

Christian Basics

CHAPTER SIX

The Trinity

Here is why this Chapter is important

- We must understand the biblical revelation about the nature of God
- We must understand ways of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity
- We must understand the history of the arguments that support the teaching of the Trinity

God is utterly transcendent. He is infinitely beyond our comprehension. The fact of his transcendence does not mean that we can know nothing about him. We will never know ALL that there is to know about God, but we can know some things about him. First of all, the Bible clearly states that we can know about God by looking at his creation.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20 (NIV)

Besides creation, we can also know God through our conscience.

14 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. Romans 2:14-15 (NIV)

These two ways of knowing God have often been termed “general revelation.” There is the revelation of nature and the revelation of conscience. Everyone is able to know something about God in these two ways. However, there still remains the need for more information. The revelation in nature and our conscience leaves many questions about the nature of God unanswered. God has helped with this by giving us his own revelation of himself. This is called “special revelation.” This special revelation is Scripture – the Bible. Without the special revelation of Scripture there can be much confusion about the nature of God. God has graciously condescended to make himself known through his Word.

The biblical revelation of God is that he is “triune.” God is three in unity. The term triune means that God is one being, existing in three distinct co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are not saying that God is three beings AND one being. To say this would be logical contradiction. God is one being and three persons. We are not saying that God is three persons AND one person. Again, that would be a contradiction. God is three persons and one being. Another way to state this is to say that God is one “what” (nature and essence) and three “who’s” (persons). There is absolute distinction between persons (who) and absolute unity in the one being (what). Each person in the Godhead is not 1/3 God, but each is 100% God – unity in nature, plurality in person: triune (the Trinity).

God may be a mystery to our minds, but knowledge of him is not irrational. God may be completely beyond us, but not completely unknowable. God is transcendent, but he has made himself known. In this chapter I hope to make clear the important biblical revelation of the nature of God.

ABSTRACT ALERT

At this early stage in our discussion I feel it is necessary to caution people not to abandon the study of the nature of God. We must not fall into the temptation of discounting the importance of this topic due to its difficulty. While it may seem abstract and theoretical (and therefore a waste of time) it is actually bedrock, biblical truth. The more we wrestle with the biblical revelation of the essence and nature of God, the deeper our relationship with God will grow.

We will also find that most of the dangerous religious cults have had their beginning by holding to a wrong view of the nature of God. This should prove that it is not merely some abstract theory, but deals with concrete reality that has the potential to affect the lives of everyone. This is an ALERT to encourage everyone to take the time and effort to understand the correct biblical revelation of the nature of God.

Section one
THREE PLATFORMS

It is important to know that we are not dealing with a philosophy in our attempts to explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This is not something some sect of Christianity has made up. It is not exclusive to any one Christian denomination. The doctrine of the Trinity belongs to all of Christianity for the simple and basic reason that it is revealed in Scripture. It is part of the “special revelation” of God through his Word. We would not know the nature of God as triune without the revelation contained in the Bible. There are three platforms that form the foundation for the revelation of the Trinity: monotheism, three persons and equality.

Monotheism

The Bible clearly makes the declaration that there is only one God.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV)

This is the famous Hebrew “Shema” which means, “Listen!” or “Hear!” It forms the most basic instructional unit pertaining to the knowledge of the nature of God. Jesus affirmed this fact when he was asked about the most important commandment of all.

“The most important one” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” Mark 12:29 (NIV)

This is the most important commandment because it serves as the basis for true worship. The Ten Commandments begin with this same emphasis.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3 (NIV)

Mono (one) theism (God) is the foundational doctrine of the Trinity and it forms the first platform in the biblical revelation of the Trinity. Monotheism is unmistakably affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments.

Three persons

There are, within the one being (God), three distinct persons. Let’s start with the Old Testament. As we read we begin to see that the holy nature that belongs to God alone was also indirectly ascribed to the Spirit of God. In creation we read that “...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). We find in Scripture that God repeatedly sent the Holy Spirit to empower and enable his servants. We know that the Spirit of the LORD came upon King David in power, but the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:13-14). David would later pray, “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11). The prophet Isaiah recounted the incidences of God’s love toward Israel “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isaiah 63:10). In the last days God has promised to “pour out my Spirit on all people” (Joel 2:28).

