THE TRINITY



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Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.
Isaiah 42:1



INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the Trinity, or the Triunity of God. Perhaps the best and simplest definition of the Trinity is that there is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and co-equal Persons; the same in substance or essence, but distinct in subsistence or existence. This has been a major area of conflict concerning the Scriptures. Throughout the history of Israel and the history of the Church, there has been tremendous opposition to this concept of the Triunity of God. "How could God be one, and how could God be three?" This seems to be a contradiction. In church history there have been five major errors concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Some of these are ancient errors, but they all have modern counterparts.

A. Arianism

One of the first early Church heresies is called "Arianism." Arianism stems from a church leader named Arias who taught that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were not the same in essence, but different. Arianism says that only God the Father is eternal. The Son was created by God the Father before anything else; then everything else was created through the Son, who Himself was a created being. We do not talk about Arians any more, but they are still around in various cults, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism, which also deny the eternal pre-existence of the Son by teaching that the Son was created by God the Father.

B. Sabellianism

A second error is known as "Sabellianism," also known as "Modalism" or "Modalistic Monarchianism." Sabellianism teaches that there is only one personality, and not three, but this one personality would reveal Himself in three different ways. Sometimes He would reveal Himself as the Father, whenever He was presented as the Creator and Lawgiver. If the issue was redemption, He would

reveal Himself as the Son. Sometimes this one Person would reveal Himself as the Holy Spirit if the issue was regeneration and sanctification. So as Creator and Lawgiver, He would reveal Himself as the Father; as the Redeemer, He would appear as the Son; as a Regenerator and Sanctifier, He would appear as the Holy Spirit. Today, this error is taught by segments in the Christian world that are called "Jesus Only." They say only Jesus is God, and that Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Spirit. The modern teachings of Jesus Only deny the Trinity, and is a revival of ancient Sabellianism.

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C. Socinianism

A third heresy that plagued the Church is known as "Socinianism," also called "Dynamic Monarchianism." Socinianism, which devaluated the Trinity, did not see all three Persons as co equals; rather, it saw each Person of the Trinity as less than the previous Person. They taught that only the Father is God. The Son is not God; the Holy Spirit is not God; only the Father is truly God. The Son is man; the Holy Spirit is not a personality, but only a divine influence. This, too, is a common teaching among certain cultic groups.

D. Unitarianism

The fourth heresy is "Unitarianism" which, very simply, denies the Trinity. It denies that the Godhead consists of three co-equal Persons. It is a denial of the tri-personality and is very similar to Judaism in this regard.

E. Tritheism

The fifth heresy is called "Tritheism." This is like Polytheism, but it limits the number of gods to three. This is a denial of the unity of the Godhead, and sees three gods rather than three personalities of the one God. While Unitarianism denies three personalities and only affirms one God, Tritheism denies the unity of the three Persons and sees them as three separate gods.

Of course, none of these five views adequately deals with the Scriptures that clearly teach the concept of a Triunity. The true biblical teaching about the Godhead must encompass three specific areas: first, "The Plurality of the Godhead," secondly, "The Unity of the Godhead," and thirdly, "The Trinity of the Godhead."

I. THE PLURALITY OF THE GODHEAD

The first area of discussion is the plurality of the Godhead. We will study this in two specific categories.

A. The Plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament

In the first category, the Old Testament clearly teaches the concept of plurality in the Godhead on more than one occasion.

1. The Plural Noun Elohim

The Hebrew word for God that is most often used is the term *Elohim*, which means "God," and is used of both the true God and the many false gods. Genesis 1:1 states: *In the beginning God, Elohim, created the heavens and the earth*. Here the word is used of the true God. It is also used of the false gods in places like Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 13:2. For example, among the Ten Commandments there is one that says: "You shall have no other gods, Elohim, before me." Here, the same word is used of the pagan, foreign, idolatrous gods as is used of the true God. The point is that the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is a plural noun and has the Hebrew masculine plural ending. Whenever it is used of the true God, it is always translated in the singular, but when it is used of false gods, it is always translated in the plural. The fact that the Hebrew word is plural when speaking of the only one true God opens the door to the concept of plurality. Of course, it is not a proof of plurality because, in Hebrew, there is the usage known as "the plural of majesty." However, it certainly opens the door to the discussion of the whole area of the plurality concept in the personality of the Godhead.

