

THREE IN ONE

- A. Introduction: We are working on a series about why we need to become familiar with the Bible (especially the New Testament) by reading it regularly and systematically. And, we've been dealing with topics that are aimed at encouraging us to read, and then help us understand what we read.
1. The Bible is a record of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. The Bible doesn't prove that God exists. It presumes that He exists and then tells us about Him—what He is like and what He does,
 - a. Through its pages, we learn who God is and who we are in relation to Him. We find answers to life's biggest questions: Why are we here? What is life all about? Where are we headed?
 - b. The primary reason for reading the Bible is to get to know God as He truly is in the most complete and reliable source of information we have about Him—His own inspired Word. II Tim 3:16
 1. True life, joy, and satisfaction come from knowing God. We were created for relationship with Him. John 17:3; Phil 3:8; II Pet 1:3; etc.
 2. Note what God says about Himself and man's relationship with Him. Jer 9:23-24—Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, strength, or riches. Let him boast about the fact that He knows God—His kindness, justice, and righteousness.
 2. In the last several lessons we focused on why we know we that can trust the contents of the Bible, and why we can be certain that we have the words that Almighty God inspired its authors to write. In this lesson we're going to begin to put the focus back on what the Bible reveals about God.
 - a. The Bible reveals that God is infinite (without limits) and eternal (having no beginning or end). His is the Creator of all. Jer 23:23-24; Ps 90:2; Isa 45:18
 1. Almighty God is Omni or All—Omniscient or all knowing (Isa 46:9-10), Omnipresent or present everywhere at once (Ps 139:7-10), Omnipotent or all powerful (Gen 18:14).
 2. God is transcendent (above and beyond anything we can imagine) and incomprehensible (beyond our understanding and comprehension). Isa 55:8-9; Rom 11:33
 - b. The Bible reveals that this wonderful Being wants to be known by the people He created. Although we can't know Him fully and exhaustively because He is infinite and we are finite, we can know enough of what He has revealed of Himself to respond with awe, reverence, gratefulness, and love.
 1. Almighty God desires a family of sons and daughters with whom He can lovingly interact. He created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him, and He made this world to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5
 2. Early in its narrative, the Bible reveals that both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. But the Bible also records that God promised that a Redeemer (Deliverer) would one day come to restore the family and the family home (Jesus). Gen 3:15
 3. The Bible is progressive revelation. God has gradually revealed Himself through its pages, until we have the full revelation of Himself and His plan of redemption, given through Jesus (Heb 1:1-2). In these lessons, we've followed the Bible narrative down to the coming of Jesus, the Promised Redeemer.
 - a. The New Testament is a record of Jesus' ministry. Its documents were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus (or their close associates), men who walked with Jesus, saw Him die, and then saw Him alive.
 1. Before Jesus returned to Heaven He commissioned the eyewitnesses to tell the world what they saw—His crucifixion and resurrection—and then to explain (teach) what this event means for all who believe on Jesus, (trust and rely on Him as Savior and Lord). Matt 28:18-20
 2. The eyewitnesses wrote the New Testament documents as part of that effort. Jesus promised them that even though He was leaving this world, He would continue to reveal Himself to His followers through His written Word. John 14:21-23
 - b. The apostle John made a statement about why they wrote: Jesus did many other miraculous signs besides the ones written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the

Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life (John 20:30-31, NLT).

1. Notice, John said he wrote so that people will believe some very specific things about Jesus—that He is the Christ and that He is the Son of God. (Christ is from a Greek word meaning anointed and Messiah is from a Hebrew word that means anointed).

2. Over the next few lessons we're going to examine the Bible to find out what it means that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. We're going to examine what the eyewitnesses believed about Jesus. Here's a preview:

A. When we look at what John and the rest of the New Testament writers reported about Jesus, we find that they believed Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God.

B. This statement brings up a number of questions. If God is God, then how can Jesus be God? And, if Jesus is God, how can He be the Son of God? We're going to begin to address these issues in tonight's lesson.

B. To answer these questions, and clearly state who Jesus is, we must first deal with the nature of God or the Godhead. Godhead is a term used in the New Testament to mean the Divine nature (Rom 1:20; Acts 17:29; Col 2:9). We could do a series on this subject, but consider a few points that will help us see who Jesus is.

