The Doctrine of God

All Scriptures are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted

Introduction

The word "theology" comes from two Greek terms: *theos*, meaning "God," and *logos*, meaning "discourse" or "study." So, theology is the study or discourse about God, which includes the entire field of Christian belief from the nature of salvation to the end times.

Theology Proper focuses specifically on the nature and attributes of God. It deals with basic questions such as: Who is God? What is He like? How can we understand His character and works? These are not merely academic questions; they are at the heart of Christian faith and practice. What we believe about God shapes our worldview, influences our choices, and defines our relationship with Him.

This treatise will provide a general overview of Theology Proper, exploring the key doctrines held by theologically conservative Christians throughout history. We will present a biblical view of who God is, reflecting the consensus of Christian thought in a clear and understandable format.

The Metaphysical Attributes of God

The metaphysical attributes of God are the essential characteristics that define God's nature and existence. These attributes are foundational to understanding who God is in His essence, apart from His actions or relationships. They highlight the unique aspects of God's being that set Him apart from His creation.

First, God is a living Being. The Bible reveals that God is a personal and active presence in the universe, not a mere force, concept, or abstract idea. For instance, in Psalm 84:2, the psalmist expressed a deep longing for "the living God," showing that God is real and alive, not an inanimate or impersonal entity. In Matthew 16:16, Peter confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This living God is self-existent, the source of all life, and actively involved in the world He created.

> My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. (Psalm 84:2)
>
> Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

Second, God is a spiritual Being. Everything in this universe is composed of matter and energy and is subject to the laws of nature. But the Bible reveals that God is immaterial, an infinite spiritual Being.

> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

Unlike us, God isn’t composed of matter or energy and isn’t subject to the laws of nature. The Bible also reveals that humans have a material body, while a spirit does not. In Luke 24:39, Jesus highlighted this fact after His resurrection when He told His disciples that "a spirit does

not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." We have a material body and an immaterial spirit, but God is purely spirit and therefore isn't limited by physical form.

> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. (Luke 24:39)

The Bible also reveals that because God is a spiritual being, He is invisible to human eyes. For example, in Colossians 1:15, Paul spoke of "the invisible God," and in 1 Timothy 1:17, he called God "the King of the ages, immortal, invisible." This highlights the spiritual nature of God, who can't be seen or fully understood by the human mind.

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Colossians 1:15)
>
> To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

However, throughout Scripture, there were times when God revealed Himself in visible forms, known as theophanies. For example, in Genesis 15:17, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a blazing torch that passed between the pieces of his sacrifice, and in Exodus 3:2, Moses encountered the burning bush. Of course, God isn't a literal torch or burning bush; this was only a temporary symbol of God's presence to aid communication with His servants.

The Bible reveals that theophanies aren't literal depictions of God. Daniel's vision of the "Ancient of Days" (in Daniel 7:13) must be symbolic rather than literal because John 1:18 says that "no one has ever seen God." Jesus Christ is the clearest revelation of God because He is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) who has made the Father known (John 1:18).

> I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. (Daniel 7:13)
>
> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

These first two attributes of God provide a foundation for understanding the profound and mysterious nature of the God we worship. They remind us that God is both personal and supernatural, inviting us to approach Him with reverence and awe.

Third, God is personal. This means that God possesses personal attributes and has relationships with others, particularly with human beings. Unlike an impersonal force or distant deity, God reveals Himself as one who thinks, feels, and wills. These personal attributes are essential to understanding how God interacts with the world and how we, as His creatures, can know and relate to Him.

The Bible reveals that God has intellect. Isaiah 40:28 declares that His understanding is unsearchable, and Isaiah 55:9 says that His thoughts and ways are far above ours.

> Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)
>
> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and

> my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9)

God's wisdom and understanding are infinite. His intellect is beyond human comprehension, and His superior intellect guarantees that He governs the universe with perfect wisdom, knowing all things—past, present, and future.

The Bible also reveals that God has emotions. He experiences and expresses feelings that are genuine and yet perfectly aligned with His holy nature. Genesis 6:6 says that God was "grieved" in His heart over the wickedness of humanity, and John 3:16 describes God's incomparable love.

> And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. (Genesis 6:6)
>
> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

This love is not a mere abstract concept but a driving force behind God's plan to save humanity.

The Bible reveals that God has a sovereign will, which He exercises according to His perfect plan. Psalm 115:3 states, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." In John 6:38, Jesus affirmed His submission to the Father's will.

> Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. (Psalm 115:3)
>
> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38)

God's will is absolute and unrestricted by any external force. His will is central to His actions in the world, guiding the execution of His plan from creation to consummation.