2. The Plural Verbs Used with Elohim

A second evidence for plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is where plural verbs are used with *Elohim*. Normally, when *Elohim* is used of the one true God, the verb used with it is singular. This goes contrary to normal Hebrew grammar because, in Hebrew grammar, the verb must agree with the noun both in gender and number. Normally, one would expect that with the plural noun *Elohim*, a plural verb form would be used. This is true when the word is used of false gods. Most of the time, whenever the word *Elohim* is used of the true God, the verb used with it is in the singular form to indicate that there is only one true God. But there are exceptions, and these again open the door for a discussion on the plurality in the Godhead. For example, Genesis 20:13a reads: *and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander.*

The Hebrew word that is translated *caused me to wander* is plural. Literally, it reads, "And it came to pass, when they in reference to God caused me to wander."

Another example is Genesis 35:7: *And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him.*

Here again, revealed unto him in Hebrew is a plural form, which literally reads, "for there God revealed themselves."

A third example is II Samuel 7:23: *God went to redeem.*

Again, the Hebrew word for went is plural, and literally reads, "For God they went to redeem."

The fourth example is Psalm 58:11b (Hebrew Text 58:12): *there is a God that judges in the earth.*

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Again, the term that *judges* is a plural verb in Hebrew, and it literally reads, "there is a God they judge."

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3. The Noun Elohim Applied to Two Persons

The third line of evidence for plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is that the word Elohim, or God, is often applied to two different personalities within the same passage. There are two examples. In Psalm 45:6-7, the writer states: *Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever: A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: Therefore God, your God, has anointed you With the oil of gladness above your fellows.*

Notice that the word God is actually applied to two different Persons within these two verses. He is addressing God, and, after addressing God, he says that another God had anointed the first God With the oil of gladness above your fellows. It should be noted that in this verse the first Elohim is being addressed. The second Elohim is the God of the first Elohim. It is God's God who has anointed Him with the oil of gladness.

A second example is in Hosea 1:7: *But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jehovah their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.*

In this passage, the speaker is Elohim or God, who says He will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the instrumentality of Jehovah their God Elohim. In other words, Elohim or God number one will save Israel by means of Elohim or God number two.

4. The Name YHVH Applied to Two Persons

The fourth line of evidence for the plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the fact that the personal name of God, which is comprised of the four Hebrew letters corresponding to our English letters YHVH and sometimes translated "Jehovah," is applied to two different Persons in one passage. The first example is in Genesis 19:24: *Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven.*

In this verse, Jehovah number one rained fire and brimstone from a second *Jehovah out of heaven*. The first Jehovah is on earth; He is the One who had been speaking previously to Abraham. Jehovah had appeared to him at the oaks of Mamre, and had warned him about the coming destruction of Sodom. That Jehovah who was on the earth, Jehovah number one, was now raining fire and brimstone from Jehovah number two, who was in Heaven. The term Jehovah, God's personal name, is used here of two different Persons.

A second example is Zechariah 2:8-9: *For thus says Jehovah of hosts: After glory has he sent me unto the nations which plundered you; for he that touches you touches the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall be a spoil to those that served them; and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts*

has sent me.
This verse says that Jehovah number one is the speaker: *For thus says Jehovah of hosts*. As He speaks, He says that He is being sent to accomplish a task by Jehovah number two. Again, there is one Jehovah sending another Jehovah to perform a specific task.

Not only is the word Elohim, meaning "God," applied to two different Persons in one passage, but God's personal name is also applied to two different Persons in one passage as well.

5. The Plural Noun Adonai

A fifth line of evidence for the plurality of the Godhead that comes from the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *Adonai*, which means "Lord." Whenever that word is used of God, it is always found in the plural. The singular form is never used of God. The Hebrew word for Lord, Adonai, is also always plural in reference to God and this, too, is evidence for plurality in the Godhead.

6. The Plural Pronouns

A sixth line of evidence concerning the plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the fact that plural pronouns are used of God. One example is Genesis 1:26a: *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*
Notice the words *us, our,* and *our*. These are plural pronouns in reference to God. God could hardly be including angels in the terms *us, our, our,* because man was to be created, not in the image of angels, but in the image of God. The pronouns *us, our, our,* can only be a reference to God, not to any angel; and they are plural pronouns.

A second example where the plural pronoun us is used in reference to God is found in Genesis 3:22a: *And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.*

A third example where the plural pronoun us is again used is Genesis 11:7a: *Come, let us go down, and there confound their language.*

An example outside of the Book of Genesis is in the Prophets, Isaiah 6:8a: *And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*

Notice, it starts out with a singular pronoun, but then changes to a plural: *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* The singular shows that God is one, and the plural shows plurality in the Godhead. These plural pronouns clearly show that God is seen in terms of plurality.

