

## Session One

# The Trinity of Persons: Unity and Distinction, Equality and Differentiation

Recommended Reading:

Doug Huffman and Eric Johnson, eds., *God Under Fire* (Zondervan)  
John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford Univ Press)

Key Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

- Clear Trinitarian delineation
- Implicit ranking of the members of the Trinity
- Centrality of the Son in all of salvation

### Historical and Biblical Overview: Why did Christians come to Believe the Trinity?

#### I. Scriptural Monotheism

##### A. OT Affirmation of One God

Genesis 1:1, Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Kings 8:59-60, Isaiah 45:5-7, Isaiah 46:9

##### B. NT Affirmation of One God

John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 3:30, James 2:19

#### II. Scriptural Trinitarianism

##### A. Key biblical teachings

1. Father is God
2. Jesus is God

John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, John 1:1, John 8:58, Heb 1:2 (Creator), 3a (exact representation of his nature), 3b (upholds the universe by the word of his power), 6 (Let all God's angels worship him), 8 (Of the Son he says, Thy throne O God is forever and ever), and 10-12 (quotes Ps 102:25-27, where God is eternal and immutable).

3. Holy Spirit is God

- Acts 5:3-4 – lie to the HS . . . not lied to man but to God
- 1 Cor 2:10-11 – Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God
- 1 Cor 3:16 – you are a temple of God, the Spirit dwells in you
- Heb 9:14 – eternal Spirit

- B. Triadic Passages – Matt 28:19-20 (baptize in the name of F, S, HS); 2 Cor 13:14 (grace of the LJC, love of God, fellowship of the HS)
- C. Council of Nicea (AD 325)
- Sabellius – modalism rejected
  - Arius – Subordinationism of essence rejected
  - Athanasius – established the *homoousios* doctrine
- D. Council of Constantinople (AD 381)
- Arius’s followers – Spirit just the presence of God, an impersonal force, rejected
  - Cappadocian Fathers – affirmed the Spirit is, with the Father and Son, fully God
- E. Definition of the Trinity (Augustinian in nature): God’s whole and undivided essence belongs equally, eternally, simultaneously, and fully to each of the three Persons of the Godhead, so that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each is fully God while each is his own personal expression, in role and activity, of the one eternal and undivided divine essence.

### **Conclusion and Prelude for Sessions 2 and 3**

What distinguishes each Person of the Godhead from each other is not and cannot be *the divine nature* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

What distinguishes each Person of the Godhead from the other Persons is his particular *role* in relation to the other Persons and the *relationships* that each has with each of the other Persons