

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

Pt2

JOHN 1:14-18

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

INTRODUCTION:

How important is it to get the Gospel right?

"Infinitely important!" said Pastor John Piper as he addressed thousands of people Friday in the Dominican Republic.

The Minneapolis, Minn., pastor was the featured guest speaker at a conference called "Back to the Cross." Organized by Wisdom & Integrity Ministries, the June 3-5 event was aimed at recovering and reinforcing the true essence of the Christian faith among believers throughout Latin America.

"We have to get this right if we're going to be the means of anyone's salvation, including our own," Piper underscored, as his address was translated into Spanish for the listeners.

"We need to be saved because we are all sinners," he said.

"There isn't any other way to be saved from hell into everlasting joy than ... [by] hearing and believing the Gospel."

1 John 2:23

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:2-3

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

REVIEW:

LESSON

I. THE EXPRESSION OF THE WORD

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. THE INCARNATION

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh

Word (3056)(**logos** from lego = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated word which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. To the Greek secular and philosophical mind, **lógos** was not merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name.

Became -

Original Word: γίνομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: ginomai

Phonetic Spelling: (ghin'-om-ahee)

Short Definition: I come into being, am born

Definition: I come into being, am born, become, come about, happen.

gínomai – properly, to *emerge, become, transitioning* from one point (realm, condition) to another. **1096** (*gínomai*) fundamentally means "become" (becoming, became) so it is *not* an exact equivalent to the

ordinary equative verb "to be" (*is, was, will be*) as with [1510](#) /*eimí* ([1511](#) / *eínai*, [2258](#) /*ēn*).

Not "made" but "became." Jesus was not created, but was the Creator ([Col 1:16](#), [Heb 1:2](#)) Who condescended to become part of His own creation, a thought too profound to fully comprehended by our mind, and yet a truth that can be fully received by our faith. Compare the verb "**was**" in [John 1:1](#) with the verb "**became**" here in [John 1:14](#)...

Verse 1 In the beginning WAS the Word...Imperfect tense indicates continuing action in the past. Language of continuing existence

Verse 14 The Word BECAME flesh...Aorist tense indicates an action that took place in a point in time. Language of change as the Word became something that He previously was not.

The Word took on flesh and, in doing so, brought about a change that will have eternal repercussions. The One who became God and man stayed that way. The One who was touched by a band of Galilean disciples is today worshiped by angels. (From [John Stevenson](#))

John Trapp - Put himself into a lousy, leprosy suit of ours, to expiate our pride and robbery, in reaching after the Deity, and to heal us of our spiritual leprosy; if he had not assumed our flesh he had not saved us.

Illustration - The story is told of a little girl who cried out to her mother from her bedroom, "Mommy, I'm afraid to be in my dark room alone." Her mother replied, "It's okay, Honey. The Lord is with you." She called back, "Yes, but I want someone with skin on." Jesus is God "with skin on." And He has come so that we never have to be afraid again.

Became flesh - "The same verb as in [John 1:3](#). All things **became** through Him; He in turn **became** flesh. "**He became that which, first became through Him.**" In becoming, He did not cease to be the Eternal Word. His divine nature was not laid aside. In becoming **flesh** He did not part with the rational soul of man. Retaining all the essential properties of the Word, He entered into a new mode of being, not a new being. The word **sarx, flesh**, describes this new mode of being (cp [Php 2:6-8-note](#)). It signifies human nature in and according to its corporeal manifestation. Here, as opposed to the purely divine, and to the purely immaterial nature of the **Word**. He did not first become a personality on becoming **flesh**. The prologue throughout conceives Him as a personality from the very beginning — from eternal ages. The phrase **became flesh**, means more than that He assumed a human body. He assumed human nature entire, identifying Himself with the race of man, having a human body, a human soul, and a human spirit. See [Jn 12:27](#); [11:33](#); [13:21](#); [19:30](#). He did not assume, for a time merely, humanity as something foreign to Himself. The **incarnation** was not a mere accident of His substantial being. "He became flesh, and did not clothe Himself in flesh." Compare, on the whole passage, [1 John 4:2](#); [2 John 7](#).

Flesh (4561)(**sarx - word study**) Ryle says that the use of this word, instead of "man," ought not to be overlooked. It is purposely used in order to show us that when our Lord became incarnate, He took upon Him nothing less than our whole nature, consisting of a true body and a reasonable soul....When "the Word became flesh," He did not take on Him "peccable flesh." It is written that He was made in "the likeness of sinful flesh." ([Ro 8:3](#).) But we must not go beyond this. Christ was "made sin for us." ([2Cor 5:21](#).) But He "knew no sin," and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and without taint of corruption. Satan found nothing in Him. Christ's human nature was liable to weakness, but not to sin. The words of the fifteenth Article must never be forgotten, Christ was "void from sin, both in His flesh and in His Spirit."

J C Ryle applies the truth that the Word became flesh - Did the Word become flesh? Then He is One who can be touched with the feeling of His people's infirmities, because He has suffered Himself, being tempted. He is almighty because He is God, and yet He can feel with us, because He is man. Did the Word become flesh? Then He can supply us with a perfect pattern and example for our daily life. Had he walked among us as an angel or a spirit, we could never have copied Him. But having dwelt among us as a man, we know that the true standard of holiness is to "walk even as He walked." ([1 John 2:6](#).) He is a perfect pattern, because He is God. But He is also a pattern exactly suited to our wants, because He is man. Finally, did the Word become flesh? Then let us see in our mortal bodies a real, true dignity, and not defile them by sin. Vile and weak as our body may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.

Webster (1828) defines **incarnation** as - The act of clothing with flesh. 1. The act of assuming flesh, or of taking a human body and the nature of man; as the incarnation of the Son of God. 2. In surgery, the process of healing wounds and filling the part with new flesh.

Bioethicist Nigel M. de S. Cameron points to a significance of the incarnation that may be missed by many — what he calls "**the bioethics of Bethlehem.**"

Cameron points back to the conception of Jesus in Mary by the Holy Spirit, and to the concrete reality of Christ's human nature during Mary's pregnancy:

God took human form; and he took it not simply as a baby, but as the tiniest of all human beings, a mere biological speck, so small and so undeveloped that it could be mistaken for a laboratory artifact, a research specimen, an object for human experimentation. But this speck was God; this complete genetic human organism, in its primitive and undeveloped form, was so much "one of us" as to bear the existence of the Creator. He dignified humanity by taking the form of this creature he had made in his image; and he did it at the most inauspicious and feeble point in the human life story. At the heart of the Christmas celebration lies the fact of all facts, that God became a zygote.

We believe that all human beings are made in the image of God. We believe that Jesus Christ was God taking human form for himself. And we believe that we started right at the beginning—that incarnation took place in embryo.

Carl F. H. Henry once stated that only a theology based in a vision of "divine invasion" could lay claim upon the church.