Besides the evidence of the Spirit of God there is also indication that there was a specially anointed servant (Messiah) who was to come. He has been given divine names and attributes, yet he seemed to be distinct in identity from God himself. There are many references that can be cited. I will list just a few.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Almighty God will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

[The LORD] says, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. Isaiah 49:6 (NIV)

13 *“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all people, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*
Daniel 7:13-14 (NIV)

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.” Micah 5:2 (NIV)

It is clear from the Old Testament that the Spirit of God and the ruler to come (the Messiah) were given the prerogatives and names of God. While this may not be all too explicit in the Old Testament, I hope you can see that the stage was set for a fuller revelation in the New Testament.

In the New Testament we have a very clear revelation that uncovers what was alluded to in the Old Testament. The New Testament confirms that there are three distinct persons (yet one being) with all the features that would allow for personhood.

There are three instances recorded in the New Testament where one or more of the persons of the Trinity can be seen active at the same time and in the same location.

At the baptism of Jesus all three persons of the Godhead were represented.

16 *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 lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*
Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV)

There were two other times where the Father could be heard audibly speaking from heaven in the presence of Jesus and other witnesses. Once was at the transfiguration of Jesus: “While [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him’” (Matthew 17:5). The other time was when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus prayed: “Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (John 12:28). We can also read of Jesus praying to the Father. Jesus spoke of returning to his Father and of sitting at his Father’s right hand in heaven.

It is interesting that Jesus used the Old Testament law (Deut. 17:6) that two separate witnesses are needed to validate a claim. This could only be possible if God the Son and God the Father were two separate persons.

In your own law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me. John 8:17-18 (NIV)

A great unifying declaration can also be seen as Jesus gave the Great Commission: “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” (Matthew 28:19). Notice that all three persons of the Godhead are under the one name (authority) that makes up the fullness of the Godhead.

These examples should make it clear that the true biblical revelation of the nature of God is that he exists in three distinct persons (who’s), yet in one unified being (what).

Equality

The equality of the three persons within the one Godhead simply means that each member has full deity. The deity of the Father should be self-explanatory. The deity of the Son was covered in the chapter on Jesus Christ. There should be no question that the Bible clearly teaches the full deity of Christ. Let’s take a look at the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit is a person.

The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” It may be difficult to think of a being without a body as being a person. God is spirit, but he has personhood. Angels are spirits, but they have personhood. When our loved ones die they no longer have a body, but they still have personhood. The Holy Spirit exhibits all the characteristics of personhood. He has intelligence: he knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:11). He has emotion: he can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). He has a will: he directed the activities of the church (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 16:6). The Holy Spirit prays for us, directs us and teaches us still today (Romans 8:26; 1 John 2:27).

The Holy Spirit is not a blind force that can be manipulated by someone alleging to have some great spiritual power. This is because the Holy Spirit is a person, not mindless force to be manipulated. People who make the error of relating to the Holy Spirit as some kind of mindless spiritual force are not conveying the truth behind the nature and character of the third person of the Trinity.

We can learn two important lessons from understanding the true nature of the Holy Spirit. First, we should not allow ourselves to be misled by people who treat the Holy Spirit of God as a force that they have somehow tamed. Who tames God? God is sovereign and so is the Holy Spirit. The second lesson is that God’s will and the will of the Holy Spirit are inseparable. Nothing is going to occur by the power of the Holy Spirit that is not in line with God’s will. We can trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring God’s will into our lives without thinking that we have been given over to some ethereal, non-personal force.

2. The deity of the Holy Spirit

Besides having personhood, the Holy Spirit also has the attributes of God as well. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7) and HOLY. The Holy Spirit was involved in creation itself (Genesis 1:2). When Peter was berating Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit he said, “You have not lied to men, but to God” (Acts 5:4). Things are said about the Holy Spirit that can only be said of God.