Through these personal attributes—intellect, emotions, and will—God demonstrates that He is not a distant or detached deity but a God who is intimately involved with His creation. He thinks, feels, and acts with intentionality and love, inviting us into a personal relationship with Him.

Fourth, God is eternal. He is without beginning or end, existing infinitely for all time. The eternity of God is one of His most awe-inspiring attributes, distinguishing Him from all created beings, who are bound by time. God's eternal nature assures us that He is constant, unchanging, and ever-present.

The Bible reveals that God always has and always will exist. Genesis 21:33 says that Yahweh is "the Everlasting God," a title that highlights His everlasting nature. Psalm 90:2 also affirms His eternal existence.

> Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. (Genesis 21:33)
>
> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

God's existence stretches infinitely into the past and the future. His existence doesn't depend on anything outside of Himself. He always was, is, and will be.

The Bible reveals that God isn't subject to the passing of time. Psalm 90:4 states that a

thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and 2 Peter 3:8 echoes this truth.

> For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4)
>
> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)

Unlike humans, who experience time sequentially, God transcends time. His eternal nature means that He exists simultaneously in the past, present, and future. He isn't limited by time the way we are.

Understanding God's eternal nature provides comfort and assurance to believers. It means that God's promises are sure, His plans are unchanging, and His presence is always with us. As the eternal God, He is the foundation upon which our faith rests, the one constant in a world of change.

Fifth, God is omnipresent. This refers to His ability to be everywhere all the time. As an infinite and incorporeal Being, God is not limited by space or physical boundaries. He is fully present in every part of creation, while at the same time transcending it. God's omnipresence should inspire a sense of comfort and accountability because we know that God is always watching us.

The Bible reveals that no one can hide from God; He is everywhere. In Psalm 139:7–8, David asked where he could flee from God's presence, and in Jeremiah 23:24, God questioned whether anyone could hide in secret places.

> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! (Psalm 139:7–8)
>
> Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:24)

These verses show that God is not confined to any one location but is present everywhere, seeing all and knowing all. Wherever we go, God is there.

The Bible reveals that divine body parts are mere figures of speech. For example, David asked God to keep him as the apple of His eye and hide him in the shadow of His wings (Psalm 17:8), while Isaiah described God measuring the waters in the hollow of His hand (Isaiah 40:12).

> Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 17:8)
>
> Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. (Psalm 18:8)
>
> Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? (Isaiah 40:12)

These statements are not meant to imply that God has a physical body; they describe His watchful care and righteous judgment in symbolic terms we can understand, while still acknowledging His infinite, incorporeal nature.

Sixth, God is omniscient. God's omniscience refers to His perfect and complete knowledge of all things. Unlike human knowledge, which is limited and fallible, God's knowledge is infinite and infallible. He knows everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen, including the most intimate details of our lives and the grandest events of history. God's omniscience assures us that nothing is hidden from Him.

The Bible reveals that God is perfect in understanding. Isaiah 40:28 declares that "his understanding is unsearchable." God's knowledge is beyond human comprehension. He possesses perfect insight into all things, and His understanding is never clouded by confusion or error. His perfect knowledge is foundational to His wisdom, as He knows the best course of action in every situation.

The Bible reveals that God sees and knows all things. Hebrews 4:13 notes that no creature is hidden from His sight, and Matthew 10:30 teaches that the hairs of our head are numbered.

> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)
>
> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:30)

God is fully aware of everything in creation. This highlights the thoroughness of His knowledge; He sees all and nothing escapes His notice. Even the smallest details of our lives are known to Him.

The Bible also reveals that God knows our thoughts. In 1 Chronicles 28:9, David instructed Solomon to serve God with a willing mind because the Lord searches all hearts, and Psalm 139:4 affirms His complete knowledge of our words.

> And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. (1 Chronicles 28:9)
>
> Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. (Psalm 139:4)

Not only does God know our actions, but He also knows our innermost thoughts and intentions. This level of knowledge reveals God's deep involvement in our lives and His intimate understanding of our very being.

The Bible also reveals that God knows all events to come. Isaiah 42:9 and Isaiah 46:9–10 express His ability to declare the end from the beginning.

> Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:9)
>
> Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’ (Isaiah 46:9–10)

God's omniscience extends to the future. He knows everything that will happen and has

declared it from the beginning. Nothing is outside of His sovereign control.

God's omniscience provides believers with a profound sense of security. Knowing that God is aware of all things—past, present, and future—means that we can trust in His perfect wisdom and care. It also calls us to live lives of integrity, knowing that nothing is hidden from His sight, and to take comfort in the truth that our lives are fully known and lovingly watched over by the One who holds all knowledge.