The Hypostatic Union

So “hypostatic union” may sound fancy in English, but it’s a pretty simple term. *Hypostatic* means *personal*. The *hypostatic union* is the *personal union* of Jesus’ two natures.

The theological term "hypostatic union" has its origins in the Council of Chalcedon and emphasizes that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man at the same time. It is used to affirm the union of Jesus' divine and human natures in one person--that Jesus Christ is perfectly God and perfectly man. Or, as theologians say, He is consubstantial with God as to His deity and with mankind as to His humanity.

Soon after the establishment of the church, doctrinal errors arose concerning the person of Jesus Christ. In October of A.D. 451, a large church council convened in the city of Chalcedon near Constantinople. After much discussion, the Council issued a statement to correct the errors and to establish an accurate theological statement concerning the person and nature of Christ. The fruit of their labor is perhaps the most significant Christological statement in the history of the church:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential, of the same substance] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or

divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us.

Jesus has two complete natures—one fully human and one fully divine. What the doctrine of the hypostatic union teaches is that these *two natures* are united in *one person* in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.

Jesus was Fully Human

Jesus has a human body, emotions, mind, and will. And this in no way compromises his deity.

When the Word became flesh—when the eternal Son of God took on full humanity—he did not merely become human in part. He fully became truly human.

Jesus' Human Body

It is clear enough from the New Testament that Jesus has a human body. John 1:14 means at least this, and more: “The Word became flesh.” Jesus’ humanity is one of the first tests of orthodoxy (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). Jesus was born (Luke 2:7). He grew (Luke 2:40, 52). He grew tired (John 4:6) and got thirsty (John 19:28) and hungry (Matthew 4:2). He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26). He died (Luke 23:46). And he

had a real human body after his resurrection (Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 27).

Jesus' Human Emotions

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clearly displays human emotions. When Jesus heard the centurion's words of faith, "he marveled" (Matthew 8:10). He says in Matthew 26:38 that his "soul is very sorrowful, even to death." In John 11:33–35, Jesus is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" and even weeps. John 12:27 says, "Now is my soul troubled," and in John 13:21, he is "troubled in his spirit." The author to the Hebrews writes that "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7) John Calvin memorably summed it up: "Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh."

Jesus' Human Mind

Jesus also has a human mind. Two key texts make this undeniable:

- Luke 2:52: "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."
- Mark 13:32: "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Jesus Is God

The Bible teaches that Jesus is not merely someone who is a lot like God, or someone who has a very close walk with God. Rather, Jesus is the Most High God himself. Titus 2:13 says that as Christians we are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of *our great God* and Savior, Christ Jesus." Upon seeing the resurrected Christ, Thomas cried out, "My Lord and *my God!*" (John 20:28). Likewise, the book of Hebrews gives us God the Father's direct testimony about Christ: "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever" and the gospel of John calls Jesus "*the only begotten God*" (John 1:18).

Another way the Bible teaches that Jesus is God is by showing that he has all of the attributes of God. He knows everything (Matthew 16:21; Luke 11:17; John 4:29), is everywhere (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; Acts 18:10), has all power (Matthew 8:26–27; 28:18; John 11:38–44; Luke 7:14–15; Revelation 1:8), depends on nothing outside of himself for life (John 1:4; 14:6; 8:58), rules over everything (Matthew 28:18; Revelation 1:5; 19:16;), never began to exist and never will cease to exist (John 1:1; 8:58), and is our Creator (Colossians 1:16). In other words, everything that God is, Jesus is. For Jesus is God.

Why the INCARNATION

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the

form

morphé – properly, form (outward expression) that embodies essential (inner) substance so that the form is in complete harmony with the inner essence.

of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the

form *morphé*

of a bondservant, *and* coming in the **likeness**

Definition: (originally: a thing made like something else), a likeness, or rather: form; a similitude.

homoíōma (a neuter noun derived from *homos*, "the same") – properly, the *same as; likeness, similitude* (resemblance).

of men. ⁸ And being found in **appearance**

sxma – properly, *exterior shape* (form); (figuratively) *the outer "shape" (manner, appearance)*.

/sxēma ("outward, visible form") is used of Jesus' earthly body (Phil 2:7,8). Christ incarnated into a *genuine physical* body, which was not an "exact match with typical humanity" because His body was *never touched or tainted by sin* (even original sin).

as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹

AW Pink

This union of the two natures in the Person of Christ was necessary in order to fit Him for the office of Mediator.

1. Brings God to Us

Matthew wrote that the virgin birth was to "fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" (Matt. 1:22-23). What the prophet Isaiah wrote symbolically, eight centuries earlier, actually happened at the dawn of the first century: Jesus Christ is, literally, "God with us."

2. Explains God To Us

Incarnation shows us God's character. In Jesus' teaching, we see God's teaching. In His miracles, we see God's power. Jesus

said that He never did anything of His own initiative; it was His Father doing His own work through Him. If you want to see God's compassion, see Jesus' healing miracles. If you want to see God's judgment, see Jesus' rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees. If you want to see divine love, see the way Jesus loved sinners. To see what God is like, look at Jesus.

3. **Enables God to Fulfill the Law** The Son of God came in the flesh in order to be the Savior of mankind. First, it was necessary to be born "under the law" (Galatians 4:4). All of us have failed to fulfill God's Law. Christ came in the flesh, under the Law, to fulfill the Law on our behalf (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:5).
4. **Enables God to be A Sacrifice** , it was necessary for the Savior to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). A blood sacrifice, of course, requires a body of flesh and blood. And this was God's plan for the Incarnation: "When Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering [under the Old Covenant] you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me'" (Hebrews 10:5). Without the Incarnation, Christ could not really die, and the cross is meaningless.

5. Enables God to be A Compassionate High Priest

By being made like us, Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. He knows what it is like to be tempted and to suffer as a man. He was also able to demonstrate his faithfulness by his unswerving and glad obedience to the Father while on earth (Heb 3:2). As his people, we have every reason to trust such a high priest.

HEBREWS 4:14

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Author Philip Yancey relates a modern day story that illustrates so wonderfully this truth.

One raw winter night, a farmer heard an irregular thumping sound against the kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass.

Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn for the struggling birds. He turned on the light, tossed some hay in a corner, and sprinkled a trail of saltine crackers to direct them to the barn. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, still hid in the darkness, afraid of Him. He tried various tactics: circling behind the birds to drive them toward the barn, tossing cracker crumbs in the air toward them, retreating to his house to see if they'd flutter

into the barn on their own. Nothing worked. He, a huge alien creature, had terrified them; the birds could not understand that he actually desired to help.

He withdrew to his house and sadly watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit him like lightning from a clear blue sky; if only I could become a bird - one of them - just for a moment. Then I would not frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety. At the same moment, this man had grasped the principle of the incarnation – why God had become man.