The fact that the Holy Spirit plays a role that seems to be quietly behind the scenes by no means indicates that he is in any way less than God. Jesus took on an additional nature at his incarnation that allowed him to play a role vastly different than either the Father or the Spirit, yet Jesus

remained fully God. The Holy Spirit will forever share the name of God as Jesus revealed to us in the giving of the Great Commission: “baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

TIME OUT

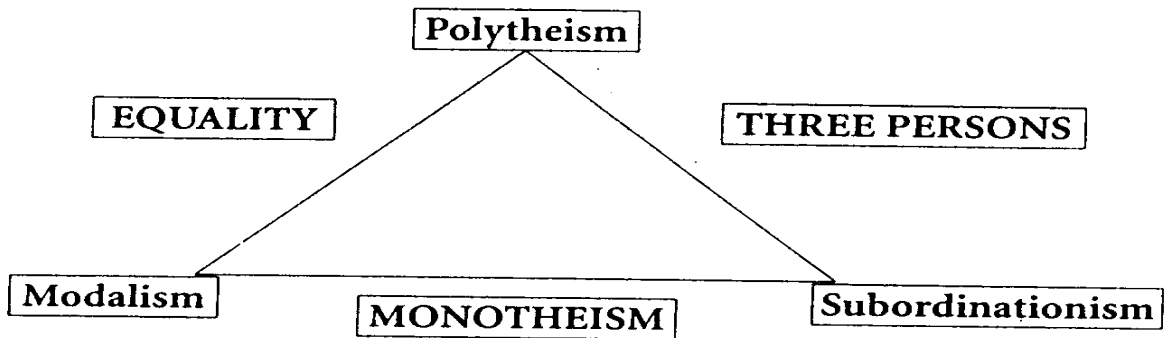
The diagram below highlights the three platforms upon which the biblical revelation of the Trinity rests:

The base of the triangle represents the foundational truth that there is but one God. This foundation is **MONOTHEISM**. Monotheism eliminates polytheism.

The right side of the triangle represents the distinct nature of the each member of the Trinity. The triune God exists in **THREE PERSONS**. This eliminates modalism. Modalism is the belief that God has, at selected times in history, taken on different modes of existence – one time he was the Father and at another time he was the Son and at another time he was the Spirit.

The left side of the triangle represents the fact that all three persons in the Godhead are co-equal. It would follow that each would possess a divine nature. All three persons the Trinity share **EQUALITY**. This eliminates the idea that one might be lesser in nature than the other and, therefore, subordinate.

Please study this diagram and review the discussion of the three platforms that make up the biblical teaching on the Trinity. Review this diagram continually until what it represents becomes clear to you. (Borrowed from the book by James White)¹



¹ James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 30.

Section Two
THREE PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION

It seems whenever the discussion turns toward the Trinity communication becomes difficult. Many times it is hard to get beyond the misconceptions that people have regarding the Trinity. The conversation often ends up going in circles rather than zeroing in on the truth. Three common problems are: misunderstanding, analogy breakdown and the fact people might be uncomfortable with mystery.

1. Misunderstanding

I have had many conversations with people who think that those who believe in the Trinity believe in three gods. We must take the time to stop the dialogue and to make sure that they know that this is NOT what we mean by the Trinity. The Bible explicitly teaches that there is only one God. Remember that the first platform in presenting the Trinity is monotheism. We must always remember that monotheism is the most basic concept of the nature of God. Keep this truth firmly in place and go back to the foundation of monotheism as often as you need to in your discussion before you move on to another point. The Bible clearly teaches that there is a Trinity, but that God is one.

Another problem often encountered is that the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. This is fact is often used to negate the teaching regarding the Trinity. We must subject ourselves to the revelation of the Bible. It would be an error to reject the plain teaching of Scripture for the lack of one word. The concept of the Trinity is clearly revealed in the Bible. We use the word “Trinity” to represent the concept. If we do away with the word, it would not do away with the biblical truth surrounding the use of that word. I’m sure we could find many examples of teachings found in the Bible that have later been codified by the use of an appropriate theological word. If you want to get technical, you could say the word “bible” is not in the Bible. The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, yet we do indeed have the concept.

