

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST

Message 3: The Holy Trinity

A. What is the Trinity?

What do we mean by the ‘Holy Trinity’?

The adjective ‘triune’ literally means ‘three in one’. It’s used to describe a single entity, the one (and only) God, who consists of (or subsists in) three independent and equal beings, known to us as the ‘Father’, the ‘Son’ and the ‘Holy Spirit’.

This triune diversity of three divine beings within the unity of the God-head is referred to as the ‘Trinity’ - a term coined by the church in the second century B.C.

B. Objections to the Trinity

Some people reject the notion of the Trinity because (as they rightly say) the word itself is nowhere found in the Bible!

I think we can do away with this objection immediately! It's based on the assumption that the Bible was originally written in English. In fact, the Bibles that we read today are translations of the original texts - coming down to us in Hebrew with a little Aramaic (O.T.) and koinē Greek - again with a little Aramaic (NT). And whether our translation is based on 'formal equivalence' (word for word) or 'dynamic equivalence' (thought for thought) both approaches are, at the end of the day, still designed to convey the ideas expressed in the original text.

This being so, it appears perfectly legitimate (and sometimes necessary) to coin expressions in one language that will conveniently convey (and encapsulate) concepts implied in the other. Hence we use words such as 'rapture' 'hypostatic union' and, in this case: 'Trinity'.

Be that as it may, some reject the concept of the Trinity because, in their view, it implies the existence of more than one God.

For example, in the third century, a theologian by the name of Sabellius taught

that there was only a single, divine being (God) who simply manifested Himself in three 'modes': Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the fourth century, an infamous heretic, Arius, maintained that God consisted of one internal person and that the Son and Holy Spirit were created by Him. This belief was dismissed as heresy by the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. There, the equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was asserted and confirmed in what became known as the 'Nicene Creed'.

There is another heresy known as 'Partialism' which teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each form only part (i.e one third) of the Godhead and that together, they form one God.

So can we conclude with certainty what the Bible has to say on this matter? Are we able to confidently 'give an answer' when confronted with objections to this most important doctrine?

C. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

Let's begin our exploration with the proposition that we can all agree on: the Bible teaches us that there is only one God! Biblically, that's beyond any doubt. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He said to them:

Deuteronomy 4:35; “You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other.” (see also **Zechariah 14:9**).

The prophecies of Isaiah contain several similar assertions made by Yahweh to His people:

Isaiah 43:10 “.....Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

Isaiah 44:6 “This is what the Lord says--- Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” (See also **Deuteronomy 6:4**).

And when we come to the New Testament writings, the testimony is just as clear:

1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God and one

mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.”

D. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE TRINITY

So it's clear, according to the Scriptures, that there is only one God. But the Bible also gives strong evidence that, while there is no plurality of gods, there is a plurality within the ‘God-head’: viz. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As we read on, we'll find that each of these ‘members’ of the Godhead is a complete and perfect personality. Accordingly, all three are usually spoken of as ‘personalities’, ‘persons’ or ‘beings’.

Yet all three are equally the one ‘God’ as they exist in perfect unity on every level. While separate in existence and action, they are of the same ‘substance’ or ‘essence’ - sharing the same uncreated, divine nature.

As such, they share the same essential attributes of deity: omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. They are absolutely equal in love, grace, holiness, righteousness, immutability and eternity of being. They are, all three, equally deserving of worship, honour, praise and glory. Each is involved in creation and redemption and each one is supreme in heaven and on earth.

But if the word 'Trinity' itself doesn't occur in Scripture, where do we find Biblical evidence of its actual existence?

E. THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The Genesis accounts

It was at first generally recognised throughout the ancient world that there was only one supreme being and He was then known by many names ('Amun re', 'Nammu', 'Ouranos' etc.). As time went by, and man increasingly descended into sin, a plethora of 'gods' were added - usually connected in a 'family' relationship with the original deity. So monotheism degenerated into polytheism

(even pantheism and animism) and pantheons ('all gods') became the norm.