5. THE HABITATION

V. 14and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,

Dwelt among us - God truly came to dwell in our midst, even as He dwelt in the midst of Israel in the Tabernacle ([Ex 24:8](#), [40:34-35](#)) and later in their Temple ([1Ki 8:10-12](#)).

Dwelt (4637) (**skenoo** from **skenos** = tent, abode) means to dwell literally in a tent, to reside, to take up one's residence, to pitch one's tent, encamp, to live in a tent (as God did in the Tabernacle of old, a symbol of protection and communion).

MacArthur has some interesting thoughts on the root word **skenos** (tent) - A tent is an apt metaphor for the human body, which is a temporary home for the eternal souls of those whose real home is in heaven ([Php 3:20](#)) and who are aliens and strangers in this world ([Ge 47:9](#); [1Chr 29:15](#); [Ps 119:19](#); [Heb 11:13](#); [1Pe 1:1, 17](#); [2:11](#)). Just as the tabernacle of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness was replaced with a permanent building when Israel entered the Promised Land, so the temporary tent in which believers now dwell will be replaced one day in heaven with an eternal, imperishable body ([1 Cor. 15:42, 53-54](#)). (2 Corinthians Commentary)

Among us (en hemin) is more literally "in the midst of us."

Steven Cole - John could have said, "The Word lived among us," but instead he used the unusual word, translated dwelt, which means "to pitch a tent" or "to tabernacle." It is used of the tabernacle in the Old Testament, where God dwelt with His people in the wilderness. John does not mean by this term that Jesus' humanity was temporary, but rather, His stay on earth was temporary. By using the word that was used of the tabernacle, coupled with seeing Jesus' glory, John wants us to make some connections. Just as the tabernacle was the place where God dwelt with His people and manifested His glory, so Jesus is **Immanuel, God with Us**. Just as the tabernacle was at the center of Israel's camp, so Christ is to be at the center of the church. Just as sacrifices and worship were offered at the tabernacle, so Jesus is our complete and final sacrifice, and we have access to God through Him. Every aspect of the tabernacle speaks of Christ

Ray Pritchard - In the Bible three kinds of people lived in tents—shepherds, sojourners, and soldiers. They lived in tents because

they never stayed in one place very long. Jesus lived in the “tent” of his humanity for 33 years on the earth because he too was a shepherd, a sojourner, and a soldier. He came to be the Good Shepherd, he came as a visitor from heaven, and he came as the Captain of our Salvation to defeat the devil once and for all. Jesus was God’s rescue mission to the human race. He came on a mission from God. When his mission was over, he went back to heaven. While he was here, he pitched his tent among us. When his time was up, he took his tent of human flesh and rejoined his Father in heaven

[Revelation 7:15](#) "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne **will spread His tabernacle** over them.

[Revelation 21:3](#) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will **dwell** among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

We saw His glory - John and the other disciples. Those who had spiritual eyes to see, saw! Have you seen His glory? He is the Word and when we read His Word, we in a sense behold His glory, but only if we have eyes to see! Eyes of faith are the only requirement. A heart like a little child. Then you will see His glory and one day live forever with Him in the radiance of His glory (cf [Rev 21:3](#), [Rev 21:23](#)). His **glory** was veiled to be sure, and yet the **glory** could not be completely hidden.

Beheld (theaomai) "denotes calm, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator." (Vincent)

Beheld (2300)(**theaomai** from **thaómai** =to wonder, from **thaúma** = wonder, admiration <> English = theatrical spectacular performance) denotes "calm, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator." (Vincent) Theaomai implies an intent contemplative gaze. The point is that it is not a mere glance or quick look, but a long, searching gaze (e.g., [Lk 23:55](#)). It describes intelligent beholding, a "careful and deliberate vision which interprets its object" (G. Abbott-Smith). **Theaomai** can mean to gaze at a show or demonstration or to watch as in a theater.

His Glory

Charles Ryrie says that the **glory of God** "is the manifestation of any or all of His attributes. In other words, it is the displaying of God to the world. Thus, things which glorify God are things which show the characteristics of His being to the world."

Puritan **Thomas Watson** rightly remarked that "A sight of God's glory humbles. The stars vanish when the sun appears."

Vincent comments that John does not refer to "the absolute glory of the Eternal Word, which could belong only to His pre-existent state, and to the conditions subsequent to his exaltation; but His glory revealed under human limitations both in Himself and in those who beheld Him.

The divine glory flashed out in Christ from time to time, in His transfiguration ([Luke 9:31](#); compare [2Pe 1:16](#), [17-note](#)) and His miracles ([Jn 2:11](#); [11:4](#), [40](#)), but appeared also in His perfect life and character, in His fulfilment of the absolute idea of manhood.

Swindoll - Jesus traveled through the country as a common, unglazed earthenware bottle, corked until those special occasions

when His glory was manifested & the fragrant beauty of deity filled the air with its aromatic presence.

For example **John** records manifestations of **Jesus' glory**...

[John 2:11](#) This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His **glory**, and His disciples believed in Him.

[John 11:4](#) But when Jesus heard it, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be **glorified** by it.”

II. THE EXALTATION OF THE WORD

V14

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.
¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

1. HIS PRECISENESS

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father

Only begotten (One of a Kind, One and Only) (3439) (**monogenes** from **monos** = alone + **genos** = birth, race, kind <> from **ginomai** = to come into being, to become) means that which is the only one of its kind of class or specific relationship and thus is unique or "one and only."

The only begotten (monogenes) - Most modern scholars agree that monogenes does not refer to the "begetting" aspect of Jesus' sonship, but rather to His uniqueness. As explained below NET Bible favors the translation "of the one and only." ESV = "the only Son", NIV = "the One and Only," NLT, HCSB = "the One and Only Son" ESV Study Bible note - The Greek word underlying "only," **monogenes**, means "one of a kind, unique," as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham's "one-of-a-kind" son in [Heb. 11:17](#) (in contrast to Ishmael; cf. [Ge 22:2](#), [12](#), [16](#)). Thus "only" is a better translation than "only begotten" (made familiar through its use in the kjv)."

Norman Geisler - JOHN 3:16—Does "**only begotten Son**" indicate that Jesus Christ is a created being?

MISINTERPRETATION: This verse refers to Jesus as God's "**only begotten Son.**" The Jehovah's Witnesses tell us that Jesus is God's only begotten son in the sense that he was directly created by the hand of God (Aid to Bible Understanding, 1971, 918). He is thus a lesser god than God the Father. **CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** The words only begotten do not mean that Christ was created but rather mean "unique" or "one of a kind" (Greek: **monogenes**). Jesus was uniquely God's son by nature—meaning that he has the very nature of God. It is significant that when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, his Jewish contemporaries understood him to be claiming deity in an unqualified sense and sought to stone him: "We have a law, and according to that law he [Jesus] ought to die, because he made himself out to be the Son of God" ([John 19:7](#) nasb, insert added).