There is also the misunderstanding that since the Holy Spirit seems to have a less prominent role that it must follow somehow that he is not worthy of equal status with God. This would be an error in logic. Because one or the other members of the Godhead happen to assume different roles does not constitute inferiority. It could be said that the Father planned our salvation: he sent his Son. It could also be said that the Son accomplished our salvation: he died on the cross. It could be said that the Holy Spirit then applies it: he works in us so we can be born again. We should not let what would appear to us as different roles taken by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to cause any one of them to lose full divine status. A deeper look into Scripture will show that their roles often overlap and that they also share the divine titles.

	<u>FATHER</u>	<u>SON</u>	<u>HOLY SPIRIT</u>
<u>God</u>	1 Peter 1:2	Romans 9:5	Acts 5:3-4
<u>Omnipresent</u>	1 Kings 8:27	Matthew 28:20	Psalm 139:7
<u>Omniscient</u>	Psalm 147:5	John 16:30	1 Corinthians 2:10
<u>Omnipotent</u>	Psalm 135:6	Matthew 28:18	Romans 15:19
<u>Holy</u>	Revelation 15:4	Acts 3:14	Romans 1:4
<u>Eternal</u>	Psalm 90:2	Micah 5:2	Hebrews 9:14
<u>Truth</u>	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
<u>Lord</u>	Luke 2:11	Romans 10:12	2 Corinthians 3:17
<u>Creator</u>	Acts 14:15	Colossians 1:16	Job 33:4

A careful review of this little chart will demonstrate that the Bible does give divine attributes to each of the three persons. The doctrine of the Trinity fits very nicely with the biblical revelation. It is easy to get lost in misleading arguments and faulty reasoning. The best way of coming to an understanding of the Trinity is let Scripture speak for itself. Let Scripture clear up misunderstandings in our communication of the nature of the Trinity. Then we can form our arguments in line with what is revealed in the text of Scripture.

2. Analogy breakdown

There have been many efforts to communicate the reality of the triune God by making him analogous to something. Perhaps you've heard the analogy of water, water vapor and ice. Maybe you've heard the analogy of the eggshell, the yolk and the egg-white. Some have tried to show the triune nature of God by using the analogy of time: past, present and future. All of these analogies fail. They do show some form of a three-in-one relationship, but they fail to show complete unity and equality that is true for the biblical revelation of the triune nature of God.

Mathematical analogies have been tried. $1+1+1=3$ is a little weak. $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ is a little better. Augustine tried the analogy of love. He said the Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the Holy Spirit is love. We should be careful with analogies because they do not give a completely accurate description of God. God is altogether unique. There is no adequate analogy for the nature of God. The best way to come to an understanding is to let the Bible speak for itself. Anything we may yet desire to know will have to remain a mystery. This will lead us to the third problem to consider.

3. Mystery

There is no analogy that can adequately describe God in all his fullness. There is no other being like him. If we could completely understand God then we would be his equal. We cannot fully understand the concept of infinity and yet we don't reject the concept. We shouldn't reject the biblical revelation of God because we cannot completely understand it. What I cannot understand, I am happy to relegate to mystery. Yes, there is a mysterious element that exists when it comes to the full extent that we can know God.

There is mystery involved in our knowledge of God, yet we can still know him. God has made himself known to us specifically through his Word. We can also know God through our relationship of being born of the Spirit. We must be careful not to engage in undue speculation that goes beyond what has been revealed in Scripture concerning the nature of God. All teaching about God must have a solid biblical foundation.

God is bigger than we are. So much bigger that it defies description except to say that he is infinitely greater than us in every way. Therefore, there will always be an element of mystery. This is cause for rejoicing because we serve a God who is holy and transcendent, yet has graciously condescended to reach out to us. The mystery remains due to his unfathomable glory and unsearchable riches.

Section Three

THREE PERSONS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Some people have the mistaken idea that the Trinity was a doctrine that was forced on the church some 400 years or so after the time of Christ. The thinking is that the church invented creeds to force the acceptance of certain beliefs. As time went by, the creeds caused the doctrine of the Trinity to be accepted. The truth is that the doctrine of the Trinity was already a clear biblical revelation. No creeds were necessary as a means to secretly import the doctrine of the Trinity into Scripture. No clandestine manipulation or conspiracy had taken place. The truth was there for all to read in the Scriptures right from the very beginning.