Seventh, God is omnipotent. God can do all things that are consistent with His nature, character, and sound reason. This underscores the unlimited power of God, who can do anything that He chooses. God's omnipotence is foundational to the biblical understanding of His sovereignty and providence because it assures us that God is fully capable of executing His plan in the world and our lives.

The Bible reveals that His name is El Shaddai, God Almighty. In Genesis 17:1, God appeared to Abram and revealed this divine title.

> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." (Genesis 17:1)

This name emphasizes God's supreme power and authority over all creation. As El Shaddai, God is not limited by any external force, and His power is sufficient to fulfill all His promises.

The Bible reveals that God created the heavens and the earth. In Jeremiah 32:17, the prophet exclaims that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

> Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32:17)

The creation of the universe is perhaps the most profound demonstration of God's omnipotence. The act of creation—bringing the entire cosmos into existence from nothing—reveals the extent of God's power. His ability to create and sustain all things testifies to His absolute authority and capability.

The Bible reveals that with God, all things are possible. In Matthew 19:26, Jesus asserted God's omnipotence.

> But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

God's power is not constrained by human limitations, but His omnipotence does not mean that He will do anything that is inconsistent with His character or that is logically contradictory. God always exercises His power in harmony with His wisdom, love, and holiness.

Eighth, God is transcendent. Unlike pantheism, which says that God is the universe and the universe is God, the Bible teaches that God is separate from the world He made, although He is intimately involved in it. God's transcendence emphasizes His majesty, holiness, and uniqueness, showing that He is not confined by the limitations of the physical world or by the constraints of created beings.

The Bible reveals that God is distinct from the universe. Genesis 1:1 and Acts 17:24 demonstrate His role as Creator outside of created temples.

> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)
>
> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man. (Acts 17:24)

God isn't a part of the created order. He existed before all things and is the source of all things.

The Bible also reveals that God is exalted above the universe. Isaiah 40:22 speaks of Him sitting above the circle of the earth, and Isaiah 57:15 describes His high and holy place.

> It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in. (Isaiah 40:22)
>
> For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

This expresses God's exalted position above all creation, emphasizing His sovereign rule over the entire cosmos. It captures both God's transcendence and His immanence, showing that while God is far above creation, He is also near to those who humble themselves before Him.

The doctrine of God's transcendence prohibits any attempt to reduce God to a mere part of the universe or to equate Him with the natural world. It reminds us that God is unique, infinitely greater than anything we can imagine, but He is also a personal Being who chooses to reveal Himself to His creatures and engage with them in meaningful ways. This balance of transcendence and immanence is central to the biblical description of God, inviting us to revere Him as the sovereign Lord of all while also drawing near to Him in faith and worship.

Ninth, God is immanent. While God is transcendent and distinct from His creation, He is also immanent, meaning that He is present and actively involved in the world. This refutes Deism, which says that God set the universe in motion but remains distant, uninvolved, and detached from it. God's immanence means that He is not only near to us but also deeply concerned with the state of the world and the lives of His creatures.

The Bible reveals that God is close to us, so He can be known. Deuteronomy 4:7 and Acts 17:27 highlight His proximity to humanity.

> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? (Deuteronomy 4:7)
>
> ...that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:27)

God is not removed from His creation but is close at hand, making Himself known to those who seek Him. His immanence means that He is accessible and available, inviting us to know Him personally. He has a unique relationship with humanity, characterized by His readiness to hear and respond to our prayers.

The Bible also reveals that God is involved in the affairs of this world. In Daniel 4:24–25, God intervenes in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar, and in Matthew 5:45, Jesus teaches that God

sends rain on the just and unjust.

> ...this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. (Daniel 4:24–25)
>
> ...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

God actively guides the events of history and the daily affairs of the world. He is not a passive observer but an active participant in the life of His creation, sustaining it and guiding it according to His plan. He is not distant or unconcerned but intimately involved in our lives. He is near to us, ready to hear our prayers, and deeply engaged in the world He has made, continually working out His purpose for the good of His people and the glory of His name.

Tenth, God is immutable. God's immutability refers to His unchanging nature, attributes, purposes, and promises. Unlike created beings, who are subject to change, growth, and decay, God is eternally the same. This doctrine provides a foundation of stability and assurance for believers, as it guarantees that God remains consistent and faithful in all His ways.

The Bible reveals that God does not evolve, decay, or perish. Psalm 102:25–27 contrasts the changing heavens with God's eternal endurance, and Romans 1:23 speaks of the immortal God.