To the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean (including the Hebrews), the ancient Semitic word for 'God' was 'El'. It's a singular noun denoting the one God. But as the Caananites turned away from the one, true God, they adopted polytheism (worship of many 'gods') and even gave El a wife called 'Asherah'. Unfortunately, many Israelites were seduced into the worship of Asherah (as evidenced by the references to 'Asherah poles' - often stylised trees) in the Old Testament. In Caananite mythology, El and Asherah then gave birth to 70 children (including Mot, Baal and others) - thus forming the Caananite pantheon.

Now, as we've said, 'El' is a singular noun - the name of the one, true God. But when we open our Bibles and read the very first verse, we find something very surprising:

“In the beginning God ['Elohim'] created ['baran'] the heavens and the earth.”
(Genesis 1:1).

Now 'Elohim' is the plural form of the word 'El' so we would normally translate it as 'gods'. But then the verb ('baran') is singular - indicating that only one being was responsible for the work of creation (as we saw in our first message on the deity of Christ). Accordingly, we can dismiss any idea of three 'gods' working together as one. In any case, the *verb* 'created' would then have been in the plural form.

So when God is presented to us as Creator, we're introduced to a concept that proves to be one of the most profound in Scripture: the notion that within a single unity ('El'), there co-exists a plurality of beings who together comprise just the one God ('Elohim').

Jewish Rabbis have had trouble with this verse (and others). They haven't dared to alter the wording (the Jews are fastidious in making sure that Scripture remains unchanged) and so most have claimed that God was simply using an 'honorific' title (i.e. the royal 'we').

But if so, then God consistently uses the royal 'we' (Elohim) more than 2500 times throughout the Hebrew Scriptures - most of them in reference to Himself. We'll find, however, that this 'honorific' interpretation of 'Elohim' becomes harder to sustain as we move through further verses in the O.T.

Another example of the plural subject linked to a singular verb is found in [Genesis 1:26](#) when God was planning to create mankind:

“Then God (plural subject) said, “Let us make (na’aseh - singular verb) mankind in our image, in our likeness.....”.

A similar problem to that arising in the very first verse of the Bible! Some have even suggested that God may have been including the angels when He said 'us' but this is unlikely as angels cannot create ([John 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:16](#)) and in any case, this would exacerbate the problem of the singular verb.

Now this verse does beg the question: how exactly was man made in God's image? Many answers have been proposed (and many of

them quite reasonably so) but I'd like to suggest one that's often overlooked - one which seems to confirm the concept of the 'Trinity'.

If we turn to **Genesis 5:1-2**, we read these words: **"....When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. [2] He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them "Mankind" when they were created."**

Translations, with the best will in the world, can sometimes be misleading - and in this case, the rendering obscures a wonderful truth. It's a truth that echoes throughout Scripture. This verse isn't talking about the creation of 'mankind' per se, but of one man! Let's read what verse 2 says in the Hebrew text:

זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בְּרָאָם. וַיְבָרַךְ. אֹתָם.

Male and female created blessed. -----

וַיִּקְרָא. אֶת־ שְׁמֵם אָדָם.

and called. ---- their name. Man (Adam)

בְּיוֹם. הַבְּרָאָם:

the day. were created

Do you see the significance? In the image of God, the two separate beings (Adam and Eve) were one flesh in their essence (Eve was taken out of man) and though two separate beings, they together formed just one whole man ('Adam'). As the Scripture says:

“.....a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

In His creation of the universe, God represents Himself as a plurality of beings who form a whole (the Godhead) and it appears that He reflected this reality in the creation of man who was to represent Him on the earth.

References to the notion of plurality within the Godhead continue in Genesis where it appears that there is a discussion within the Godhead itself. When man sinned in the garden, God said this:

“The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.....” (Genesis 3:22).

Again , upon man's attempt to build the Tower of Babel, God said:

“Come, let us (mimmennu - implied plural) go down (nerdah [pl]) and confuse (novlah [pl]) their language so they will not understand each other.” (Genesis 11:7)

The plural forms are unambiguous. So it does appear that God is one being speaking to (or about) someone else other than himself.