From the very beginning the church had many difficulties just surviving in the culture. There was much hostility and it seemed that the church was often running for its life. There was no time to formalize teaching or to set the basic tenets of the faith in a convenient creedal form. We will look briefly at three characters in church history that had a major influence in this very important time. They were Emperor Constantine, Arius and Athanasius.

Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire around A.D. 300. He had a very strong desire to bring unity to the empire. The events surrounding the persecution of Christians were a hindrance to the unity he sought. He gave an edict in the year 313 that brought the blatant persecution of Christians to a stop. Some say he gave the edict because he himself had become a Christian. Others say that we cannot be too sure, but what was true was that he wanted a unified Roman Empire. Furthermore, he had discovered that within the Christian church itself there was discord.

There was a certain pastor in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, who taught that Jesus Christ was not equal with God and that Jesus was a creation of God. His name was Arius. Arius was a clever man and had a way with words (and public opinion). He utilized slogans that gave his position favor with the people. One such slogan was, "There was a time when the Son was not." Arius was able to persuade a vast number of believers to his position. We already know how difficult the doctrine of the Trinity is to understand, much less to explain. Imagine how hard it must have been for the average believer in that day who did not have access to a Bible. Besides this fact, the doctrine of the Trinity sounded too much like the pagan polytheistic religions out of which they had just come. They couldn't figure the deity of Christ into the scheme of things. To think of Jesus as a created being made more sense to them from a natural point of view. The battle for the biblical revelation was about to begin.

Emperor Constantine wanted to put an end to the controversy. He called a council of the church leaders. He convened the meeting himself in the city of Nicea in A.D. 325 and then left it up to the theologians to come to an understanding of the issue of the deity of Christ. The issue of the deity of Christ is central to the doctrine of the Trinity. At the council of Nicea there was much heated discussion and ultimately the Arian position was defeated. But Arius was not defeated. He continued to pursue his view of Christ wherever he went.

There was a young deacon from Alexandria present at the council by the name of Athanasius. He was an assistant to the bishop of Alexandria at that time, but he would very soon become bishop of Alexandria himself. Athanasius fought boldly for the acceptance of the full deity of Christ at the council of Nicea and continued to do so when he became bishop of Alexandria. However, the politics of the time would not allow Athanasius peace. He had to flee for his life because those in power were still persuaded that the Arian view regarding Christ was the correct one. The decision at the council of Nicea had failed to ease the situation entirely. Athanasius was banished from one city to the next.

Athanasius fought for truth without giving up for over fifty years until his death in 373. It wasn't until the council in Constantinople, in 381, where the doctrine of the full deity of Christ, as well as the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit, was finally accepted as being taught in the Bible. We owe much to the tenacity and faithfulness of Athanasius who stood for biblical truth despite a whole world that seemed to be against him.

Church history makes for very interesting study. We must know, however, that just because we have had creeds over the course of church history that have helped to clarify biblical doctrines, the fight for biblical truth will never end. There are still groups today, even organizations that call themselves Christian, that do not hold to the deity of Christ or to the Trinity.

We don't believe in the doctrine of the Trinity because it happens to be a creedal statement. We believe in the doctrine of the Trinity because it is revealed in the Bible. The creeds merely add a formalized statement about truths already found in Scripture. The history of the early church shows us that this battle for Scriptural truth is nothing new and will always be with us. Just as false worship is a reality going all the way back to Genesis, unbiblical teachings will be with us all the way to the end of the age. Our duty is to be able to discern truth from error.

Creeds must be used with caution. Creeds can become formal, complex and abstract. They can be superimposed on Scripture. Properly handled, however, creeds facilitate public confession, form a succinct basis for teaching, safeguard pure doctrine and constitute an appropriate focus for the believers' fellowship in the faith. Take a look at the creed of Nicea.

THE NICENE CREED: COUNCIL OF NICEA – A.D. 325

I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God] light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [essence] with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And [I believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And [I believe] in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Note: The last paragraph was added at Constantinople in A.D. 381.

