Defining and Defending

The Doctrine of

“The Trinity”
DEFINING AND DEFENDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

This message investigates a biblical teaching that is vital to every Christian—“The Trinity”—the belief that God is three-in-one. Understanding this doctrine won't help a person in his marriage, make him a better parent, help with feelings of loneliness, or solve financial problems, but it will give a person the proper view of God. It will also help the person avoid the deception of bogus teaching that thrives in modern cults like Mormonism, The Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Science.

The doctrine of “The Trinity” is one major area where Christians and cultists differ. Christians say, “Jesus is God. He is part of the triune Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Cultists say that Christ is not God. To them, he is a lesser god, a good teacher, or something else.

This raises the question, “Is the doctrine of the Trinity really that important?” Yes, it is vital. Either God is three in one or He’s not. If He is three-in-one, then Father, Son and Holy Spirit all deserve equal reverence. To relegate one or more of them to a lesser status is blasphemy.

Did you know that the average cultist often can support his beliefs better than the average Christian. It’s true. Many times, the average Christian has not learned to defend his faith. The average cultist, on the other hand, is usually heavily indoctrinated into the false teachings of his cult. In many instances, like with Jehovah’s witnesses, their members are highly discouraged from reading any literature not written by their own organization. They are even told not to read the writings of those who leave their organization, because those people would only write out of bitterness. Once a cult gets its members only to read the literature they want them to read, the cult has succeeded in isolating its members from any outside influence, and can get them to believe whatever they want them to believe. This is dangerous indeed, especially when many cults tell their members that they are the only true church.

This is why Christians need to wake up and become more proficient in defending their own faith. They should know how to defend the true faith against false teaching.

Christians often take the doctrine of the Trinity for granted. They accept it as true because it has been the belief of the best Christian scholars for nearly
two thousand years. Cultists, on the other hand, reject the doctrine of the Trinity even though their organizations have only been in existence for the last hundred years or so. They reject true scholarship and twist Scripture to make it say what they want it to say. In the case of groups like The Jehovah’s Witnesses, they have come up with their own errant and fallacious Bible (The New World Translation) to support their false teachings. The best Greek and Hebrew scholars have labeled this translation as spurious and a gross misrepresentation of the Bible text.

When faced with a cultist who says, “The doctrine of the Trinity is false!”, most Christians don’t know what to say. What would you say to the Jehovah’s Witness who tells you the word TRINITY is not found in the Bible, and Colossians 1:15 teaches that God the Father created Jesus, proving that Jesus is not God? Or, how would you respond to the Mormon who says there are many gods and many lords because 1 Corinthians 8:5 says so?

It is not enough for a Christian to say, "I believe in the TRINITY." Christians must be able to defend that position from the pages of the Bible. 1 Peter 3:15 states, “...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” Although this verse primarily refers to sharing ones faith, it can also be applied to defending that faith. As the subject of the TRINITY is explored, two main areas will take center stage:

1. Defining the doctrine of the Trinity
2. Defending the doctrine of the Trinity

Let's begin by defining the doctrine of the TRINITY.

**Defining the Doctrine of the Trinity**

So how is the doctrine of the TRINITY defined? Here is a simple definition,

- **There is only one God, but that one God is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

It is not that God changes modes and becomes one person at a time. That is modalism and is not taught in Scripture. Instead, “Trinity” means God is three persons all possessing the same eternal attributes. These three persons are the one God.
But how can this be? How can three be one and one be three? It sounds like a contradiction. That is what cultists say. They say that the trinity is an invention of man and just doesn't make any sense. But does everything in the spiritual realm make perfect sense to us? No it doesn't. When I think of the TRINITY, I often am reminded of Isaiah 55:8,9 which states, "[8] 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. [9] ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'"

The issue is not whether the TRINITY makes sense to our human minds, but whether it is taught in Scripture. It is also not important that the word trinity be used in the Bible to prove its validity. The word grandfather is not used in the Bible but we all believe in grandfathers. In order to answer our question regarding the TRINITY, let's go to the Bible to see exactly what is taught. Let's begin in the Old Testament as we defend the doctrine of the TRINITY.

Defending the Doctrine of the Trinity
Isaiah 43:10,11 states, “[10] ‘You are My witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. [11] I, even I, am the Lord; and there is no savior besides Me.'"