Nevertheless, we have to concede that these references are not conclusive. The actual meaning behind these early Hebraic expressions has been the subject of some dispute among theologians - particularly during the last century. For example, as we've said before, some believe that God may be using the 'royal we' while others claim that He is addressing angels in the heavenly assembly (referred to in [Psalm 89:5-7](#); [Isaiah 41:21-23](#); [Daniel 7:9-10](#) etc (cf [Psalm 82](#))).

So while many of us believe that the Father is indeed speaking to the other members of the Trinity, we need to go further in the

Scriptures to confirm our belief in the divine plurality within the God-head. If we can do so, this will in turn lend weight to our interpretation of these early references in Genesis.

2. Isaiah's vision

There's an intriguing passage in [Isaiah 6](#) which tells us even more. It appears to indicate that there are not just two, but three beings in the Godhead.

Isaiah has just seen a vision of God seated upon His throne. We later find that the one he saw was Jesus himself - seated there in his majesty and glory ([John 12:41](#)). At the sight of the Lord's holiness, the prophet bemoans his own sinfulness and those of the people. As he does so, a seraph touches his mouth with a live coal and pronounces the following:

“See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” ([Isaiah 6:7](#))

But how was this forgiveness and atonement to be accomplished? Who would carry out the work of salvation? And so, from the throne, the Lord asks the question:

“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

The Lord appears to be asking this question on behalf of Himself (**Whom shall I send?**) and at least one other person (**who will go for us?**). And the answer comes immediately - apparently from a third being:

“And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”” (Isaiah 6:8)

In the context, of course, Isaiah is the third being who volunteers to go to the people. However, when we turn to the book of **Hebrews**, we discover that what the prophet saw was a vision of something that took place in eternity. In fact, Isaiah’s response to the call, represented that of Christ himself!

Hebrews 10:7 “Then I said, 'Here I am---it is written about me in the scroll---I have come to do your will, my God.'”

Christ reaffirmed this response shortly after he began his earthly ministry:

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”
(John 6:38)

It now seems reasonable to assume that the Father deliberated with the Holy Spirit and the Son (represented by Isaiah) then volunteered to accomplish the proposed work of Salvation. It's even possible that the method of accomplishing this was settled upon at that 'time' (so to speak): Christ would have to become a human being (therefore fittingly represented by Isaiah) in order to make atonement possible (**Hebrews 2:9,14**).

This necessary preparation (deity taking on humanity) is referred to in **Hebrews 10:5**

“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;”

Having become fully human, the second member of the Godhead offered up that body of flesh in a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins - so achieving the atonement announced by the seraph. And in that atoning death, he perfectly accomplished the Father’s will:

“..by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10)

We were actually given further advance notice of God’s plan, as later on in the book of Isaiah, Christ (in prophecy) echoes this commissioning scene which took place in heaven:

“Come near me and listen to this: “From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there.” And now the Sovereign Lord has sent me, endowed with his Spirit.” (Isaiah 48:16)

Notice here that three divine persons are said to be involved in Christ's incarnation! The Sovereign Lord (the Father) sent the Son, who was endowed with the Spirit. The Spirit was instrumental in Christ's birth ([Luke 1:35](#)) descended upon him at his baptism ([Matthew 3:16-17](#)) filled him during the years of his ministry ([Luke 4:1](#)) and enabled the man, Christ Jesus, to undergo that propitiatory sacrifice at Calvary ([Hebrews 9:14](#)).

Before we leave Isaiah's vision, notice the cherubs' description of the Almighty:

[Isaiah 6:3](#) "...they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy , holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

For this reason we sometimes refer to God as 'thrice holy', Surely it's because the quality of holiness is ascribed, in turn, to each member of the triune Godhead!