They thought Jesus was committing blasphemy because he was claiming deity for himself. Many evangelicals believe that Christ's sonship is an eternal sonship. Evidence for Christ's eternal sonship is found in the fact that he is represented as already the Son of God before his human birth in Bethlehem ([John 3:16–17](#); cf. [Prov. 30:4](#)). [Hebrews 1:2](#) says God created the universe through his "Son"—implying that Christ was the Son of God prior to the Creation. Moreover, Christ as the Son is explicitly said to have existed "before all things" ([Col. 1:17](#); compare with vv. 13–14). As well, Jesus, speaking as the Son of God ([John 8:54–56](#)), asserts his eternal preexistence before Abraham (v. 58). Seen in this light, Christ's identity as the Son of God does not connote inferiority or subordination either of essence or position. (When cultists ask : A popular handbook on cultic misinterpretations).

[Hebrews 11:17-note](#) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his **only begotten** son;

[1 John 4:9](#) By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His **only begotten** Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

God's Only Begotten Son

by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

One of our favorite Christmas Scripture verses is I John 4:9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The marvelous incarnation in human flesh of the only begotten Son of God is not the end of the story, of course. The next verse explains that we have life through Him because God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Our heavenly Father gives us eternal life instead of the eternal hell that we deserve because His

only begotten Son died in our place for our sins. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

The Only Begotten of the Father

Consider, though, the significance of this revelation that Jesus Christ is the Father's "only begotten" Son. This unique phrase is used with reference to the Lord Jesus just four other times, and all five verses contain vitally important truths concerning Christ. These verses are as follows:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

This is the key verse of the Incarnation, assuring us that the man Jesus, who dwelt among us for a time, was also the eternal Word who was "in the beginning with God" and that He "was God" and that "all things were made by Him" (John 1:1-3). He was God the Creator manifest in the flesh.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18).

The Father is omnipresent, and therefore invisible to mortal eyes, but as Jesus said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Men have seen and heard the Father in the person of His only begotten Son. Whenever God has been seen by men, it has been through the Son who has revealed Him.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

This verse, of course, is the most magnificent of all gospel verses; many would call it the greatest verse in the Bible. It assures us that, if we simply put our trust in our great Creator who has become man in order to die for our sins, and then to defeat death and become our Savior, our sins will be forgiven, and we shall live forever with Him.

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

Other than the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In view of all that our Creator/Savior has done for us, this verse gives clear warning that those who refuse or neglect to believe on the person and work of God's only begotten Son, will die in their sins, condemned forever by the Father whose Son they have spurned.

"God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9).

This great Christmas verse was discussed above and is a wonderful summary verse on salvation that Christians now often write on their Christmas cards.

The Only Begotten Son

But why was it important for the Holy Spirit who inspired these five great verses to stress that the Lord Jesus was the incarnate *only begotten* Son of God? Many modern English translations of the New Testament apparently do not consider it important, for they render the phrase merely as "only son." It is so rendered in the Living Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the God's Word translation, the Twentieth Century New Testament, the New Living Translation, the Moffatt, Goodspeed, and Williams translations, and many others. The New International Version renders it "one and only son." There are still a few, however--the best-known being the New American Standard and the New King James--that render it correctly (as in the King James Version) as "only begotten Son."

The Greek word for "only begotten" is *monogenes*, the very form of which clearly denotes "only generated." As monotheism connotes only one God and monosyllable means a word of only one syllable, so *monogenes* means only one genesis or only one generated--or, more simply, *only begotten*. It does not mean "one," or even "one and only." It is worth noting that, although Christ is called the Son, or Son of God, frequently in the New Testament, He is never (in the Greek original) called the "only" son of God.

The fact is, that to call Him the only Son of God would make the Bible contradict itself, for He is not the only Son of God, and certainly not the "one and only" Son of God. Angels are several times called the

sons of God (e.g., Job 38:7) since they had no fathers, being directly created by God. Likewise, Adam was called the son of God (Luke 3:38), because he was directly created. The same applies even to fallen angels (Genesis 6:2), and even to Satan (Job 1:6), because they also were created beings. The term is also used in a spiritual sense, of course, for those who have become "new creations" in Christ Jesus by faith (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; etc.). In this sense, we also are "sons of God" (e.g., I John 3:2) by special creation?not physically but spiritually.

But it is never applied in this sense to Christ, for He is not a *created* son of God (as the Jehovah's Witnesses and other cultists teach), but a *begotten* Son of God--in fact, the *only begotten* Son of God. He never had a beginning, for He was there in the beginning (John 1:1). In His prayer to the Father in the upper room, He spoke of "the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

In that wonderful Old Testament Christmas prophecy about His coming human birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), we are told that His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." His human body was, indeed, "brought forth" from "she which travaileth" (Micah 5:3). But long before that, He had been everlastingly going forth from "the bosom of the Father." As noted in John 1:18, He was still "in the bosom of the Father," even while He was on Earth manifesting the Father.

These truths are beyond our full comprehension, of course, for they are all part of the great mystery of the Tri-une Godhead. Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), for as He said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

Eternally Begotten

He is not just the only begotten Son of the Father, for He is also the *eternally begotten* Son of the Father. He is eternally "in His bosom," yet always "going forth" to "declare" the Father--once as the creating Word, occasionally in pre-incarnate theophanies, also through the Holy Spirit conveying God's written Word (which had been "eternally settled in heaven" [Psalm 119:89]) down to man through divinely chosen prophets, then ultimately appearing as the incarnate Word to live forever as the God/man.

The doctrine of "eternal generation" was what the older theologians called this great truth. He did not *become* the only Son by His virgin birth. He was the only begotten Son from eternity, "set up from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:23).

The First Begotten from the Dead

But that is not all. He was not just the only begotten Son in the beginning, He soon also became the "first begotten of the dead" in time (Revelation 1:5). He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). When Paul at Antioch preached on the resurrection, he declared that God "hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:33).

He is the only begotten Son eternally and now the first begotten Son by resurrection, "the first fruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

What a wonderful Savior is Jesus Christ, our Lord!

The Lord Jesus is not only the unique Son of God by eternal generation and by resurrection, but also by divine inheritance. God has "spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2).

The Uniquely Incarnate Son

His unique human birth, miraculously conceived with a divinely created body in a virgin's womb, had also marked Him as the incarnate Son of God. To Mary, the angel had said: "Fear not . . . that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:30,35).

His unique righteousness, in both character and action, still further marks Him as Son of God, for He alone possessed the divine nature from the beginning. He said on one occasion: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

He was even identified as God's Son by heavenly proclamation.

"There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

The Lord Jesus Christ is thus Son of God by miraculous conception and virgin birth, by heavenly proclamation, by His uniquely perfect human nature, by divine inheritance, and by triumphant resurrection.