> In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing You will change them, and they will be passed on. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end. (Psalm 102:25–27)
>
> ...and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:23)

Unlike the created order, which is subject to change and decay, God is eternal and unchanging. He isn't subject to the processes of change, aging, or death that affect the rest of creation.

The Bible also reveals that God's character does not change. Isaiah 51:6 notes that His righteousness will never be dismayed, and 1 Kings 8:56 affirms that not one word of His promise has failed.

> Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. (Isaiah 51:6)
>
> "Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant." (1 Kings 8:56)

God's immutability also extends to His moral character and attributes. While the physical world is temporary, God's righteousness and faithfulness endure forever. The unchanging nature of God's character provides a solid foundation for our trust in Him.

The Bible reveals that God's decisions do not change. Malachi 3:6, Romans 11:29, and James 1:17 confirm that His purposes are fixed.

> For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)
>
> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)
>
> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

God's unchanging nature is the basis for His faithfulness to His covenant promises. His immutability ensures that His plans are carried out without deviation and that His promises remain steadfast.

The Bible also reveals that God responds to changes in our behavior. Psalm 18:25–27 describes how God interacts with humanity based on their character.

> To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. (Psalm 18:25–27 NIV)

God's interactions with us are consistent with His unchanging character but vary according to our responses to Him. When we repent and turn to God, He is faithful to forgive; when we persist in sin, He is just to discipline. This does not imply that God's nature changes. He is always dependable and His promises will never fail. In a world where everything is subject to change, we can find comfort in the unchanging nature of God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Lastly, God is incomprehensible. While we can truly know God, we can't fully understand Him. God's infinite nature is beyond the capacity of finite human minds. This doesn't mean that He is completely unknowable, but there will always be aspects of His being, wisdom, and purposes that are beyond our full grasp. So, we should approach God with humility and reverence, recognizing the limits of our understanding while rejoicing in the truth He has revealed to us.

The Bible reveals that God is unique; no one is like Him. Isaiah 46:9 and Jeremiah 10:6 emphasize His incomparable nature.

> Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me... (Isaiah 46:9)
>
> There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. (Jeremiah 10:6)

God is incomparable and stands alone as the only true God. Because God is unique, He can't be fully compared to anything within creation, and thus He remains beyond the complete comprehension of finite beings. This uniqueness is a fundamental aspect of God's incomprehensibility.

The Bible also reveals that His wisdom is beyond our understanding. Isaiah 55:8–9 and Romans 11:33 describe the vast depth of His thoughts and judgment.

> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)
>
> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Romans 11:33)

There is a vast difference between God's thoughts and human thoughts; His ways and plans are far beyond our limited understanding. His wisdom and knowledge are so profound that they are beyond human investigation or comprehension. We can only grasp a small part of His infinite understanding.

The Bible reveals that no one can know God unless the Son reveals Him. Matthew 11:27 and John 1:18 explain that divine knowledge is mediated through Jesus Christ.

> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matthew 11:27)
>
> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

The knowledge of God is not something we can attain on our own; it is a gift that comes through the Son of God. Jesus, as the incarnate Word of God, is the ultimate revelation of the Father, making known to us the God who is otherwise beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Through Christ, we are given true knowledge of God, yet even this knowledge is partial, as the full glory and majesty of God remain beyond our finite understanding.

The doctrine of God's incomprehensibility reminds us of the mystery and majesty of God. It encourages us to approach Him with humility, knowing that there will always be more to learn and discover about Him. Yet, it also assures us that what we do know is true and reliable, revealed by God Himself for our salvation and instruction. As we grow in our knowledge of God, we can find joy in the fact that there is always more to explore and that our relationship with Him will continue to deepen for all eternity.

The Moral Attributes of God

The moral attributes of God describe His perfect character and ethical standards by which He governs His creation. These attributes are foundational to understanding who God is and how He interacts with the world. They reflect God's moral perfection and provide the basis for the ethical behavior expected of His people.

First, God is holy. God's holiness is a key aspect of His nature. He is utterly separate from all sin and evil, possessing absolute moral purity. The holiness of God is not merely one attribute among many but is the very essence of who He is. Everything about God—His actions, His thoughts, His judgments—is characterized by holiness. This attribute sets God apart from all creation, and He demands that His people also pursue holiness.

The Bible reveals that God has nothing to do with evil or wickedness. Psalm 5:4 and James 1:13 emphasize His absolute distance from sin.

> For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. (Psalm 5:4)
>
> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (James 1:13)

God’s holiness is incompatible with sin. He is entirely separate from sin and can’t tolerate evil in His presence. He neither engages in nor promotes evil in any form. His holy nature ensures that all His actions are pure and righteous.