In these two verses God is saying that He is God. There was no God formed before Him and there will be no God formed after Him. He is the one God. There have not been any other Gods in the past, nor will there be any in the future. These verses clearly establish the fact that the Bible teaches there is only ONE GOD. Deuteronomy 6:4 also reiterates that the Lord is one God. But how does this support the concept of the TRINITY? Someone has said that the simplest proof of the TRINITY is to show from Scripture there is only ONE God, but that three persons are called GOD. If there is only ONE God and yet THREE are called GOD, then those three must be the ONE GOD! We call three in one a TRINITY. You can call it a triad or something else but it is still THREE IN ONE.

Let's now see that there are three persons in Scripture referred to as God.
The Father is God
Nearly everyone would agree that God is referred to as our heavenly Father. Luke 11:2 is one example. Here, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, "When you pray say, 'Father, hallowed be Thy name..." Calling God “Father” is not a problem for cultists. The problem arises when Christians say that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also God. It is thus important to see that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are referred to as God in the Bible.

The Son is God
John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This verse clearly says that the Word was God. To find out who the Word is, we look at verse 14 which states, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Who came and dwelt among us? Jesus did. If Jesus is the Word, and the Word is God, then Jesus is God. This is as straightforward as the following math illustration: If A=B and if B=C, then A=C.

In John 14:7-9 Jesus says, "...he who has seen Me has seen the Father..." Here Jesus is claiming equality with the Father. Jesus is not saying that the Father has arms and legs but that in divine qualities, Jesus and the Father are one.

In John 10:30 Jesus also says, "I and the Father are one." He again was claiming equality with God. The Jews knew exactly what He was saying and sought to stone Him. Listen to the following verses (31-33),

"[31] The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. [32] Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?' [33] The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

Others in Scripture refer to Jesus as God and Jesus calls Himself God. If He is not God then He is a liar and so is the author of the book of John. Jesus' claim to be God, eliminates the possibility of Him being a lesser god. We have already seen from Isaiah 43:10,11 that there were no gods created before or after the one true God. Jesus therefore must be the one true God, part of the trinity.
Before moving on to the Holy Spirit, let's see more verses from Scripture that show that Jesus is God.

In Isaiah 9:6 is a prophecy foretelling the coming of Christ. Listen to the names given to Jesus in this passage, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

Many people like to refer to Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of Peace but He is also known as Mighty God and Eternal Father. The passage is clearly stating that Jesus is God and equal with the Father. There is no other way to interpret it without twisting and distorting the clear meaning.

In John 8:58 Jesus made a startling statement. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." He was saying that He existed before Abraham in eternity past. In heaven He had not yet taken on a human body, but He existed, co-equal with the Father and Spirit.

Another support regarding Christ's deity involves CREATION. Genesis 1:1 states "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.", yet John 1:3 states that Jesus created everything: "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." If Jesus were a created being, as some state, then according to this verse He would have had to create Himself. This notion is absurd. It is also interesting to note that the word God (Elohim) in Genesis 1:1 is plural. Many have taken this to refer to the trinity. This is the same as in Genesis 1:26 where God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness."

Colossians 1:16,17 also states that Jesus created all things and that through Him all things hold together,

"[16] For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created by Him and for Him. [17] And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."
If someone is confused about who “He” is in the proceeding verses, all they need to do is look at verse 18 which follows, "He is also head of the body, the church..." Who is the head of the church? Jesus is! Thus, He is the one referred to in all of these verses. The logic here is simple. If God created all things and yet Jesus created all things, then Jesus must be God.

Another support for Christ's deity involves WORSHIP. In Exodus 20:1-5 God directs that only He is to be worshipped, “[1] Then God spoke all these words, saying, [2] ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [3] You shall have no other gods before Me. [4] You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.’"

Notice in verse 5 that God specifically states that no other gods are to be worshipped or served. Yet in Hebrews 1:5,6, angels are directed to worship Christ, "[5] For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee.’? And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me.’? [6] And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him.’”

If no one is to be worshipped but God and yet God the Father directs that the Son is to be worshipped, then the Son must also be God.

In Philippians 2:10,11 God directs all people to worship Jesus, “[10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, [11] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In Revelation 7:9,10 - Jesus is worshipped with God the Father, “[9] After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; [10] and they cry out with a loud voice, saying ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ [11] And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God.”
Notice that verse 17 states, "for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd..." In other words, the Lamb was on the throne. He was part of the Godhead. He was and is God.

Here, again, the logic is simple. If God commands that He alone is to be worshipped, and yet He directs Jesus is to be worshipped, then Jesus must be God.