1. The Bible reveals that there is only one God. However, God, in His ultimate Being, exists as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is by nature triune or three in one

a. This teaching is known as the doctrine of the Trinity. The word Trinity is not in the Bible, but the teaching (doctrine) is. Trinity is from two Latin words—*tri* (three) and *unus* (one).

b. Some reject the idea of three in one because they think that we are saying that there are three Gods. God is not three Gods—He is one God. Nor is He one person who sometimes takes the role of the the Father, sometimes the role of the Son, and sometimes the role of the Holy Spirit.

2. God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three Persons. Person is the best word we can use to describe the indescribable. But the word falls short because, to us, person means an individual who is separate from other individuals.

a. These three Persons are not separate; they co-inhere or share one Divine nature. They are the same in substance, power, and glory. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

1. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons in the sense that each is aware of the others, speaks to the others, loves and honors the others. However, all the fullness of Deity (the Godhead, the Divine nature) is shared completely by each Person.

2. How is this possible? It's possible because God is God. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and He is omnipresent (Jer 23:23-24). That means that He is not limited by time or space.

b. This is a difficult issue to discuss because we're talking about an infinite (limitless) Being, and we have only finite (limited) words to describe Him. God's nature is beyond comprehension. We simply accept it with awe, wonder, and worship—as did the eyewitnesses of Jesus (more later!).

c. When we try to explain the nature of God, we degrade the doctrine of three in one into something it is not. People mistakenly try to describe three in one as an egg which has a shell, yolk, and whites. But that is not accurate. The shell is not an egg, and neither is the yolk or whites. Shell, yolk, and whites are only parts of a whole egg.

3. The doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly stated in Scripture in the sense that there is one verse that spells it out. But it is implied in both the Old and New Testament. Consider this sampling of passages.

a. The Bible clearly states that there is only one God. Deut 6:4; II Sam 7:22; Ps 86:10; Isa 44:6; Isa 45:5; I Cor 8:4; I Thess 1:9; I Tim 1:17; etc.

b. But the Bible also calls three distinct Persons God: the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. I Pet 1:2; John 20:26-28; Acts 5:3-4; etc.

1. All three Persons possess attributes of God—Omnipresence (Jer 23:23-24; Matt 18:20; Matt

28:20; Ps 139:7); Omniscience (Rom 11:33; Matt 9:4; I Cor 2:10); Omnipotence (I Pet 1:5; Matt 28:18; Rom 15:19); eternity Ps 90:2; Micah 5:2; Heb 9:14).

2. The Bible states that there is only one Creator, yet it tells us that all three Persons were involved in creation. Isa 45:18; Gen 2:7; Ps 102:25; John 1:3; Col 1:16; Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30

C. We said earlier that the eyewitnesses believed Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. We'll discuss this next week, but for now, let's look at some things they reported about Jesus and the Triune God.

1. The eyewitnesses mention the three Persons together in numerous passages. They also report that Jesus spoke about the Father and the Holy Ghost. And, when Jesus spoke He was clearly referring to other Persons, and not to Himself. Consider a few of these passages.

a. Luke 1:26-35—Luke (who carefully researched his gospel) reported that the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and announced that she would bear a son, whom she was to name Jesus.

1. Notice that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all mentioned in this passage, and it's clear that they are distinct Persons. These three Persons were involved in Jesus' birth.

2. The Father provided a body (Heb 10:5; Ps 40:6-8), the Son willingly took on a human nature (Heb 2:14), and the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she conceived a child (Luke 1:35)

b. Matt 3:16-17—Matthew (one of the twelve apostles) reported that when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, God the Father spoke from heaven and called Jesus His Son. Then the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon the Son. We see distinct Persons interacting with each other.

c. John 14:16-17; 26—John (another of the twelve) reported that at the Last Supper, the night before Jesus was crucified, He told His apostles that the Father was going to send the Holy Spirit in His name. Notice once again, three distinct Persons interacting with each other.

d. Matt 28:18-20—According to Matthew, one of the last things Jesus said to His apostles before He returned to Heaven was that they were to make disciples (learners) of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

1. Notice that Jesus did not say in the names of. He said in the name of—singular. Jesus instructed His followers to baptize in the name of the Triune (three in one) God.

2. Keep in mind that Jesus is talking to monotheists—Jews who recognized and believed that there is only one God (Deut 6:4). That's who Jesus spoke to throughout most of His ministry. 2.