7. The Plural Adjectives

A seventh line of evidence, which shows the plurality of the Godhead from the Old Testament comes from the fact that God is also described in terms of plural adjectives. In English translations, these

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appear as nouns, but in the Hebrew text, these words are Hebrew adjectives. They are also in the plural form. For example, Joshua 24:19 reads in English, *holy God*. But the adjective *holy* is a plural form, which literally reads, "holy Gods." A second example is Psalm 149:2, which in some English translations reads: *in his Maker*. The adjective that is translated *Maker* is plural in Hebrew; so, it literally reads, "Let Israel rejoice in his Makers." A third example is Ecclesiastes 12:1: *your Creator*. Again, the word Creator is a plural adjective in Hebrew, and it literally reads, "your Creators." Isaiah 54:5 has two examples. In English, the verse reads, *your Maker is your husband*. But both the terms *Maker* and *husband* are plurals in the Hebrew text, and they read literally, "your Makers, your husbands" in reference to God. This, too, emphasizes the concept of a plurality.

8. The Angel of Jehovah

The eighth line of evidence which shows the plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the teachings concerning the "Angel of Jehovah" or the "Angel of the LORD." Throughout the Old Testament, this figure appears here and there. In some translations, He is called *the angel of Jehovah*; at other times, He is identified by the expression *the angel of the LORD*. What is interesting is the fact that, in every passage where He appears, in one part of the context He is called *the angel of Jehovah*, and in another part of the same context, He is called Jehovah Himself. What is clear is that the Angel of Jehovah is not a common, ordinary angel, but is a unique Being, who is a visible manifestation of God Himself. The context always makes this evident.

a. Examples of Uniqueness

The first example is Genesis 16:7-14. He is called *the angel of the Jehovah* in verses 7, 9, 10 and 11; then He is called Jehovah Himself in verse 13.

A second example is Genesis 22:9-13. He is called *the angel of Jehovah* in verses 11 and 15; but He is called God in verse 12 and Jehovah in verse 16.

Third example is Genesis 31:11-13. In verse 11, He is called *the angel of God*; but in verse 13, He says: *I am the God of Beth-el.*

The fourth example is Genesis 32:24-30. In verse 24, He is called a *man*, because that is how He appeared. Verse 28 says: *you have striven with God*; and in verse 30: *I have seen God face to face*. The One who appeared as a man was really the Angel of Jehovah; but when Jacob is said to have wrestled with the Angel, he is also said to have wrestled with God.

The fifth example is Exodus 3:1-5. He is called *the angel of Jehovah* in verse 2; but He is called both Jehovah and God in verse 4.

The sixth example is Judges 2:1. *The angel of Jehovah* was responsible

for the Exodus; but Exodus 19:4 states that it was God who was responsible.

The seventh example is Judges 6:11-24. He is called *the angel of Jehovah* in verses 11, 12, and 21; *the angel of God* in verse 20; but *Jehovah* in verses 14, 16, 22 and 23.

The eighth example is Judges 13:2-24. He is called *the angel of Jehovah* in verses 3, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 21; *the angel of God* in verse 9. Then in verse 18, His name is *wonderful*; one of those special Hebrew words, *pele*, which is used only of God, as in Isaiah 9:6. Verse 22 of Judges 13 states that what they saw was God's face.

The final example is in the Book of Zechariah, chapters 1-6, where He is frequently called the Angel of Jehovah Himself.

These manifestations of the Angel of Jehovah also point to the concept of a plurality in the Godhead.

b. Scriptural Evidence of Uniqueness

The fact that this Angel is not a common, ordinary angel is clear from three Old Testament passages. The first passage is Isaiah 42:8, where God said: *I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another.*

The glory that is encased within the personal name Jehovah–YHVH–is something that belongs to God alone, and it is not given to any other person and certainly no creature.

The second passage is Exodus 23:20-23, which states certain things about this Angel of Jehovah. In verse 20, it is this Angel who will lead the Exodus. In verse 21, it is this Angel who must be obeyed and never provoked. The reason is that He will not forgive their sin or rebellion, because *my name is in him*. This Angel has God's personal name, so His name is also Jehovah. In light of Isaiah 42:8: *I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another*, unless this Angel is also part of the Godhead, then He has no right to have this name. So, Jehovah number one says that this Angel has the name of Jehovah as well. In verse 22, there are blessings for obedience and, in verse 23, He is again declared to be the Angel of the Exodus. The fact that God's name is in Him, and the fact that this Angel has the power to forgive or not to forgive sin, is once again a clear teaching that He is not a common angel, but God Himself.