Before we move on, let's be clear about Christ's title as the 'Son'. It doesn't refer to him being born! The first two messages of our

series: 'The Deity of Christ', have shown clearly that Christ was eternally pre-existent. In fact, nowhere in Scripture is he referred to as a 'child' of God - only as the 'Son'. The difference is crucial and best demonstrated in that we'll-known passage from Isaiah:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.”
(Isaiah 9:6)

The birth in Bethlehem produced a 'child' - perfectly human in all respects (apart from the question of sin [[Hebrews 4:15](#)]). There also in Bethlehem was 'given' a 'Son' - divine in all respects and having come down to earth from heaven as a 'gift' from the Father ([John 3:16](#)). A child 'born' (Christ's humanity) and a son 'given' (Christ's Deity) - both natures co-existent in perfect harmony within the one personality.

The title of 'Son' actually denotes a status within the divine 'family' that constitutes the Trinity (as we'll see in the next message: 'Christ: the Son of God'). Mary was the progenitor of the man, Jesus, but she was merely the blessed channel for God the Son,

who united within Himself a human nature and his pre-existing divine being.

3. The Trinity in Psalms and Proverbs

(i) The Father and the Son

The fact of a pre-incarnate, eternal Son existing within a Trinity, is alluded to in the following verse from the Psalms:

Psalm 2:12 “Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

The phraseology of this verse demands that it be a reference to God Himself - and that God is here recognised as the ‘Son’.

An indication of (at very least) a duality of the ‘Father’ and the ‘Son’ in the Godhead is found in a fascinating series of questions posed in the book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 30:3-4 “I have not learned wisdom, nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One. [4] Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is the name of his son? Surely you know!”

(ii) Son and Holy Spirit

And finally there’s a verse that clearly points to the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit:

Psalm 2:6-7 “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain. ” [7] I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father.”

As **Hebrews 5:5** makes clear, this verse is a reference to Jesus Christ himself. Yet in the first message of this series we saw that Christ is uncreated, pre-dates all creation and is therefore eternal. That being the case, this verse must necessarily be a prophetic reference to his birth as a human being in

Bethlehem. This is made clear by the use of the word: 'today' which is irrelevant in the context of eternity and therefore must indicate that a point in our time-stream marked the occasion in question.

If this is so, then it becomes equally evident that the 'Lord' referred to here, must be the third person of the Trinity - the Holy Spirit - as He was the one instrumental in begetting the child and in that sense, was his father.

Luke 1:35 "The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Yet Christ never refers to the Spirit as his 'father' - but uses the term always in reference to the first person of the Trinity (the 'Father'). This adds further weight to our understanding that the terms 'Father' and 'Son', when applied to the Godhead, have nothing to do with propagation. Instead they appear to be describing a particular status and role within the Godhead itself.

And so we have the whole of the Trinity involved in Christ's incarnation. The Father sent the Son (the eternal Son) and the Holy Spirit brought about the birth of the human child in Mary's womb (as the 'son of man').

F. THE TRINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This concept of the Godhead as consisting of plurality within unity is brought out clearly in many places in the New Testament.

1. Unity in the Godhead

A striking reference to an undivided unity within the Godhead is found in the so-called 'great commission' in Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Notice the word 'name' is singular (not 'names'). One God - one name! Yet three beings are included in that name! Three

beings who have each been separately addressed as 'Lord' in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the three persons of the Godhead are several times seen as co-existing within this unity. The book of **Ephesians** contains several references that indicate the association between the three:

Ephesians 2:22 “And in him (the Son) you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God (the Father) lives by his Spirit (the Holy Spirit).”

Ephesians 4:4,6 “There is one body (Christ) and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called ; [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 5:18-20 “...be filled with the Spirit, Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, [20] always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In fact, so much are the three persons of the Trinity 'one' in essence, that they are pictured as dwelling within one another.

(i) The Father and the Spirit in the Son

Colossians 2:9 “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”

(ii) The Son in the Father

John 14:10 (a) “Don't you believe that I am in the Father...”

(iii) The Father in the Son

John 14:10 (b) “...and the Father is in me...The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”

(iv) The Spirit in the Son

Luke 4:1 “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,”

Here's one of the Divine mysteries: three in one means that while each member of the Godhead has individual experiences, each at the same time shares that experience! We'll discuss this further in a moment.