Israel worshipped the One true God under the name of Jehovah (*Yahweh*). And the apostles' interaction with Jesus convinced them that He was God Incarnate (God in human flesh)—not a new or a different God, but a fuller revelation of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

a. We've made the point repeatedly that the Bible is progressive revelation, and that God has gradually revealed Himself and His plan of redemption in the Bible until the full revelation given in Jesus.

1. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are present in the Old Testament. But the doctrine of three in one isn't explicitly spelled out in the same way as it is in the New Testament. (When the Old Testament is read in the light of the New Testament, the doctrine is found there.) 2.

When God began to reveal Himself to Israel (the people group Jesus was born into, and the ones to whom the Scriptures were given) the entire world was polytheistic (worshipped multiple gods). God's primary revelation to a world of polytheists in the Old Testament was: I am the Only God.

b. The doctrine was not explicit or complete until the second Person, the Son, came into this world.

Two thousand years ago, the second Person of the Godhead incarnated or took on flesh. The infinite, eternal God stepped out of eternity into time and space and became a man, so that He could die as the perfect, once for all sacrifice for sin, and recover His family. Heb 2:14

3. The eyewitnesses who wrote the New Testament documents believed that Jesus is God become man.

a. Matthew he wrote the gospel (biography of Jesus) that bears his name. He believed Jesus is God.

1. Matt 1:21-23—In his description of Jesus' conception and birth, Matthew noted that it was the fulfillment of a prophecy given by Isaiah the prophet.
 2. Isa 7:14—Look! A virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel, meaning God is with us (NLT).
 - b. John, (author of a gospel and three letters), also believed that Jesus is God. John opened his biography of Jesus with the statement that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1
 1. John stated that the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us. John then clearly identified the Word made flesh (God) as Jesus. John 1:14; John 1:15-17
 2. How can the unlimited, eternal God enter into the limitations of flesh and be born into this world? Neither John, nor any of the other New Testament writers, tells us.
 3. There is no indication in the New Testament that these men tried to figure out or analyze Jesus' nature. They simply accepted what they saw, and what they heard Jesus say about Himself (more on this in another lesson). Remember, Jesus authenticated every claim He made about Himself by rising from the dead. Rom 1:4
 - c. Jesus became fully man without ceasing to be God, one Person, two natures—human and Divine. The apostle Paul, another eyewitness, wrote that this is the mystery of the incarnation.
 1. I Tim 3:16—Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith (NLT). God was manifested in the flesh (KJV).
 2. The word mystery is used in the New Testament to mean something in the plan and purpose of God that had not yet been revealed until that point. Once it is revealed, we gain understanding, but not necessarily full comprehension because of the limitations of our finite mind. Just because we don't fully understand it doesn't mean we can't accept it. The eyewitnesses did.
- D. Conclusion: We have much more to say next week about who Jesus is—according to the Scriptures—but consider these points as we close.
1. Lessons like this can seem impractical because the information doesn't relate to everyday life and our problems. But we are living at the end of this age and Jesus' return is near.
 - a. Before He left this earth, He warned His followers that religious deception will abound in the years preceding His return. He specifically said that there will be false Christs and that many—including some of His followers—will be deceived. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
 - b. The only way you can recognize a false Christ is to be so familiar with the real Jesus Christ that you can instantly spot a fake. And, the only completely reliable source of information about Jesus is the inspired record written by the eyewitness—the New Testament documents..
 2. If ever there was a time to be familiar with Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament, it's now. Throughout this series I've encouraged you to read the New Testament, regularly and systematically.
 - a. Don't only read random verses or passages. The Bible was not written in chapters and verses. Those designations were added centuries later to make it easier to find specific statements.
 - b. Read the documents as they were meant to be read—from start to finish, just like any book or letter is meant to be read. People use Bible verses to support all kinds of ridiculous teachings.
 1. Everything in the Bible was written by a real person to other real people to communicate specific information. Everything was written by someone to someone about something.
 2. The only way we can accurately interpret a passage is to consider what it meant to the first readers. We must always consider who wrote and why they wrote—this sets the context.
 3. This wonderful Eternal, Infinite Being wants to interact with us, so let's get to know Him as He truly is through the pages of the Scriptures. Much more next week!