The Bible also reveals that God’s people must be holy. Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:15–16 state His command for holiness among believers.

> Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. (Leviticus 19:2)
>
> But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15–16)

The holiness of God not only defines His character but also sets the standard for His people. The call to holiness is an invitation to live in a manner that reflects God’s own purity and moral excellence. As God’s people, we are to be set apart from sin and dedicated to living in obedience to His commands.

Second, God is righteous. God’s righteousness refers to His unwavering commitment to doing what is right and just. It is closely related to His holiness, as God’s righteousness is an expression of His holy character. God’s righteousness guarantees that His actions are always fair, just, and morally upright. We can trust God to govern the world and our lives with perfect justice.

The Bible reveals that God is inherently righteous and upright. Deuteronomy 32:4 and Daniel 9:14 praise His flawless deeds and justice.

> The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4)
>
> Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. (Daniel 9:14)

The righteousness of God is an inherent aspect of His character. His actions are always right and just because they flow from His inherently righteous nature. His righteousness is evident in all His deeds, whether in blessing or judgment. His actions are always in line with His just character.

The Bible also reveals that God is just and fair in all His judgments. Zephaniah 3:5 and Revelation 16:7 affirm that His judgments are true and right.

> The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth

> his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame. (Zephaniah 3:5)
>
> And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” (Revelation 16:7)

God’s righteousness ensures that He is just and fair in all His judgments. He never acts unfairly or unjustly. Even in His ultimate judgments, God’s actions are true and righteous. His righteousness guarantees that He will always follow His perfect moral standards.

Third, God is loving. The attribute of love is central to the character of God. God’s love is not merely a sentiment or an emotion; it is an active, sacrificial giving for the benefit of others. His love is pure and selfless, flowing from His very nature. In God’s love, we see the perfect example of how we are to love others. It is a love that seeks the highest good of the beloved, even at great personal cost. This divine love is a source of immense comfort and assurance for believers, as it reveals the depth of God’s commitment to us.

The Bible reveals that God is love, and He engenders love in His people. 1 John 4:16 connects God's nature directly to love.

> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16)

This profound statement emphasizes that love is not just an attribute of God but is intrinsic to His very being. Because God is love, those who are in a relationship with Him are called to love others. God’s love is transformative, empowering His people to love in the way He loves. This love is the evidence of His presence within us, marking us as His children.

The Bible also reveals that God is gracious and merciful, patient and kind. Psalm 145:8 describes His slow anger and abounding love.

> The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Psalm 145:8)

God’s love is expressed through His grace, mercy, patience, and kindness. These attributes reflect the depth of God’s compassion and care for His creation. He is patient with us, giving us time to repent and turn to Him, and His kindness is evident in the many blessings He bestows upon us, even when we are undeserving. God’s grace and mercy are the outpouring of His loving nature, offering forgiveness and restoration to all who seek Him.

The Bible reveals that God is benevolent and generous. Psalm 145:14–15 and James 1:5 highlight His care and open-handed provision.

> The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. (Psalm 145:14–15)
>
> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

God’s provision for the needs of His creatures is a testament to His generosity. His love is not limited; it overflows in acts of kindness to His people.

The Bible reveals that God even sent His Son to die for our sins. John 3:16 records the ultimate

demonstration of His love.

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

This act of love demonstrates the lengths to which God was willing to go to save humanity. Jesus' death on the cross was the supreme sacrifice, offered out of love to redeem us from sin and death. This sacrificial love is the foundation of the gospel and the reason for our hope.

The Bible reveals that God exercises tough love when necessary. Proverbs 3:12 and Revelation 3:19 explain that His loving care includes discipline.

> For the LORD disciplines the one He loves, as does a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:12)

> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

While God's love is gentle and compassionate, it is also firm and corrective when necessary. God's tough love is an expression of His commitment to our growth and holiness. He disciplines us not out of anger, but out of love, seeking to guide us back to the right path and to mold us into the image of Christ. This aspect of God's love ensures that we are not left to our own devices but are continually shaped by His loving hand.

Fourth, God is faithful. God's faithfulness is a cornerstone of His relationship with His people. He is utterly dependable and trustworthy. He keeps His promises, watches over His people, and remains steadfast in His commitment to us, even when we are unfaithful. God's faithfulness means that He will never abandon us and His word is always true.

The Bible reveals that God keeps His promises to His people. Deuteronomy 7:9 and Joshua 21:45 affirm His covenant-keeping nature.

> Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

> Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. (Joshua 21:45)

Throughout Scripture, God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His unwavering commitment to fulfill His promises. His promises are enduring, extending far beyond our immediate circumstances. God's faithfulness is the bedrock of our trust in Him, knowing that He will do what He has said.

The Bible reveals that God will watch over His people. 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3 confirm His protection against temptation and evil.

> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

> But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

God's faithfulness is evident in His vigilant care for His people. These promises reveal God's

commitment to our well-being, ensuring that we are never left without His support and guidance. His faithfulness ensures that He is always present to protect and sustain us.

The Bible reveals that God will forgive His people. Matthew 6:14 and 1 John 1:9 promise forgiveness when we confess our sins.

> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (Matthew 6:14)
>
> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

God's faithfulness is also evident in His readiness to forgive those who come to Him in repentance. This reflects the broader biblical truth that God is faithful to forgive when we confess our sins. God's faithfulness means that He is always willing to restore us to a right relationship with Him, no matter how far we have strayed.

Fifth, God is true. God's truthfulness means He is always truthful and cannot lie. His truth is absolute, unchanging, and the foundation of all reality. In a world where deception and falsehood are prevalent, God's truthfulness is a beacon of reliability and certainty. We can trust that God's word is always true and that He will fulfill all His promises.

The Bible reveals that God is always truthful and cannot lie. John 17:17, Titus 1:2, and Hebrews 6:18 declare the absolute reliability of His word.

> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)
>
> ...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began... (Titus 1:2)
>
> ...so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:18)

God is the embodiment of truth, so He can't lie, and His word is the ultimate standard of truth. God's truthfulness ensures that we can place our trust in Him without fear of deception or falsehood. His word is the ultimate guide for our lives, providing a firm foundation for our faith and conduct.

The Trinity of God

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most profound and mysterious aspects of Christian theology, yet it is foundational to understanding the nature of God. It distinguishes Christianity from all other monotheistic faiths because it says that there are three eternal distinctions in the one divine essence of the Godhead. This is not merely a theological abstraction but an essential revelation about the nature of God, His work in salvation, and the dynamics of the Christian life.

Basic Statement: God is One Being Existing as Three Coequal, Coeternal Persons

The basic definition of the Trinity is that God is one Being existing as three coequal, coeternal

Persons. While this concept may seem difficult to grasp, it is biblically sound and central to the Christian faith. Part of the problem is that this definition uses specific theological terms that most people don't fully understand, so we will explain each of the key terms in greater detail.

First, the term "God" refers to Yahweh, the one true God of Israel. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to Israel by His personal name Yahweh, which means "I AM WHO I AM." This name, often translated as "LORD" in capital letters in English Bibles, shows that God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging. The New Testament repeatedly quotes from the Old Testament in ways that identify the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Second, the term "one Being" means God is one undivided spiritual essence. God's essence is His very nature. Unlike humans, who have physical bodies composed of distinct parts, God is Spirit. This spiritual essence is indivisible; God isn't composed of different parts. When we say God is "one Being," we mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the same divine nature; they are fully and completely God. There isn't one-third of God in each Person; each Person possesses all the attributes of divinity.

Third, the term "Persons" refers to three distinct personal manifestations. While God is one in essence, He has revealed Himself through three distinct personal manifestations. Over the centuries, theologians have struggled to find the right vocabulary to adequately describe this truth. The word "person" originally came from the Latin term persona, meaning an actor's face mask, and by extension, his role in a play. Today, many people confuse this term with an individual being.

While we may struggle to express this truth, the fact remains that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct in how they relate to one another and creation. The Father is distinct from the Son, the Son is distinct from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father. They are not three separate gods (which would be polytheism), but they are distinct modes of being who exist in perfect unity.

Noted theologian Alister McGrath offered the following explanation of this threefold distinction:

> "A helpful way of looking at this is to say that three essential models must be used if the full depth of the Christian experience and understanding of God is to be expressed adequately. No one picture, image or model of God is good enough--and these three models are essential if the basic outlines of the Christian understanding of God is to be preserved. The first model is that of the transcendent God who lies beyond the world as its source and creator; the second is the human face of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ; the third is that of the immanent God who is present and active throughout his creation."

Fourth, the term "coequal" refers to their divine nature, not their distinct roles. While the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have different roles, they are equally divine. Each Person possesses all the attributes of deity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. However, the Father has the role of sending the Son into the world and calling unbelievers, the Son has the role of redeeming believers and headship over the church, while the Holy Spirit has the role of regenerating, gifting, and sanctifying believers. These distinct roles don't imply inferiority or superiority, but show how God works in the world.