Section Four

THREE REASONS WHY TRUTH IS IMPORTANT

There can be an attitude of laxity, or even apathy, when it comes to truth. Sometimes the tendency of human nature is to take the least painful route. It might seem to be less painful just to let things be and allow truth to find its own way. However, once we become believers, our spiritual eyes are opened. We may often find ourselves in a fight for the truth. Truth becomes important because we serve the God of truth. I would like to leave you with three reasons why truth about the nature of God is important. Obviously, it was important to the early church and to men like Athanasius. It should be important to us as well.

1. Truth honors God

Jesus said, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). God must be worshiped for who he has revealed himself to be. There are many misconceptions about the nature of God because there are many people who have not received their knowledge of God from the Bible. Without the Bible as our source it opens the door for other sources of questionable authority.

Any idea about the nature of God that falls short of God's own revelation falls short of reality. It is not the truth. If it is not the truth then it dishonors God. People may be very sincere, but it still doesn't make them immune from error. The truth about God is honoring to him and he himself has put a tremendous amount of emphasis on this fact.

2. Errors lead to more errors.

Many non-Christian religions and cults got their start by having false ideas about the true nature of God. They hold to views of God completely foreign to the Bible. Some of them have embraced the idea that there are many gods. Some have even taught that we ourselves are gods. Others have taught that God is too transcendent to be known or that he is a mere impersonal force.

Some have wrong ideas about the nature and character of Jesus Christ. To many people Jesus was some kind of highly evolved spirit-man. To others Jesus was just one of many prophets who have come. As a result, many people have relegated Jesus to the level of a mere created being.

There are people who have the wrong idea about the Holy Spirit. To them he is just some kind of force. They have the mistaken idea that with a little of the right kind of spiritual hocus-pocus a highly skilled person can learn to manipulate the Holy Spirit.

Once an error of any kind is introduced it isn't long before more errors will come into play. Inevitably there will be attitudes, actions and behaviors that might lead to sin or to dangerous practices. But the gravest danger of all is that it will also lead to a false salvation.

3. Truth intensifies worship and strengthens faith.

Full and accurate knowledge of the nature of God will strengthen our faith. Our confidence will increase and we will be better versed at communicating the truth about God to others. Our faith in God will expand when we have a clearer understanding of who God is and what he has done.

We will be able to appreciate the Bible to an even greater degree when we realize that the Holy Spirit was behind its inspiration (2 Peter 1:21). The fact that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit will take on much more importance (1 Corinthians 6:19). We will marvel at the fact that Jesus said he would send another comforter to be with us forever (John 14:16). When we read the book of Acts and learn how much the Holy Spirit directed the church our appreciation for the third person of the Trinity will increase. This same Holy Spirit is at work in our lives today.

As we become more aware of the true identity of Jesus think how much more we will be able to value his work of atonement on the cross. Think of the power and majesty of his person and work, his teaching, his holy example and his love. To know that Jesus is our high priest, our shepherd, our redeemer, our Savior and Lord, should cause us to lift our voices in praise and adoration. Our adoration will increase all the more as we learn of his true divine status.

CONCLUSION

The Bible tells us that the full nature of God was involved in creation. God in all his glory is also involved in new creation.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)*

The world is full of people dedicated to the study of God's creation. We have astronomers, physicists, biologists, botanists, zoologists and the list goes on. We have barely begun to understand the grandeur that is God's handiwork. With this in mind, is it any wonder that we struggle to understand the God behind it all? We should not presume that we might corner him by some mathematical formula or some other clever means not found in the Bible. We can know and understand him as he has revealed himself to us. At this revelation we bow and commit ourselves. We study him with reverence and awe as people who worship the One who is infinitely bigger than all of creation itself. Blessed Trinity indeed.

Questions?

Go to **christianlifetools.org** with your questions. They will be answered ASAP.

Review

1. The revelation of nature and the revelation of conscience tells us something about the nature of God. What is "special revelation" and why is it important in informing us about the nature of God?
2. What is the first platform in discussing the nature of the Trinity?
3. What are the second and third platforms?
4. Can you cite some Old Testament passages that tell of the deity of the Holy Spirit and the deity of the Messiah?
5. Can you cite some New Testament passages that do the same?
6. What are the three categories discussed that might hinder communication about the Trinity?
7. What were the differences between Arius and Athanasius in how they each viewed the Trinity?
8. What were the three concluding reasons that told why the truth about the nature of God was important?