2. Plurality in the Godhead

So there is unity of essence and existence in the Godhead - but also distinction in personality and function. Remember what happened after the Lord's baptism? Matthew describes the scene:

Matthew 3:16-17 “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. [17] And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Not only is each divine member a distinct personality, but each has an individual relationship with the other two:

The Father initiates, the Son responsively obeys and the Spirit brings everything about by His working within. We've seen all this play out in the matter of Christ's incarnation.

Subordination is also a feature of the relationship within the Trinity, This has nothing to do with inferiority: there is absolute equality between the three beings. Instead, it's a willing subordination engendered by perfect love and selflessness. As the Father wills, the Son delights to obey - as we saw in [Isaiah Chpt 6](#) (see also [John 4:34](#); [6:38](#); [8:29](#)) - and the Holy Spirit brings everything about by His in-dwelling power ([Ephesians 2:18](#)).

Again, as the Father sent the Son, so did the Father and the Son, in their turn, send the Holy Spirit ([John 14:15-16,26](#)). Further to this, we find that when the Son was on the earth, he didn't seek his own honour but sought only to glorify the Father in heaven ([John 17:4](#)). Similarly, now that the Spirit is on the earth, He seeks only to glorify the Son who is himself now in heaven ([John 16:14](#)).

The whole of the Godhead is also involved in bringing about both our salvation. and our 'adoption' to sonship in God's family:

G. The Godhead in our salvation

The action of the three divine beings in the realisation of our salvation - each playing a different but complementary role - is made apparent in **1 Peter 1:1-2**:

"Peter.....To God's electwho have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood,....."

Chosen by the Father, we're sanctified (set apart) for the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:8**) which leads to the obedience of faith and cleansing by the blood of Christ, Here the term 'sprinkling' was appropriate for these Jewish believers: it would have been an instant reminder of the blood of the Covenant sprinkled on the altar and on the people by Moses (**Exodus 24:6,8**).

H. The Godhead in our Sonship

The three beings in the triune Godhead also work together in bringing about our 'adoption' ('son-placing' - 'huiiothēsia') in the family of God. The role played by each, is detailed for us in the first chapter of Ephesians:

1. The Father chooses

As we have seen, the Father sent the Son. It's the Father who plans ([Ephesians 1:19,17](#)) and His design through the ages has always been to unite a redeemed creation under the headship of the Son ([Ephesians 1:10](#)). It has always been His intention to honour the son - to the extent that He purposed to bring to glory a race of beings recreated in the image of His beloved. ([Hebrews 2:10](#)).

To that end, the Father chose us to be in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world so that we might be fit to be sons in His family - heirs and co-heirs with Christ ([Romans 8:17](#))

Ephesians 1:4-5 “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Because in love he had predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will”

2. The Son redeems

The Father’s choice for our Sonship was then made possible by the redemptive work of Christ:

Ephesians 1:7 “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.”

This link between redemption and Sonship is further affirmed in the epistle to the Galatians:

Galatians 4:4-6 “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman,

born under the law, [5] to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

And in that redeeming work on Calvary, all three persons of the Godhead were involved.

Hebrews 9:14 ...Christ,.....through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God”

3. The Spirit seals

Chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son (as the man, Christ Jesus), we were then indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit who provided us with the ‘spirit of sonship’.

Ephesians 1:13-14 “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession---to the praise of his glory.”

So it's the indwelling Spirit who Himself provides us with a foretaste of the coming glories of full sonship (**Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6**). For this reason He is described as the “**Spirit of promise**” (literal rendering - see K.J.V.), a “**deposit guaranteeing our inheritance**” and, as in **Romans 8:23**, the “**firstfruits**” of what is to come.