But, most of all and first of all, He is Son of God by eternal generation--the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only begotten Son of God!

The Son Given

There is another great Christmas verse. "For unto us a child is born," known and beloved by every born-again Christian. That child was the infant Jesus, born of the virgin as prophesied hundreds of years in advance (Isaiah 7:14) in the little town of Bethlehem, as also prophesied (Micah 5:2). At the same time, "Unto us a son is given." That Son was the only begotten, eternally begotten Son of God. "And the government shall be upon His shoulder," for He holds the whole wide world in His hand! "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

As one with the everlasting Father in the Tri-une Godhead, He is also the mighty God. He is our Creator, our Redeemer, our Resurrected Savior, our King of kings and Lord of lords. "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25).

From the Father - From is the preposition para, which primarily means near or nearby, expressing the idea of immediate vicinity or proximity.

Steven Cole cautions - Sadly, many supposedly evangelical missionaries to Muslims are producing and endorsing translations of the New Testament that replace the terms "**Father**" and "**Son**" with other terms that are less offensive to Muslims. They argue that Muslims wrongly think that Christians believe that Jesus is the result of God having sexual relations with Mary. To remove that stumbling block, they change the terms. But in so doing, they change the very nature of God as He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture. God is the eternal Father and Jesus is His eternal Son. The Holy Spirit is also eternal God; three persons but one God. While it is humanly impossible to fully understand it, we dare not tamper with it to somehow make the message less offensive.

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE FATHER AND SON RELATIONSHIP IN TRINITY

— Bishop T.D. Jakes says he has moved away from a "Oneness" view of the Godhead to embrace an orthodox definition of the Trinity – and that some in the Oneness Pentecostal movement now consider him a heretic.

Jakes – long a controversial figure among evangelicals because of his past unwillingness to affirm the Trinity. Jakes, founder and senior pastor of The Potter's House in Dallas, was the focus of a motion at Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings in 2009 and 2010 by a messenger who wanted LifeWay Christian Stores to stop selling his books. One was ruled out of order by the SBC president, the other referred to LifeWay for study.

Jakes – who once made the cover of Time magazine, which asked if he might be the next Billy Graham – said he was saved in a Oneness Pentecostal church. Oneness Pentecostalism denies the Trinity and claims that instead of God being three persons, He is one person. In Oneness Pentecostalism, there is no distinction between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It is also called "modalism," and it is embraced by the United Pentecostal Church International. Oneness Pentecostalism which holds to an unorthodox position on the Trinity. This position is known as Modalism or, historically, as Sabellianism.

Modalism holds that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not refer to distinct persons in the godhead, but to different modes of existence of a single person. It teaches that in ages past God manifested himself as the Father, during the incarnation of Christ he manifested himself as the Son, and subsequently he manifested himself as the Holy Spirit. As one of its key tenets it states that God cannot exist in more than one mode at a time. So while this teaching does hold to a form of trinitarian theology and while it does proclaim the divinity of Jesus Christ, it denies that there are three distinct persons who together make up the godhead. I began to realize that there are some things that could be said about the Father that could not be said about the Son," Jakes said. "There are distinctives between the working of the Holy Spirit and the moving of the Holy Spirit, and the working of the redemptive work of Christ. I'm very comfortable with that."

The doctrine of the Trinity – embraced by all three historical branches of Christianity – holds that God is three persons, each person is distinct, each person is fully God, and that there is one God.

Southern Baptist leaders applauded Jakes' transformation while also saying Jakes isn't fully where he should be on that and other issues. "It is encouraging to see T.D. Jakes moving away from the heresy of modalism," said Malcolm B. Yarnell III, director of the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "However, we should pray for him and exhort him privately and publicly to move into biblical orthodoxy without equivocation.

Russell D. Moore, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said he takes "Bishop Jakes at his word that he holds to Trinitarianism."

"But there's still some elephants left in the room," Moore said. "First of all, Bishop Jakes isn't a new convert being disciplined in the basics of the Christian faith. He is a celebrity mega-church pastor. Moreover, Trinitarianism isn't the 'meat' of some advanced doctrine, but the most foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. A Christian pastor affirming least-common-denominator Christian doctrine should hardly be news, much less an elephant in the room. This can only happen in an American evangelicalism that values success, novelty and celebrity more than church accountability."

Moore added, "There still stands the issue of the prosperity gospel Bishop Jakes preaches. Joyce Meyer and Kenneth Copeland are Trinitarians but their health and wealth gospel is different from the message of Jesus and His apostles."

Though he has recently denied being a Modalist, T.D. Jakes continues to use *manifestations* in place of *persons* and continues to affirm the faith of those who remain ardent Oneness Pentecostals. This is no minor quibble in theology because it contradicts and confuses the orthodox and accepted view of the Trinity. Until he clearly affirms the orthodox definition of the Trinity *and* denies the Modalist definition of the Trinity, we must regard him warily as a false teacher.

The Relationship between God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Now, having established that there is only ONE God (part 3 of this series, long ago) but also that there are three persons who are shown to be this one God, we are faced with the question of how these three persons are 'related'.

There have been different 'models' and ideas for this in the course of (Christian) theology and the history of heresies.

It is worthwhile first to examine the false interpretations and identify their errors so that we narrow down the possibilities until only the genuinely Biblical understanding remains'.

The worst of these theories and most easily to dispel is the one of a 'development of God' who became the Son who became the Spirit. This heresy "solves" the problem of "3=1" by saying, that at all times there was only one person and God, who was originally "God the Father" then went on to incarnate himself and become God the Son and after death and resurrection goes back into a solely spiritual existence. But Jesus in his preaching was constantly talking about the Father and communicating with the Father in prayer. He talked not about the Father "who was" but the Father "who is (in heaven)". He even taught his followers this very prayer "Our Father who is in heaven. Hallowed be your name....". And today this 'explanation' of a "God who transforms" seems to be really dead and not defended anymore. I am not aware of any sect which teaches it. So let me go on to those which are more prominent even today.

I want to give a very short overview of the different ways of 'linking' Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

There are three independent gods [Tri-theism].

There is only one God in one person who appears and operates in three ways [Sabellianism].

There is only one Person who is God and Christ was his first CREATION [Arianism].

There is one Godhead existing in three Persons [Trinitarianism] [Biblical Christianity (my conviction and that of nearly all Christians)].

A Trinitarian (whether Catholic or Orthodox or Protestant) believes that:

The Father is God.

The Son is God.

The Holy Ghost is God.

The Father is not the Son.

The Father is not the Holy Ghost.

The Son is not the Holy Ghost.
 But there is precisely one perfect and indivisible God,
 not three "Gods".

On the other side, there are several different views, explained in a few more words than above. The main ones are:

Sabellian:

The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are all one and the same, just different names or different aspects or different ways of seeing God, but really the Father IS the Son and the Father IS the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost IS the Son. And all these three are names of the One God.