The third passage on this point is Hosea 12:3-5, where Hosea reemphasizes that this Angel has God's personal name. For the Angel to have God's personal name, He must be God Himself.

9. The Son of God

The ninth line of evidence for plurality of the Godhead in the Old

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Testament is the concept of the Son of God, which is found in two Old Testament passages.

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a. Psalm 2

The first passage is Psalm 2, where that concept is found in two places. Psalm 2:7 states: *I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, You are my son; This day have I begotten you.*

In verse 7, there is a declaration of Sonship: God has a *son*. Someone is decreed to be that son. Verses 8 and 9 state that this Son is destined to rule the world.

Concerning this Son, in verses 10-12, the entire world is instructed to obey Him. Then verse 12 states: *Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, For his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.*

The world is instructed to obey the Son. To *kiss the son* means "to pay homage" to Him. Then He instructs all to *take refuge in him*; and those who will take refuge in the Son of God are the ones who will be saved by God. Psalm 2 clearly teaches that there is a Son of God.

b. Proverbs 30:4

The second passage that teaches the same point is Proverbs 30:4, where the writer asks a series of six questions. The first four are rhetorical questions in that the answer is obvious. The first four questions are: *Who has ascended up into heaven, and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has bound the waters in his garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth?*

The answer to these first four questions is obvious: it is God. All four questions ask who is responsible for creating and forming the universe. Obviously, the answer is God in each case; God is responsible for all four of these things.

Then comes the fifth question, which is: *What is his name.*

His name throughout the Old Testament is the four Hebrew letters which correspond to the English letters YHVH. His name is YHVH, often translated as "Jehovah" or "Lord."

Then comes the sixth question: *and what is his son's name, if you know?*

This is the tricky part of this verse. It does teach that God has a Son; but, at that point in history, His name had not yet been revealed. The various names of the Messiah are revealed later in the Prophets, which is beyond the time when the Book of Proverbs was written.

10. The God-Man Concept

The tenth line of evidence for plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the fact that the Old Testament also teaches the concept of a God-Man. This is seen in various examples.

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a. Genesis 4:1

And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bore Cain, and said, I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah.

In the first example, Eve called her son Cain because: *I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah*. Actually, the phrase *with the help* of is not in the Hebrew text. Literally, the last line of Genesis 4:1 reads, *I have gotten a man: Jehovah*. In other words, Eve thought that the son whom she had just borne was God Himself. It shows how Eve understood Genesis 3:15, where God promised the Messiah for the first time: *and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

This is the first Messianic prophecy, which spelled out that the Messiah would be born of the seed of the woman. What that clearly taught was that the Messiah was to be human. He was to come from humanity: from the seed of the woman. At the same time, Eve also understood that, for this man to be the Redeemer, for this man to be able to save her from her sins, He would also have to be God as well. When she gave birth to her first son, she thought Cain was the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15; so she said, "I have gotten a man: Jehovah." Her theology was absolutely correct; the Messiah was going to be both God and man. She was not in error in her theology, her error was in the application of it; she thought that Cain was the fulfillment of that promise in Genesis 3:15. It should be noted that with the first human birth there was already the understanding that the Messiah would be both God and man; thus, the God-Man concept comes as early as Genesis 4:1.

b. Isaiah 9:6-7

Another example is the famous passage in Isaiah 9:6-7. The first part of verse 6 speaks of a Jewish child born into the Jewish world: *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*

A child is to be born into the Jewish world, and it is His humanity that is being stressed. But, in the second part of verse 6, He is given four names, three of which can apply only to God. He is first called *Wonderful Counsellor.* The word "wonderful" in English is used of both God and man. We talk about God being wonderful, and we talk about our spouse being wonderful. But in the Hebrew Bible, there are certain words which are used only of God. The Hebrew word for Wonderful is *pele*, and is one of those words used exclusively of God. While in English, the name Wonderful Counsellor does not demand deity, in Hebrew it definitely does. The second name of the child is *Mighty God*. This is clearly a title of divinity and deity. The third name is Everlasting Father or more literally, "the Father of Eternity" or "the One who controls eternity." This, too, emphasizes His deity, for only God can control eternity. His fourth name is *Prince of Peace*. That is the only one of the four names, which can be used both of God and man. Three of His four names are names, which are true of God only. The first part of the verse emphasizes His humanity; the second part emphasizes His deity; and again, the concept is that of the God-Man.