Notice, too, how the three persons of the Trinity are associated in various orders as they operate on behalf of the believer:

Galatians 4:6 “**Because you are his sons, God (the Father) sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba , Father.’”**

Ephesians 2:18 “**For through him (the Son) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”**

Ephesians 3:16-17 “**I pray that out of his glorious riches he (the Father) may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ (the Son) may dwell in your hearts through faith...”**

I. The Godhead in our prayer-life

Even in the prayer-life of the believer, the whole of the God head is involved. A certain formula is suggested in Scripture (although I would by no means dogmatise on this).

(i) We pray to the Father

It would seem that we customarily pray to the Father. As the titular head of the family, and the planner and initiator, it's fitting that, as His sons, we bring our prayers and requests to Him. Jesus prayed to the Father and he is our example - see also [Matthew 6:9](#)

(ii) We pray in the name of the Son ([John 14:13-14, 16:23](#))

It is with the authority of Christ himself that we can come into the presence of the Father. Our authority and fitness to access the presence of God is made possible because of Christ's sacrificial work (we enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus - [Hebrews 10:19](#)) and his

continuing work as our representative High Priest ([Hebrews 7:24-25](#), [9:34](#); [Romans 8:34](#)).

(iii) We pray through the Holy Spirit

It's the Spirit himself who takes our prayers and praises - presenting them to the Father. In doing so, He also - together with the Son - intercedes for us before the throne ([Romans 8:26](#))

This then, I believe, is the order in which our prayers are shaped and should be so directed. But many people do ask the question: 'Can we direct our prayer to any one of the three in the Trinity?'

I would imagine so. While the three distinctions above are predicated on the differing roles in the Godhead - and are therefore suggested in the Scriptures - the essential unity within the Trinity would lead to the conclusion that praying to any one member of the Godhead would effectively be to pray to all three (i.e. to 'God'). But just remember one thing: in respect of honour and glory, the Holy Spirit is here to direct our

praise and worship towards the Son (see previous message: 'The Spirit and the Bride').

J. The Mystery of the Godhead

Yet, as mere human beings, even though enlightened by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 1:17), we must admit that we have scarcely begun to even glimpse the depth and complexity of the Trinity. As the Scripture says: "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? [8] They are higher than the heavens above---what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below---what can you know?" (Job 11:7-8)

An ant is a creature that lives in a two-dimensional world. Suppose the ant comes across a 3-dimensional pyramid. It can crawl up one side of that pyramid and can relate to its surroundings because, though sloping upward, that side, for the ant, is in itself two-dimensional. The ant can cross over to the second side - with exactly the same result.

But what the ant cannot do, is to stand back and recognise each side as actually forming a part of one structure - a structure that's unknowable and unrecognisable to the ant because it's in a different dimension!

It's a feeble illustration but there's some truth to it! If more than five dimensions exist, then God is not only in a higher dimension to us, but could, in fact, be said to be above all dimensions! We can appreciate (but dimly) each separate 'side' but the nature of God's being - three forming one entity - is something we have to accept by faith.

I have found the concept of the Russian nesting (Babushka) doll very useful as an illustration (for me at least) when discussing the Trinity. I'm sure you're all familiar with it. The outer doll has a smaller doll within it and that doll has another doll within it and so on..... And what is noteworthy is that each doll is identical to the one that contains it (although smaller, of course).

Again I stress - this is a faint (and imperfect) analogy but it helps me. I trust that you will

also find it useful. We can't comprehend the incomprehensible but we can appreciate some of its features.

So what do I find useful in this case?

Well - firstly imagine a nesting doll which contains two other dolls.

(i) The Trinity - plurality in unity

a. Each of the Babushka dolls is contained within the other

We've seen this already. The Spirit was in the Son and the Son is in the Father.

b. Each of the dolls is identical to the other two

Take a babushka doll apart and you'll find each doll is identical (though successively smaller in our physical analogy)!

Likewise, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are essentially identical in respect of power, honour, glory, character, will, love and,

indeed, all the characteristics we associate with Deity. As Jesus said:

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

c. No action taken by any one of the Babushka dolls is truly independent.