Fifth, the term "coeternal" means the three Persons always exist. There was never a time when the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit came into being. They are coeternal, meaning they have always existed and always will. Some mistakenly believe that the Father created the Son or the Holy Spirit, but the Bible teaches that all three Persons are eternal. This means that the Father didn't create the Son or the Spirit, and they didn't have a beginning; all three are equally eternal.

Understanding the Trinity is essential for a robust Christian faith, as it shapes our understanding of who God is, how He acts, and how we relate to Him. The Trinity is not just a theological concept but the very heart of the Christian faith, revealing the depth and breadth of God's love, wisdom, and power. As we contemplate the mystery of the Trinity, we are drawn into a deeper relationship with God, who is one in essence and perfect in unity and love.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is Consistent with Scripture

While the doctrine of the Trinity is complex and beyond full human understanding, it is fully consistent with Scripture. The Trinity isn't a later invention of the church; it is revealed in both Old and New Testament texts. We can summarize the biblical evidence for the Trinity into five main points.

First, there is only one true God, Yahweh. The Bible clearly teaches monotheism, the belief that there is only one God. This oneness of God is foundational to the doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian faith.

> Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god." (Isaiah 44:6)
>
> I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me... (Isaiah 45:5)
>
> Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." (1 Corinthians 8:4)

Scripture consistently teaches that Yahweh alone is God. Groups that reject this core teaching always end up teaching some form of polytheism.

Second, the Father is Yahweh. Scripture repeatedly equates the Father with Yahweh, the one true God. While some groups argue against different aspects of the Trinity, this is perhaps the least controversial assertion.

In Hebrews 1:13, the author cites Psalm 110:1, where David quotes Yahweh speaking to the Messiah.

> And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (Hebrews 1:13)
>
> The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

In these passages, Yahweh is speaking to the Messiah, the son of David, so Scripture equates Yahweh with the Father. Hebrews 5:5 also quotes Psalm 2:7, where Yahweh God declares, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you," highlighting the Father's divine authority and

identity as Yahweh.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” (Hebrews 5:5)

> I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” (Psalm 2:7)

So, Scripture clearly identifies the Father as God, sharing the same divine name and attributes as Yahweh.

Third, the Son is Yahweh. Throughout history, many people have struggled with this truth. Some have tried to maintain strict monotheism by saying that Jesus is a created being, a demi-god who did not exist prior to His human birth. Or, they claim that God merely entered the body of Jesus at his baptism and departed from him when he died. But the Bible clearly asserts the full deity of Jesus Christ.

In John 8:58, Jesus claimed, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." This statement is an allusion to Exodus 3:14, where God reveals His name to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM," identifying Himself as Yahweh.

> Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)
>
> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14)

By claiming to exist before Abraham and claiming to be the I AM who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Jesus was claiming to be Yahweh, God incarnate. The Jews who heard this immediately understood what He was implying and picked up stones to kill Him, but He miraculously escaped their grasp. In Colossians 2:9, Paul further verified the deity of Christ.

> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. (Colossians 2:9)

Jesus is not a lesser god or a created being; He is fully and completely Yahweh, possessing the fullness of divine nature. He existed prior to His human birth and then took on flesh so He could die for the sins of humanity. He is fully God and fully man in one Person.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is Yahweh. When people hear about the Father, they naturally picture an old man with a long gray beard sitting on a throne in heaven, even though the Bible says that no one has seen God at any time. The term "Father" makes it easy for people to think of God as a Person. The same is true for Jesus; people read the gospels and easily accept the fact that Jesus is a Person even if they don’t quite understand how He could be fully God and fully human at the same time.

But the Holy Spirit is nebulous and ethereal. He appears like a dove when John baptized Jesus or as tongues of fire on Pentecost, which isn’t very personable. His name, the Advocate, also doesn’t readily suggest that He is a divine person. But a spirit can be a person without having a material body, and Scripture clearly equates the Holy Spirit with Yahweh.

For example, in Acts 28:25–26, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:8–9, where Isaiah hears the voice of Yahweh calling him. Paul attributes this voice to the Holy Spirit, equating the Spirit with Yahweh.

> And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”’” (Acts 28:25–26)
>
> And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’” (Isaiah 6:8–9)

Also, in Acts 5:3–4, when Peter confronted Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit, he declared that Ananias had lied to God.

> But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” (Acts 5:3–4)

This passage shows that the Holy Spirit is a person, because it is impossible to lie to a force or an impersonal power; it also equates lying to the Holy Spirit with lying to God. The Bible shows that the Holy Spirit is Yahweh, fully divine and worthy of worship. He is the Comforter, Counselor, and Advocate who regenerates sinners and empowers believers for lives of holiness and service to God.