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c. Jeremiah 23:5-6

A third example of the God-Man concept is found in Jeremiah 23:5-6. Verse 5 speaks of a descendant of David, sitting upon the throne of David; here, His humanity is stressed. But then, in verse 6, His name is: *Jehovah our righteousness*. The human being of verse 5 who sits on David's throne has God's personal name in verse 6; and again, God's name shows His deity. So, verse 5 emphasizes His humanity and verse 6 emphasizes His deity; and once again, we see the God-Man concept.

d. Zechariah 13:7

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.

In the fourth example, some translations have "my associate" instead of *my fellow*. The Hebrew word translated either as fellow or associate is a word that literally means "my equal." Thus, the verse literally reads: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man, emphasizing His humanity, that is my equal, saith Jehovah of hosts." This man is God's equal, and God's equal must be God Himself. On one hand, His humanity is stressed: *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man*; and then His deity is stressed "that is my equal."

These are four examples where the Old Testament clearly teaches a God-Man concept.

11. The Holy Spirit

The eleventh line of evidence concerning the plurality of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the frequent appearance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sometimes seen as God, and sometimes He is seen as one Person within the Godhead. His many appearances in the Old Testament are also evidence of the plurality of the Godhead. One example is Genesis 1:2, where it is *the Spirit of God* who was brooding or hovering like a mother hen over the darkness of the deep, so, the Holy Spirit was involved in Creation; and Creation is a work of God. In Exodus 31:3, the Holy Spirit is called God. In Job 26:13, the Holy Spirit is involved in Creation. In Psalm 51:11, He is given the name *holy Spirit*. Psalm 139:7 teaches that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. And in Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit is called the *Spirit of Jehovah.*

B. The Plurality of the Godhead in the New Testament

In the second category, the plurality of the Godhead is also taught in the New Testament in that, more than one Person is called God. For example, the Father is called God (Jn. 6:27; Gal. 1:1, 3). Secondly, the Son is called God (Jn. 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Tit. 2:13; I Jn. 5:20). Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is also called God in Acts 5:3-9, where lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God, and in II Corinthians 3:17.

Summary: Throughout the Bible, the Scriptures clearly teach that

there is plurality in the Godhead; the Godhead consists of more than one Person.

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II. THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

The second area to be discussed is the unity of the Godhead, and to show that, while on the one hand the Bible teaches plurality in the Godhead, it never teaches a plurality of Gods as in Polytheism; only a plurality of Persons. There is one God, and this plurality is a unity of only one God.

A. The Unity of the Godhead in the Old Testament

"What is the evidence for the unity of the Godhead?" In dealing with the Old Testament, there are five specific evidences.

1. The Same Image and Likeness

The first evidence is found in Genesis 1:26, which states: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*

This passage was cited earlier in this manuscript to show that there is a plurality in the Godhead. This same verse also shows a unity in the Godhead, because the speaker and the one spoken to have the same image and likeness: *in our image, after our likeness*. The plural pronouns *our* emphasize plurality. The fact that both the speaker and the one spoken to are of the same image and likeness, emphasizes their unity.

2. The Use of Singular Verbs with Plural Nouns

The second line of evidence for the unity of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the fact that, although the word "God" in Hebrew is Elohim and is plural, it is almost always used with a singular verb, which is contrary to normal Hebrew grammar. The rules of Hebrew grammar require that the verb must agree with the noun in both gender and number. When the noun Elohim is used of the true God, being a plural noun it sometimes has a plural verb according to Hebrew grammar. Several examples of this were cited earlier as evidence of the plurality of the Godhead. But the fact that the vast majority of cases use the singular verb with Elohim emphasizes unity. An example is Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God, Elohim, a plural noun, created, a singular Hebrew verb. It does not agree with the noun in number, thus violating normal Hebrew grammar. This violation of the normal Hebrew grammar in the majority of cases where the word Elohim is used of the true God also shows unity in the Godhead.

3. The Use of Singular and Plural Forms Together

A third line of evidence for the unity of the Godhead in the Old Testament is the use of *El Elohim. El* is the singular form, and *Elohim* is the plural form; but both are used together in one verse of the same God. One example is Genesis 33:20: *And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.*

El is the singular, but *Elohe* is the construct state of Elohim, which is a plural form. So, literally it reads, "God, the Gods of Israel." The fact

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that the singular is followed by the plural and that both words refer to the one true God emphasizes unity.

A second example where both the singular and the plural are used together is Joshua 22:22: *The Mighty One, God, Jehovah, the Mighty One, God, Jehovah, he knows; and Israel he shall know: if it be in rebellion, or if in trespass against Jehovah (save you us not this day).*
The Hebrew word translated as *The Mighty One* is the word El, which is the singular word for God. The word translated God is Elohim and it is a plural noun, which means "God" or "gods." The word translated Jehovah is God's personal name: El, Elohim, Jehovah. Jehovah is God's personal name; Elohim emphasizes His plurality; but the singular El emphasizes His unity. So, unity can be seen in the use of El Elohim, the singular and plural used together of one and the same God.