Arian (Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.):

The Father is God. The Son and the Holy Ghost are not God, but creatures, albeit very good and holy creatures made by the Father, in very privileged positions, agreeing in all things with the Father. In a sense this is the nearest view to Islam of all of them.

Tritheite/polytheist (Mormons, New Age, ...):

The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Ghost is God. There are at least three different Gods.

Positive atheist:

There is no Father, no Son, no Holy Ghost and no God.

The atheist is in here just for completeness sake and since the existence of God is a given to Christians and Muslims alike, I am not going to bother with that one.

We have seen in the earlier parts that Jesus and the Holy Spirit have the divine attributes. Attributes, characteristics, qualities which are not possible for even the highest created being and therefore they can only be God.

Therefore, the Arian position is defeated by all that I have quoted before. We have established that the Bible teaches that Jesus is God and the Spirit is God. The position of Arius is not tenable.

The Tri-theist position is contradicting the very clear statements of "there is only one God" which abound in scripture. Scripture does maintain the very clear distinction between the Creator and the created. The Mormon position, that we all are supposed to 'develop into little gods' is absolutely anti-Biblical. Scripture references can be given if needed. But this is not a position Muslims would accept and Christians don't hold it, so let us forget about this one too.

The next couple of verses are addressing the last two alternatives. Is it one God who only "appears" in three different roles, like a man, who can be husband to his wife, father to his children and boss to his employees, or are these three really distinct persons?

If Father, Son and Spirit were the same person, then all the talk of Jesus about the Father and the Spirit would be strange.

Jesus talks about his love of the Father, about his obedience towards the Father, about the Father's love of the Son, ... He says in John 16:25-28

"I will tell you plainly about my Father, ..., I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

Jesus makes the clear distinction between the Father and himself. "The Father Himself" loves you... This kind of language would be nonsense if Jesus is the Father. Jesus is always with himself, he can not "leave himself" to come into the world and "go back to himself" by leaving the world. No, the Son is not the Father and the Father is not the Son. And shortly before this, Jesus says about the Spirit "I will ask the Father, and he will give you ANOTHER Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth." John 14:16.

So, the distinctness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is very clear in Jesus word's.

Let me give you one more category of scripture passages which confirms that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equals, but not equal. And that should finally establish, that the real Trinitarian doctrine is the only one that brings together the Deity of all persons, the distinctiveness of the persons, but still maintaining that God is only one God.

Recently I posed the question:

"Would a Muslim be shocked about Allah (pbuh = peace be upon him) or Muhammad (swt = glory be to him)?"

and got the expected answer:

"The former would seem odd, since Allah SWT is the source of peace, and the latter would be blasphemous."

And the Jewish and Christian understanding is exactly the same. No mere prophet, not even the greatest prophet before Jesus, Moses, ever got glory ascribed to him, or it is unheard of people blessing others by invoking the "peace of Moses" on them. Moses had just as much need for God's peace as every other human being. He has no peace of his own to dispense no others.

In the light of this, look at the following statements by Jesus and about Jesus.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; **my peace I give you**. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! **I have overcome the world.**

And as quoted already earlier, John 1:17

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself says in John 14:6

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

He is not just pointing to the way, or the truth that is to be found in God only, no, Jesus IS the personification of truth, grace, peace, life, i.e. the personification of attributes ultimately only God possesses. He is the personification of God in the flesh. Ephesians 2 states
 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For **he himself is our peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
 Look at this greeting:

Grace
 and
 peace
 to you from
 God our Father
 and
 the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the exact greeting in used in Romans 1:7, 1 Cor 1:3, 2 Cor 1:2, Gal 1:3, Eph. 1:2, Phil. 1:2, 2 Thess. 1:2, etc. [meaning: this was not a one time accident, but a normal/formal greeting]

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. -- 1 Thessalonians 3:11
 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.
 -- 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17

Compare the two first lines of the two quotes of the letters to the Thessalonian Church and observe the complete parallelism and the switch in sequence of Father and Lord. Seemingly it is interchangeable

and there is no 'ranking' as to who is higher and mentioned first. And they 'act together' in unity.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead ... I will give you this charge:... -- 2 Timothy 4:1
Both together are (equally) called upon in giving this solemn admonition.

Also in Jesus' command to make the nations "followers of HIM" = disciples, he uses the strange combination:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in(to) the name_ of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." -- Matthew 28:18-20

Two observations: Jesus himself puts "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" together into one phrase. And, seemingly the three are not 'separate enough' to have three nameS but only one NAME. Literally it is baptizing INTO the name and comes from the picture that a slave who is bought by the new owner now carries his name, which means the authority of the one over me, whose name I bear. Baptizing means, I am now the servant of the one God [one name] who revealed himself to me as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and I submit myself to Him completely. And, he [Jesus] claims to have now ALL authority in heaven and on earth. Something only God can say of himself. Why 'given'? Because for the time of his earthly existence Jesus had laid aside all his heavenly glory and authority and lived the human life in full. Including assuming 'dependence' on God as every other human being. Now that this task is fulfilled, his original authority and glory is given back to him and he assumes again what he had before his incarnation.

Another formula of blessing:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. -- 2 Corinthians 13:14

Now, what do all those passages where God, the Father, Jesus the Lord, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in 'parallel' really mean?

Would you be able to say: "May the peace of Allah and the mercy of Muhammad be with you!" ?? Why not? Because it is putting side by side what is not of equal status. It is belittling God, if His peace is "on the same level" as Muhammad's mercy. No human quality can be able to stand as equal of a divine quality.

So, what does that mean for the above quoted verses? Though they do not explicitly teach the Trinity, they would be totally inappropriate language and utterly blasphemous if the Trinity were not assumed. But they are regular greetings or blessings of welcome and departure. And anything like it is never used for any of the other prophets of scripture. Only Jesus gets this honor. And this again is a clear sign that Jesus was considered equal to God from the very beginning [and he considered himself equal since he claims it for himself - to be the truth and the life etc. it is not the invention of his disciples.] Thus these greetings reflect that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were thought to be 'equals' in a way that does make it appropriate to mention them in this way together. If the Trinity were not assumed, it would be completely inappropriate and even blasphemous to use such greetings and they could not have become the regular greetings in the first years of early Church.

And there are more passages in this regard: 1 John 1:3, 2 John 3, 2 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 3:18, Philippians 1:2, Philemon 3, Jude 2,21 1 Timothy 1:1-2, 2 Tim 1:2, Titus 1:4

Based on those verses I presented and even many more, I think it is clear that the Bible teaches that there is one and only one God, but that this one Godhead reveals himself to exist as a loving community of three persons. The Bible does not even make an attempt to give a "systematic exposition" of the Trinity. It gives us the data and the community of

believers meditated and studied the revelation and formed the "concept" or doctrine of the Trinity in order to clearly express what the Biblical revelation is saying. The Bible teaches it, the Church only has reflected on it and found clearer and clearer ways of expressing it and in the process of reflection on God's revelation the term "Trinity" as the most appropriate was born from this study of the Scriptures. The Bible itself is not giving the theory. It just presents this God, who is our creator and who is very much involved in our life and interested that we respond in love to him.