If I lift up a babushka doll, all three dolls are lifted up by virtue of there being only one nesting doll - and so on. Whatever happens to one of the babushka dolls happens to all three as they are contained within one another.

A perfect example of this is seen when we consider the Trinity in operation on the earth. As we've discussed already, the Holy Spirit filled Jesus during his ministry on earth (**Luke 4:1**) and it was the Father within him who was, according to the Lord, actually doing the work (**John 14:10**).

d. Yet each of the three dolls is an independent entity

I can unscrew the top of the Babushka doll and take out the other two. Each is an independent entity and I could therefore simultaneously place each one in a different situation to serve a specific purpose. But even then, none of them would ever be anything else but an essential member of the original Babushka doll. Any separation would be in terms of role and purpose - never of identity or essence.

So 'Partialism' has no place in our understanding of the Godhead. Each person in the Trinity is completely and authentically God - yet there is only one God! In this, our faith can confidently rest.

K. The Trinity and the Church

If I'm an artist, my paintings will reveal the extent of my talent, the object(s) of my interest, aspects of my temperament and often, the depths of my soul. The same can be said of a composer's musical work.

It is no different with the true Creator-God! The heavens declare His glory (**Psalm 19:1**)

and we're told, in the first chapter of **Romans**, that the material creation reveals God's eternal power and glory (**Romans 1:19-21**).

(i) The old creation: a reflection of the Trinity

We see God's power and glory in creation but we've seen that in His creation of man, His image has been reflected in another way. In the joining of man and woman into one flesh, we have a faint echo of the triune nature of the indivisible Godhead.

If this is the case, and if Christ is the firstborn of the new creation (as he was of the old), then we would expect to see exactly the same in the new creation - the church.

(ii) The new creation: a reflection of the Trinity

And we do! The new creation is the spiritual counterpart of the old. It, too, exists for God's glory (**Ephesians 2:10, 3:10**); in this case, the glory of His grace (**Ephesians 1:6**). It similarly demonstrates the reality of the Trinity by the union of the last Adam (**1 Corinthians 15:45-**

47) with his heavenly Eve to form one body in Christ - one new man:

Ephesians 5:31-32 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” [32] This is a profound mystery---but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

The church, one with Christ, is a body that also, within itself, reflects the diversity in unity that we find in the Godhead. We know this because Christ himself, in praying for believers, said this: “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.”(John 17:21)

Several times in the New Testament, this unity (in diversity) is underscored:

1 Corinthians 10:17: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf” (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:4-6).

And as with the Trinity, the plurality of members in this body is also emphasised:

Romans 12:4-5 “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, [5] so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (See also **1 Corinthians 12:13**).

The fact that “**each member belongs to all the others.**” has a particular significance in the Scriptures. We’ve seen (in our Babushka doll analogy) that what affects one member of the Godhead, affects all three. Similarly, in the New Testament body analogy, the same principle applies.

For example, Christ is the head of this one body and so what affects us affects him. Remember his words to Saul on the road to Damascus:

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ...I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” (**Acts 9:4-5**)

In the same way, what affects one part of the body must necessarily affect every other member in the body.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. [27] Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

So let's remember to care for one another, support one another and pray for one another. The verse above doesn't say every part 'should suffer' or 'should rejoice' with the affected part. It will do so - inevitably (perhaps on a level we don't understand). Certainly we know that if one member of the body is spiritually cold, then the overall temperature of the body goes down!

So to care for one another is tantamount to caring for oneself. To pray for one another is to pray for oneself and so on. Here, the analogy of the one body created by the union of the husband and the wife, is most appropriate:

Ephesians 5:28-30 “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves

himself. [29] After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church--- [30] for we are members of his body.”

Unity in diversity is precious to God as it both reflects the nature of His being and is only made possible among men by the tremendous self-sacrificial work of Christ on the cross. It's therefore a testament to who God is and what He has accomplished. So let's make sure that we are also united in thought, word and deed.

Ephesians 4:2-4 “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. [3] Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called ; [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism; [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

May God bless His Word to each one of us
Amen