4. The Use of the Compound One

The fourth line of evidence for unity of the Godhead in the Old Testament is in Deuteronomy 6:4; a very famous verse for Jewish people. Deuteronomy 6:4 is called the *sh'ma*, and it is considered the essence of all forms of Judaism. That verse reads: *Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.*
This verse, more than any other, emphasizes the concept of a unity. In the field of Jewish evangelism, Deuteronomy 6:4 is often used by Jewish people to teach against the plurality of the Godhead. But, if this verse is studied very carefully, it is evident that it is not teaching an absolute unity, but a compound unity. Rather than arguing against a plurality of the Godhead, Deuteronomy 6:4 actually supports the concept of plurality in the Godhead. To begin with, it should be pointed out that where it reads *Jehovah our God* the Hebrew word for God is plural, and literally reads, "our Gods." But, the key word to focus attention on is the word *one*.

a. Echad

The Hebrew word for *one* is *echad*. By comparing the usage of echad elsewhere in the Old Testament, it is clear that this word refers to a compound one, not an absolute one. For example, Genesis 1:5 states: *And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*
The combination of evening and morning comprised the unity of echad, or *one day*.

Another key passage is Genesis 2:24: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*
A man and a woman who come together in marriage are said to become *one*, *echad*, flesh. There are two personalities, a man and a woman, coming together in marriage, and the two become one. Obviously, they do not become an absolute one, for they retain their separate personalities; however, there is definitely a unity there.

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Another example is Ezra 3:1, where the whole assembly of Israel was as *one*, *echad*. Although it was comprised of numerous individuals, they were all looked upon as one; obviously a united one.

Another example is Ezekiel 37:17, where Ezekiel is told to put two sticks together, and they are combined to become *one*, echad, *stick*. These examples of the usage of the word *echad* in the Hebrew text, which is the very same word used in Deuteronomy 6:4, show that it speaks of a compound unity, not an absolute unity.

b. Yachid

There is another Hebrew word, which does mean an absolute one: *yachid*. It is used in Genesis 22:2, where it emphasizes Isaac as Abraham's only, unique son. So, if Moses had wanted to emphasize absolute oneness of God, he would have used the term *yachid*. But he did not use that term for the oneness of God. Deuteronomy 6:4 is, therefore, an argument in favor of the plurality of the Godhead and, at the same time, it teaches the unity of this plurality of the one God.

5. Jehovah Declared to Be One

The fifth line of evidence of the unity of the Godhead from the Old Testament is, that Jehovah is declared to be *one*, *echad*, in Zechariah 14:9.

B. The Unity of the Godhead in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the unity of the Godhead is taught in Ephesians 4:4-6; I Timothy 2:5; and James 2:19.

III. THE TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD

The third area of this Messianic Bible Study will deal with the actual Trinity of the Godhead. Thus far, it has been shown that the Bible teaches that there is plurality in the Godhead, and that this plurality is a unity of only one God. Now, it is necessary to show that this plurality is limited to a Trinity in that there are no less and no more than three Persons.

A. The Trinity of the Godhead in the Old Testament

From the Old Testament, the evidence that God is, indeed, a Trinity is found in the fact that only three Persons are ever called God, and no more than three Persons are ever seen together.

1. Isaiah 42:1

Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Notice the three Persons in this first example. The first Person is the speaker, who is seen by the pronoun *I*. The second Person is the speaker's *servant*, the servant of Jehovah. And the third Person is the *Spirit* of God. Here is a passage where there are three and only three

Persons, no more or no less than three.

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2. Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

The second example mentions only three individuals: the *Lord Jehovah*; the Spirit of Jehovah; and the pronoun *me*, in reference to the speaker: *The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me*. Again, there are three Persons, and no more.

3. Isaiah 63:7-14

A third example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the Old Testament is found in the context of Isaiah 63:7-14, which deals with a summary of the Exodus. Within the context of this passage, three and no more than three Persons are mentioned. For example, in verse 7 there is one Person: *I will make mention of the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah, and the praises of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.*

In verse 7, the reference is to the Person called *Jehovah*. In this case, Jehovah is God the Father.

A second personality mentioned is in verse 9: *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old.*

A second personality mentioned in this context is *the angel of his presence*. He is the same as the Angel of Jehovah, who has the name of Jehovah Himself. Notice in verse 9, that it was this angel who was responsible for saving them and for redeeming them.