Fifth, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. While the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are identified as Yahweh, they are also distinct Persons within the Godhead. This distinction is evident in the teaching of Jesus, particularly in John’s gospel.

> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever... (John 14:16)
>
> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)
>
> But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (John 15:26)

These verses reveal that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons who interact with one another, yet they are united in essence and purpose. In the Middle Ages, people depicted this using a series of interconnected circles, which was originally called the Shield of the Faith, based on the analogy of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:13–17, but in modern times, people call this the Shield of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a contradiction but a divine mystery revealed in Scripture. It asserts that there are three eternal distinctions in the one divine essence of the Godhead. This truth is essential for understanding the fullness of God’s revelation and His work in the world. As Christians, we worship one God, who has revealed Himself through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three coequal and coeternal Persons, existing in perfect unity and love.

Analogies from Nature

While the doctrine of the Trinity is a profound mystery, science provides some useful analogies that illustrate how nature can have both unity and diversity. These imperfect examples from the physical world show us that the Trinity is not necessarily a logical contradiction. They remind us that God's nature is far beyond our understanding and that we can only begin to scratch the surface of this mystery.

First, water can exist as a solid, liquid, and gas at the same time. One of the simplest analogies is that water molecules can exist as a solid, liquid, and a gas. Under precise conditions of temperature and pressure, called the triple point, water can coexist in all three states at the same time. This shows how one substance can take on different forms without changing its nature. Likewise, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, but they share the same divine essence. Just as ice, water, and steam are all molecules of H_2O, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are fully God. Each Person is distinct in function and relation but remains unified in the same divine essence.

This analogy shows how God's triune nature doesn't mean He is divided into three gods. Just as water retains its chemical identity in different forms, God remains one while existing in three distinct ways.

Second, light behaves like a wave and a particle. In physics, light acts like a wave, spreading out over space like ripples on the surface of a pond, but it also behaves like a particle, with a definite location and discrete energy. This phenomenon, known as wave-particle duality, shows how a single photon can exhibit two apparently contradictory properties at the same time. In the same way, the doctrine of the Trinity asserts that God is one Being who exists in three distinct ways.

Just as light does not switch between being a wave and a particle, but is both at the same time, God does not change between being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is all three simultaneously. Light's dual nature parallels the mystery of the Trinity. God's oneness and threeness coexisting, even if it challenges our understanding of how something can be both at once.

Third, entangled particles share a single quantum state. In quantum mechanics, when two particles become entangled, they share the same quantum state, even when separated by great distances. Changes to one particle instantly affect the other, as if they are the same particle existing in two different places at the same time. This illustrates how two distinct entities can still function in perfect unity, as if they are one.

In a similar way, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, but they share the same divine essence and act in complete unity. They are never disconnected from each other just as entangled particles cannot be fully understood apart from their shared quantum state. The distinctness of the Persons within the Trinity does not disrupt their unity, just as entangled particles remain inseparable in their quantum relationship. This analogy reflects the perfect harmony and indivisible unity of the Trinity.

Some people say that the doctrine of the Trinity is too complicated and counter intuitive to be true, but certain concepts in modern science, such as the quantum nature of space and time, are also complicated and counter intuitive, but they are still true. Physicists, such as Albert

Einstein, have tried to untangle the spooky behavior of entangled particles without success. Other physicists have speculated about the nature of reality because the universe appears to behave like a very sophisticated computer simulation, while theoretical physicists have proposed the existence of extra dimensions to account for the strange behavior of exotic subatomic particles.

If massive black holes can literally turn space and time inside out and then evaporate due to virtual particles generating Hawking radiation, how can we say that the Trinity is more unbelievable than the unexplained phenomena that we observe in our own universe?

While these analogies help us grasp the concept of the Trinity, none of them fully capture the depth of God's nature. God is unique and supernatural, far beyond the physical realities of this world. These analogies simply provide a way for us to better understand the coexistence of unity and diversity within the Trinity. Ultimately, the doctrine of the Trinity reveals the mystery of God's infinite nature, which surpasses human understanding, while remaining consistent with both Scripture and reason.

The Trinity may seem paradoxical, but it shows us the depth and breadth of God's nature. God isn't limited by the rules that apply to finite human beings. He exists in perfect unity, but He also reveals Himself in personal terms that express His love, mercy, and justice. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have unique roles in our salvation, yet all three work together as one to accomplish this. The Trinity preserves the mystery of the three eternal distinctions in the one divine essence, upholding God's infinite nature while remaining true to the clear teaching of Scripture.

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