Another support for Christ's deity is Thomas' response in John 20:27,28. The first time Jesus appeared to His disciples, Thomas was not present. When Thomas was told that Jesus was alive, he refused to believe and commented that he would not believe unless he could see Jesus for himself. Jesus appeared a second time and challenged Thomas, “[27] Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.’ [28] Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’”

Thomas called Jesus God. This was not just an exclamation of surprise. It was a clear recognition on Thomas' part that Jesus must be Lord and God because He had indeed conquered death. If Jesus was not God, this would have been His opportunity to set the record straight and correct Thomas. He did not.

It is clear from the foregoing verses that Jesus is called God. Since there is only one God, Jesus must be God and part of the trinity.

**The Spirit is called God**

In addition to the Father and Son being called God, the Spirit is called God as well. In Isaiah 40:13-18 the Spirit is referred to as God, “[13] Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him? [14] With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding? [15] Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. [16] Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering. [17] All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless. [18] To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?
In Acts 5:1-4 the Spirit is called God, “[1] But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, [2] and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. [3] but Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? [4] while it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.’

Both of these passages clearly show that the Spirit of God is called God. If He is called God then He is God along with the Father and Son.

A summary verse that illustrates the entire trinity is Matthew 28:19 which states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Notice it says in the name, not names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are all one name, singular, not many names, plural. They are three separate persons which make up the one (singular) God.

Besides the biblical evidence, God has placed many trinities in the world around us, perhaps to help us better understand Him.

**Time** - In the time spectrum there is past, present, and future time. In order to understand time, all three must be considered. One melds into the other.

**The Universe** - In the universe we live in a time, space and matter continuum. In order to understand the universe all three must be considered.

**Water** - Water comes in three forms, liquid, solid, and gas. All three are H2O (two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen) and yet all three are different.

**The Egg** - Eggs have a shell, an egg white and a yoke. All three make up the egg and yet all three are quite different.

**Family** - Families are made up of husband, a wife and children. These three make up one family.
Volume - The volume of something is made up of length, width and height. To understand the totality of something, a person must understand all three. All three make up the one object.

Important Verses
In defending the trinity there are a number of verses that are commonly misunderstood. Let's take a look at each one.

Philippians 2:5-8
“[5] Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

This passage talks about Jesus being in the form of God and emptying Himself when He came to earth to become a man. Some cults say, "If Jesus emptied Himself, then He is not God but instead something less." The proper understanding of the concept of "emptying" is, when Jesus left heaven, He laid aside the use of some of His attributes. It is not that He did not possess them, only that by choice, He did not use them. Jesus was the God-Man. He was God in human flesh. Now He is back in heaven with a glorified body and again uses all of His attributes.

Colossians 1:13-17
“[13] For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [15] And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. [16] For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created by Him and for Him. [17] And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

In verse 15 of this passage, Jesus is referred to as the "first-born of all creation". Cults say, "If Jesus was born then He was created. If He was created then He did not always exist and is thus not eternal. Since God is eternal, then Jesus cannot be God." The problem with this reasoning is that the phrase first-born refers to Christ's position in creation (He is first), not that He was created at a certain time. The succeeding verses (16,17) clearly
teach that He was "before all things" and that all things were "created by Him". When someone was called first-born in the Old Testament it primarily referred to their position of special status in a family, not that they were necessarily the child that was born first.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6
“[4] Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and there is no God but one. [5] For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, [6] yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”.

Some cults say, "These verses teach there are many gods and many lords. Jesus then is one of these gods." The problem with this reasoning is that the many "gods and lords," referred to here, are idols. Idols are not Gods (Big "G") but no-gods (Little "g"). The passage clearly teaches there is only ONE GOD.

Psalm 82:6
"I said, "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High."

Some people have wondered about the identity of the gods mentioned in Psalm 82:6. Those referred to as gods in this passage are the elders of Israel, who indeed will die like men (v7). This passage in no way refers to other divine gods, like God. We have already seen that there is only one God. This passage is talking about men who because of there leadership positions are looked up to as gods by the people and who perhaps even see themselves as gods in their pride. But God sees them only as mortals who will die like every other man.

Conclusion
We have clearly shown that there is only one God and yet three are called God. The only possible solution is that these three; Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the one God, and comprise the Trinity. One way to look at the Trinity is:

The FATHER - The invisible fullness of the Godhead in heaven
The SON - The visible fullness of the Godhead on earth
The HOLY SPIRIT - The internal fullness of the Godhead in us
Please pass this information on to a friend and keep a copy handy in case a cult member comes knocking at your door. God bless...