A third personality is the Holy Spirit mentioned three different times. First, verse 10 reads: *But they rebelled, and grieved his holy Spirit.*

Secondly, verse 11: *where is he that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them?*

And for the third time in verse 14: *As the cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah caused them to rest.*

In this passage, the three personalities are clearly in view. There are not less than three, and there are not more than three.

4. Isaiah 48:12-16

The fourth example as evidence of the Trinity of the Godhead in the Old Testament is in the context of Isaiah 48:12-16. Verses 12-14a: *Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called: I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Yea, my hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand has spread out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear; who among them has declared these things? He whom Jehovah loves shall perform his pleasure.*

In these verses, it is clear that the speaker is God Himself because the

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speaker refers to Himself as the One who is responsible for the Creation of the heavens and the earth. Since God is responsible for creating *the heavens and the earth*, the speaker, then, must be God Himself.

Then verse 16 states: *Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; from the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord Jehovah has sent me, and his Spirit.*
Notice carefully the three Persons: the speaker, the *Spirit*, and the *Lord Jehovah*. In verse 16, the speaker is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and He refers to Himself by the pronouns *I* and *me*. This speaker distinguishes Himself from two other Persons. One Person from whom He distinguishes Himself is *the Lord Jehovah*. The second Person from whom He distinguishes Himself is the Spirit of God. Here is the clearest Old Testament passage on the Triunity. Here, in Isaiah 48:12-16, the Triunity is as clearly presented as the Old Testament Scriptures have chosen to make it.

In the Old Testament, only three Persons are ever called God, and no more than three Persons are ever seen together.

B. The Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there are three major lines of evidence for the Trinity of the Godhead.

1. Only Three Persons Are Ever Called God

Only three Persons are ever called God, and no more than three Persons are ever seen together.

a. Matthew 3:16-17

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
Notice, no more than three Persons are to be found in the context of the baptism of Yeshua (Jesus). The Son is seen in the Person of Yeshua; the *Spirit* is seen because He comes down in the bodily form of a *dove*; and the Father is made present by the audible voice that comes down *out of the heavens*, saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

b. Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
In the second example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament, only three Persons are mentioned specifically, no less than three, but no more either. These three Persons are now given titles of *Father, Son,* and *Holy Spirit*. Notice the seeming contradiction insofar as

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the grammar is concerned. The command is to go and baptize *in the name of,* and the word *name* is singular. It does not say, "in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," which would have been more grammatically correct. But rather, it is *in the name of*. The word *name* is singular, emphasizing the unity of the Godhead. But then, this one *name* belongs to *the Father, the Son,* and *the Holy Spirit*, emphasizing the Trinity of the Godhead.

c. John 14:16-17

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholds him not, neither knows him: ye know him; for he abides with you, and shall be in you.

In the third example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament, notice again the three Persons mentioned in this context. One Person is the speaker, Yeshua, who is identified by the pronoun *I*. The second Person is *the Father*, to whom He will pray. The third Person is the Holy Spirit, who is going to be sent.

d. I Corinthians 12:4-6

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who works all things in all.

In the fourth example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament, once again three Persons are mentioned, but no more. Verse 4 mentions the *Spirit*, who is the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 mentions the *Lord*, who is the Son. And verse 6 mentions God, who, in this case, is God the Father.

e. II Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Notice the three Persons in the fifth example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,* the Son, *the love of God,* the Father, *and the communion of the Holy Spirit* the Holy Spirit. Again, three Persons are mentioned, no more and no less.

f. I Peter 1:2

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

In the last example of the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament, verse 2 mentions three Persons: *God the Father*, who is responsible for the foreknowledge; *the Spirit*, who is responsible for *sanctification*; and the Son, *Jesus Christ*, who is responsible for the sprinkling, shedding, of His blood for the sins of the world.

From these passages, it is clear that only three Persons are ever called "God," and no more than three Persons are ever seen together.

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Summary: In keeping with the teaching of the Old Testament, the New Testament clearly recognizes that there are three Persons in the Godhead. But, while the Old Testament clearly taught a Triunity, it did not actually name the members of this Triunity; this comes only with New Testament revelation. The First Person is called God the Father. The Second Person is called God the Son. It is the New Testament that answers the question of Proverbs 30:4: *What is his son's name?* His Son's name is Yeshua. In accordance with the Old Testament, He was sent by God to be the Messiah, but this time as a man, instead of an Angel. Furthermore, He was sent for a specific purpose: to die for our sins. In essence, what happened was that God became a man in order to accomplish the work of Atonement. The Third Person is called God the Holy Spirit. Throughout the New Testament, He is related to the work of the Second Person in keeping with the teaching of the Old Testament.