Saying at the outset that the Trinity is a mystery and that we do better not even to try to understand it is not a Biblical approach. The word of God does exhort us to use our God-given ability to reason and we are to seek understanding. But the fact that God does not give us a worked theology of the Trinity might be an indication, that in the end the Trinity IS too big for our limited brain-power and though we can understand all this revelation in its different parts, the total concept is too big to be completely understood, and in this sense it will remain a mystery to us created beings.

But God has in his word given us so much truth and shown that he is trustworthy, that on the basis of these evidences we can also accept that what he says about his own nature is true.

And in the end, our relationship to God is very similar to a good loving marriage relationship. Our spouse will never be able to prove beyond the least doubt that he/she really loves us. We might have a lot of evidence for it, but proof is impossible, after all (s)he could just 'fake' it and only want us to believe it for whatever reason. And then, what about the very phenomenon of "love" itself? We can experience it, we can give and receive love, but I have yet to find even one person who is able to say, I "understand" what love really is. "Love" really is a mystery, it is "to be lived" more than "to be understood".

That doesn't mean it is false, and it doesn't mean we cannot grow in our understanding of it as we gain experience of it and grow in it and also have our failures and hurts. But in the end, it will remain a mystery. And so will the Trinity of God. We can experience the way God meets us and

loves us, but the nature of God himself will remain mysterious to us. Who would say "I am not going to accept any love before I exactly understand what love is!"? Why then would I say, "I am not going to even make a start at believing in God unless I totally understand who God is and what his essence is like."? The Apostle John writes "God is love". Will I refuse to experience the love of God in my life simply because I can not understand yet all that God is? I can know God and his love for me even if I neither fully comprehend what love is nor fully understand all characteristics of the nature of God.

The Biblical definition of "Faith" is "entrusting myself to God" and believing that he will care for me. Yes, it also is about knowing propositional truth, but this is not enough. There is something like "dead correctness". Faith is about life and a living relationship to a God who wants us to understand him more and more out of a trusting and loving relationship with him.

Let me share with you one last passage which goes back to the very beginning of all creation and revelation.

I do not want to base the Trinity on the next verses that I am going to present, since there are a few conservative Christian scholars who think this would not be valid reasoning. But they do nevertheless believe the Trinity is a strong Biblical doctrine. And as we have seen, many verses substantiate this doctrine. But I wonder if these following ones are really of so little value in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. But see for yourself.

Even in the very first chapter of the Bible, when we read the Creation story we can make some interesting observations:

God says: "Let US make man in OUR image." - Who could He be talking about? God alone is the CREATOR, who else is creating there? Angels or any other beings are CREATED not creating ones and to this day have no 'creating power'. Our image (verse 26) - his own image (verse 27) in the next verse. Not the image of angels, the image of God. One God, but somehow plural. And if that alone doesn't convince you, have you ever thought about the next part? The part where this being created in his image is described? Somehow one person was not enough

to represent God's image. God's image was created as a loving community in two persons, and two complementary persons at that - male and female with this strange urge to 'love' and serve each other and be a harmonious unity.

And, on top of it all, each human being, in the image of God, is a 'trinity', a multiple unity of body, soul and spirit, while still remaining one person, one being, one entity.

Do we want to 'demand' that God be 'less complex' than a human being who is "only" His image?

We read in Genesis 1:

25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds,
the livestock according to their kinds,
and all the creatures that move along the ground
according to their kinds.
And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image,
in our likeness,
and let them rule over the fish of the sea
and the birds of the air,
over the livestock, over all the earth,
and over all the creatures that move along the
ground."

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created
them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and
increase in
number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the
fish of the
sea and the birds of the air and over every living
creature that
moves on the ground."

And do you see the Hebrew poetic structure of emphasis, the parallelism in verse 27? There "in the image of God" corresponds to "male and female". Mankind is 'one', but God sees the need to make two different and complementary beings in order to adequately represent his image. Even taken in isolation, this verse is a strong pointer towards the plurality of the nature of the one God, which the rest of the scriptures can then be seen to support.

Even if some Christian scholars disagree, why do I still think that this really is a valuable additional reference, even though the Trinity is amply demonstrated in the other scriptures?

Because even the Jewish Rabbis have a very hard time to come to terms with this passage. Several Rabbis tried to advance various explanations as to 'explain away' this plural but they only have managed to show that it won't go away. Each subsequent Rabbi refutes the former ones and shows why their reasonings do not survive scrutiny. But, maybe, as with so much, the concept of the Trinity might just be the solution to this problem too.

Have a look at the Jewish Rabbis' struggles at: [Rabbinic Interpretations](#).
Isaiah 40:13-14:

Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor?

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

And the answer that is clearly implied, is "Nobody". So, the "us" can not refer to anyone other than God. And even the Qur'an disagrees with the idea that the Lord took advice from the angels [Sura 38:71-73]. The Lord only announces to the angels that he made man and now they have to prostrate before man. So again, only the Lord God is the Creator, just as the Bible says.

<http://www.answering-islam.org/index.html>

2. HIS PREEXISTENCE

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

Testified (3140) (**martureo** from **martus** = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something. English = martyr) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. Thus the verb **martureo** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. The words testified related to fact, not opinion, as in a courtroom setting. As discussed below in the passive voice **martureo** takes on the sense of to be well testified of or to have a good report.

Cried out (2896)(**krazo**) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those onomatopoeic words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry (or "croak") of the raven. Clearly John the Baptizer gave a bold, public witness that the Messiah had arrived...

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING (not **krazo** but **boao**) IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’” ([Mt 3:3](#))

In the NT the first use of **krazo** is out of the mouths of the demons ([Mt 8:29](#)). Then we see **krazo** used by those in great need - Two blind men "crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” ([Mt 9:27](#), cp [Mt 20:30](#))

He who comes after me has a higher rank than I - Jesus was born after John the Baptist, but "birth order" was trumped by

Christ's eternal existence (**See God's Attribute of Eternality**) with the Father, which is what John goes on to explain.

D A Carson says this could be translated, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me," or "he was first with respect to me"

The implication is not only that He pre-existed, reaffirming what he had already said about Christ's pre-existence in

[John 1:1-3](#)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Before me - A T Robertson - "In rank and dignity." (cp [Mk 1:7](#), [Mt 3:11](#)) In [John 3:28](#) (emprosthen ekeinou = before him, the Christ) does mean priority in time, but not here. This superior dignity of the Messiah John proudly recognizes always ([John 3:25-30](#)).

