

## In the beginning...how can God be both three and one?

1. Study Deuteronomy 6:4. Grab a concordance and do a word study on the word "God" and "one." What do you observe? How do you reconcile the seeming contradiction of the Hebrew meaning for these two words?

During biblical times, it was a privilege to know someone's name; it revealed something about them. In today's contemporary Bible translations, the original Hebrew names may not be given, thus one may miss how God has revealed Himself to His people.

"El" is one such word. It is a root word for God and refers to a god. It was used by many ancient Semitic cultures and referred to either the true God or false gods. "Elohim" is the plural form of *El* and is the Hebrew word used here in Deut 6:4. It refers to "three or more." This concept of God (Elohim) is actually found in the very beginning in Genesis 1:1. Yet the Bible is clear and consistent about there being only one true God in the Old Testament (Deut 4:35, Isa 43:10, Isa 44:6, and Isa 46:9) and in the New Testament (1 Cor 8:4-6, Eph 4:4-6, and James 2:19). How does this plurality fit in?

"Echad" is the term used for "one" in Deut 6:4. To gain a better understanding of this term, a concordance lists the use of this word used elsewhere. In Numbers 13:23, *echad* is used in "a (*echad*) single cluster of grapes;" thus, referring to a group comprised of individual grapes. In Genesis 2:24, *echad* is used as, "they shall become one (*echad*) flesh." *Echad* describes the oneness or singularity of marriage though comprised of two individual people one male and one female.

2. Another challenge is the nature of the Holy Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit a Spirit or God? Examine the following verse of John 14:16: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." What are some observations that you can make about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is referred to with a personal pronoun.

The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is a distinct personality with power; He helps and is eternal.

3. With this plural aspect to the one and only God, one gets a glimpse of His complex nature, which defies human logic. How was the concept of the Trinity derived?

Because of its difficulty to comprehend, the Trinity doctrine has generated the most questions and criticisms. Critics, who do not accept the Bible as a true and accurate document, fall into two camps:

1) Monotheism: There is only one god, but Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are separate entities.

2) Polytheism: The doctrine was adopted from older pagan religions such as Hinduism, which embraced the triune godhead of Brahma - the god of creation, Vishnu - the god of maintenance, and Siva - the god of destruction, or one of Egypt's many trinities such as Horus, Isis, and Osiris.

Because Christianity shares the number three with these other pagan "trinities," some have erroneously concluded that Christianity borrowed their pagan concepts.

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Upon closer examination, **the uniqueness of the Trinity is found in their service of selfless love towards each other.** The Father serves the Son, the Son serves the Father, and both defer to the Holy Spirit who also defers and serves the Father and the Son. This concept is what makes Christianity unique, a model for Christian living, and is beyond human nature and comprehension.

The Trinity doctrine does not emerge easily, but if one studies of the biblical evidence within context, it does become apparent. One such method is to examine the attributes of each: God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. If they were not the same, they would not share the same characteristics.

Complete this chart. What do you notice?

Attribute	God	Jesus Christ	Holy Spirit
Omnipotence	Matthew 19:26 1 Peter 1:3-5	Matthew 28:18 2 Corinthians 12:9	Luke 1:35 Romans 15:18-19
Omnipresence	Jeremiah 23:24 1 Kings 8:27	Matthew 18:20 Matthew 28:20	Psalms 139:7-10
Omniscience	Jeremiah 17:10 1 John 3:20	John 16:30 John 21:17	1 Corinthians 2:10-11
Eternal	Psalms 90:2	John 17:5 Revelation 1:8, 17	Hebrews 9:14
Truth	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
Searches the heart	Jeremiah 17:10	Revelation 2:23	1 Corinthians 2:10
Sanctifies	1 Thessalonians 5:23	Hebrews 2:11	1 Peter 1:2

**Both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have qualities like and equivalent to God.** This evidence suggests that they are God, and because there is only one God, the Trinity doctrine exists.

#### 4. What is the definition of Trinity?

God is one Divine Being who has three distinguishable personal distinctions; each serves the other in selfless love and working dependently and cooperatively together.

God is not three distinct individuals working independently.

God does not have three phases as solid, liquid, and gas.

God does not act in three different ways.

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