2. Only Three Persons Have the Attributes of God

The second major line of evidence concerning the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament is that only three Persons have the attributes of God. There are four particular, divine attributes, which only three Persons possess.

a. Eternality

The first attribute is that of eternality. Only three Persons are said to have this attribute in that only three Persons have always existed and will always continue to exist.

The Father has this attribute of eternality in Psalm 90:2, which speaks of the Father being *from everlasting to everlasting*.

The Son also has the attribute of eternality in Micah 5:2 (quoted in Mat. 2:5-6). Although in His humanity, He would be born in Bethlehem, Micah 5:2 also states that, as to His deity, He has been *of old, from everlasting*. The Hebrew words that Micah uses are the strongest possible terms concerning the concept of eternity past.

The Son's eternality is also taught in John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
According to this verse, the Son existed in the beginning with God the Father. In other words, as long as God has existed, so also the Son has existed. Since God the Father has existed from all eternity, therefore, the Son must have existed for all eternity as well. John 1:1 is clear evidence that some of the cultic teachings, which claim that the Son was created by God the Father, are wrong. The point of John 1:1 is that as long as the Father has existed, which has been for all eternity that is how long the Son has existed. The eternality of the Son is also found in John 1:15 and 8:58.

The Holy Spirit also has the attribute of eternality according to Hebrews 9:14.

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b. Omnipotence

The second attribute is that of omnipotence, which means "all-powerful." Only three Persons have the attribute of omnipotence. God the Father is omnipotent in I Peter 1:5. The Son is omnipotent in Hebrews 1:3. The Holy Spirit is omnipotent in Romans 15:19.

c. Omniscience

The third attribute is that of omniscience, which means "all-knowing." The Father is omniscient in Jeremiah 17:10. The Son is omniscient in John 16:30; 21:17; and Revelation 2:23. The Holy Spirit is omniscient in I Corinthians 2:10-11.

d. Omnipresence

The fourth attribute, which only three Persons have, is omnipresence, meaning that "God is everywhere." The Father is omnipresent according to Jeremiah 23:24. The Son is omnipresent according to Matthew 18:20 and 28:20. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent according to Psalm 139:7-10.

Summary: Thus, the second line of evidence that the plurality of the Godhead is limited to a Trinity is the fact that only three Persons have the attributes of God; in particular, the uniquely divine attributes of eternality, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

3. Only Three Persons Know the Works of God

There is a third line of evidence for the Trinity of the Godhead in the New Testament: only three Persons act like God or do the works of God. There are three specific examples in this area.

a. The Work of the Creation of the Universe

The first example is the Creation of the universe. The thrust of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is that God is the Creator of the universe. The Creation of the universe is a specific work of God, and yet in the Scriptures, there are three different Persons who are responsible for the Creation. The Father is responsible for the Creation of the universe in Psalm 102:25. The Son is responsible for the Creation of the universe in John 1:3; and Colossians 1:16. The Holy Spirit is responsible for the Creation of the universe in Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; and Psalm 104:30. In dealing with the Creation of the universe, which is a work of God, these three Persons are said to be responsible.

b. The Work of the Creation of Man

A second specific work of God is the creation of man. Again, the thrust of Scripture in both testaments is that God created man in His own image. Once again, the Scriptures teach that three different Persons are credited with the creation of man. The Father is responsible for the creation of man according to Genesis 2:7. The Son is responsible for the creation of man according to Colossians 1:16.

The Holy Spirit is responsible for the creation of man in Job 33:4. As it was true with the Creation of the universe, so it is also true with the creation of man: three Persons are credited with this work, which is a work of God.

c. The Work of Inspiration

The third example is the work of inspiration. The thrust of Scripture is that God does the work of inspiration; God is the revealer of Himself. But again, three different Persons are said to be responsible for the work of inspiration. God the Father does the work of inspiration according to II Timothy 3:16. God the Son is responsible for the work of inspiration in I Peter 1:10-11. The Holy Spirit is responsible for the work of inspiration in II Peter 1:21. This, too, is a work of God, and yet, three Persons are responsible.

CONCLUSION

Concerning the Godhead, the Bible teaches three great truths.
First, the plurality of the Godhead: there exists a plurality of personalities within the Godhead.

Secondly, the unity of the Godhead: the plurality is not a plurality of gods as in Polytheism, for there is only one God.

Thirdly, the Trinity of the Godhead: the plurality of the personalities of the one God is limited to three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, no more and no less.✡

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IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS022, 047, 051 and 186.