Steven Cole - John the Baptist began his public ministry before Jesus' ministry. So by the first part of that declaration, John was dispelling the common cultural view that the older man had greater honor than the younger one. He is saying that Jesus is the greater one....So, the apostle John wants us to see that Jesus is greater than John the Baptist and all the other prophets because, whether the Baptist fully recognized it or not, Jesus is the eternal Word. He had a higher rank than John because He existed before John, although he was younger than John. Jesus said that there were none greater than John the Baptist ([Mt. 11:11](#)). So if John himself testified that Jesus was greater than he, and if John's words about Jesus may be taken to point to His preexistence, then Jesus is greater than all the prophets. Thus we should believe in Him. (**Why You Should Believe in Jesus - John 1:15-18**)

Jesus affirmed that He existed before John by testifying that He even existed before "father Abraham," in his confrontation with the Jews who had "believed" with the "belief of unbelief" in John 8 (Compare [Jn 8:30](#) with [Jn 8:45](#) - it could not be clearer for Jesus Himself says their "belief" is "unbelief!") for...

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I am.**" ([John 8:58](#))

Comment: "I Am" is the identical "ego eimi" statement with which God identified Himself to Moses in [Ex 3:14](#) (as recorded in the Greek Septuagint): " God said to Moses "I Am Who I Am" ("ego eimi [present tense] hos on [present tense of eimi]") (Yhwh is Commonly known as the "**tetragrammaton**", the "four letters" which Jews over the ages have zealously avoided pronouncing). While scholars might argue on the meaning of "I Am" falling from the lips of Jesus was crystal clear in the ears of the Jewish audience. They recognized that He had just claimed to be Jehovah, to be God, and that they considered blasphemy and for that they sought to stone Him to death ([Jn 8:59](#))!

Passages on Pre-existence of Christ - [Jn1:1](#); [8:56–59](#); [16:28](#); [17:5](#); [1Cor. 8:9](#); [Php. 2:6–7](#); [Col. 1:17](#); [Heb. 1:3](#)

In the night before He was crucified, in His high priestly prayer to His Father Jesus prayed...

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You **before the world was.** ([John 17:5](#))

3. HIS PREEMINENCE

14b full of grace and truth.

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Full of grace and truth - Jesus was abounding in these attributes. Vincent adds that this phrase "is connected with the main subject of the sentence: **“The Word — full of grace and truth.”** A common combination in the OT ("lovingkindness and truth" - see [Ge. 24:27, 49](#); [32:10](#); [Ex. 34:6](#); [Ps. 40:10, 11](#); [61:7](#)). In these two words the character of the divine revelation is summed up. **“Grace** corresponds with the idea of the revelation of God as Love ([1John 4:8, 16](#)) by Him who is Life; and **Truth** with that of the revelation of God as Light ([1John 1:5](#)) by Him who is Himself Light” (Westcott)."

Full (4134)(**pleres** from **pleos** = full, **pletho** = to fill) means filled up as opposed to empty (as of a hollow vessel - [Mt 14:20, 15:37, Mk 6:43](#)). Of a surface, covering every part (leprosy in [Lk 5:12](#)). Figuratively, of one full of, filled with, abounding in, thoroughly endowed with ([Lk 4:1](#) full of the Holy Spirit, [Acts 9:36](#) abounding in deeds, Stephen full of grace and power [Acts 6:8](#))

For - Always stop and interrogate this small but strategic **term of explanation**. Steven Cole favors [John 1:16](#) as explaining [John 1:14](#).

Of His fullness - To what does this refer? John has just stated that Jesus is "full of grace and truth," and it certainly is reasonable that these blessings are those to which John refers, especially in view of his repetition of "grace upon grace" a phrase which speaks of abundant, sufficient grace.

Fulness (4138)(**pleroma** from **pleroo** = make full, fill, fill up) means fullness, full measure, abundance, completion or what fills. **Pleroma** describes a full measure or abundance with emphasis upon completeness. **Pleroma** is completion and describes what is fulfilled or is completed without any gap. The sum total. The totality. **Pleroma** speaks of the total quantity and emphasizes completeness.

Grace upon grace - Christ can supply **grace upon grace** because He is "**full of grace and truth.**" ([Jn 1:14](#)) The simple picture is of grace piled upon grace. All that we will ever need is in Christ so that Paul could say "I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me (by His grace." ([Php 4:13](#)) and because His grace is sufficient His power is perfected in my weakness ([2Cor 12:9-10](#))

Illustration of grace upon grace - Years ago, Amy Carmichael shared some helpful insights about the phrase, "grace for grace." Drawing from the writings of Bishop Moule (1841-1920), she wrote that the Greek word translated "for" literally means "instead of." He illustrated the meaning by describing a river. "Stand on its banks," he wrote, "and contemplate the flow of waters. A minute passes, and another. Is it the same stream still? Yes. But is it the same water? No." The old water, he explained, had been displaced by new—"water instead of water."

For (term of explanation) - Steven Cole sees this as John's elaboration (explanation) "on the fact (from [John 1:14](#)) that Jesus is also full of truth."

The Law was given - Strictly speaking the Law referred to the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy), but in this context probably is a reference to the entire OT (cf [Jn 5:39](#) below), especially in view of the fact that the entire OT pointed to the Logos, the Messiah. And in the present passage John is in effect presenting a contrast between Old and New, Moses and Jesus, Law and grace and truth.

Even the **Law** was to have pointed Israel to Jesus for as Jesus Himself said "You search the Scriptures (in context this refers to the OT, including the Torah) because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." ([John 5:39](#)) Jesus declared "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is **Moses**, in whom you have set your hope."

Boice - The contrast is between the **law** with all its regulations and the new era of salvation by **grace** through faith apart from the works of the law that has come with Jesus Christ. It is a great contrast. **Under the law**, God demands righteousness from people; under grace, He gives it to people. **Under law**, righteousness is based on Moses and good works; under grace, it is based on Christ and Christ's character. **Under law**, blessings accompany obedience; under grace, God bestows his blessings as a free gift. **The law** is powerless to secure righteousness and life for a sinful race. Grace came in its fullness with Christ's death and resurrection to make sinners righteous before God. (The Gospel of John : An expositional commentary)

D L Moody - The Law begins with commands and ends with blessings; but the blessings are fruit upon lofty branches, which fallen man can never reach: he cannot and will not climb the tree. The Gospel, on the contrary, begins with promises, and promises give birth to precepts. The Law demands justice; the Gospel delights in mercy through satisfied justice. Moses blesses the law-doer; Jesus pardons the guilty and saves the lost.

III.THE EXPOSITION OF THE WORD

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

1. THE INVISIBLE GOD

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time.

Yuri Gagarin the first Soviet cosmonaut used in 1961 when he said in space, "I don't see any God out here."

So when John says in verse 18: "No one has ever seen God,"

2. THE VISIBLE GOD

V. 18 The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.