

PURPOSE OF STUDY: To show that God is made up of three individual, distinct, co-eternal persons united in thought and purpose, and that this union is to be the model for all creation.

TEXTS:

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| 1. GE 1:26 (11:7) | 8. 1CO 12:11 |
| 2. DT 6:4 | 9. JN 14:26 |
| 3. MT 19:4-6 | 10. EPH 4:30 |
| 4. JN 1:1, 14 (MT 1:23) | 11. AC 5:3, 4 (MT 12:31) |
| 5. JN 8:56-9; EX 3:14 (JN 10:30) | 11. MT 3:13-17 (28:18-20) |
| 6. HEB 1:8 | 12. GA 4:5-6 (EPH 3:14) |
| 7. JN 15:26; 16:7, 13 | 13. EPH 4:1-6 |

THE STUDY:

- Does the Bible refer to God in the singular or the plural? GE 1:26 (11:7)**
“Let Us make man...” The Hebrew word for God here and throughout the OT is the word Elohim, which is a plural word, thus the translation “Let Us...”, a clear indicator here that God is more than one being.
- How does God express the unity that exists among the Godhead? DT 6:4**
*“The LORD our God [YHWH Elohim]... is one!” The Hebrew phrase here uses the proper name of God, YHWH (often translated “Jehovah”) followed by Elohim, which is plural. Some argue that this means God is only one being; yet the Hebrew text makes it clear that this one-ness is not talking one in **number** but one in **unity of purpose**.*
- How does the Bible describe this same oneness in the marriage relationship? MT 19:4-6**
In marriage, “the two become one flesh”. This is not to say that they become one individual being, but two personal beings united in one purpose. If God can say this of two personal beings, then it should be easy to accept the same of three personal beings being declared to be “one” – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God the Son

- How does the Bible describe Jesus, the Son of God? JN 1:1, 14 (MT 1:23)**
Jesus is the eternal God; He was with God from eternity, and is declared to be God by the apostle John.
- Did Jesus claim to be God? JN 8:56-9; EX 3:14 (JN 10:30)**
Jesus assumes the name “I AM,” the name He gave Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). While some will argue that Christ is not really assuming the divine name, it becomes very evident that this is exactly what He was doing when we see the Jewish leaders take up stones to stone Him to death for blasphemy.
- What does God the Father call His Son? HEB 1:8**
If the Father can call His Son God, can we refer to Him as anything less? We see that the apostle John claims that Jesus is God; Jesus claims that He is God; and the Father Himself claims that Jesus is God. It is evident from the Scripture that Jesus is a part of the Godhead.

God the Spirit

7. **Did Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit as a personal Being or just an energy force? JN 15:26; 16:7, 13**
The Holy Spirit is a personal being. Here the personal pronoun “He” is used in conjunction with the Greek word parakletos (“comforter”, “helper”), which demands a personal pronoun. In other words, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as a personal being. Other texts give support to the personality of the Holy Spirit. [Note: Sometimes the Holy Spirit is referred to as “it” in the Scripture (Ro. 8:26, KJV), not because the Spirit is not a personal being, but because the personal pronoun in the original manuscript lacked a gender; in other words, the passage speaks of a personal being, but does not specify whether that being is a “him” or “her”].
8. **What personal characteristics does the Holy Spirit possess?**
- a. **1CO 12:11 – The Holy Spirit wills, or chooses.**
Only a personal being can make a choice.
- b. **JN 14:26 – The Holy Spirit teaches.**
Once again, only a personal being can teach.
- c. **EPH 4:30 – The Holy Spirit experiences the emotion of grief.**
Only a personal being can experience emotions.
9. **Does the Bible refer to the Holy Spirit as God? AC 5:3, 4 (MT 12:31)**
Peter said that lying to the Holy Spirit was lying to God. Further, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed, which is a sin which can only be committed against God.

The Significance of the Godhead

10. **What primary purpose do we find the Godhead united in? MT 3:13-17 (28:18-20)**
All three persons of the Godhead are present and accounted for at the baptism of Jesus; all three are to be named in the baptism of believers. This demonstrates their oneness of purpose and mission in the divine union of the Godhead for the salvation of lost humanity and the blessing of the entirety of Their creation.
11. **How are we called into that purpose? GA 4:5-6 (EPH 3:14)**
When we are “born again,” we are adopted into the heavenly Family.
12. **What are we urged to do as a part of the divine-human family? EPH 4:1-6**
To keep the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The unity that exists in the Godhead is the most glorious and harmonious unity of thought and purpose. We find our mission and purpose in aligning ourselves with Their mission and purpose of reaching the lost. Our success is guaranteed by the three most powerful beings in the universe.

APPEAL:

In the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we behold God’s ideal for His creation. We have a perfect and complete model of self-sacrificial love to follow in our families, in our churches, in our world. The Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, that we might behold this ideal for humanity. He sent the Holy Spirit as a regenerating power to enable humanity to reach this ideal. He raised up His church on the earth to experience and to model this ideal, and proclaim it to the world. God wants us to experience the joy and fulfillment that comes from the self-sacrificing love and unity that exists in each member of the Godhead. Today, He invites you to experience His ideal for you in your home, in your church, and in your world. Will you choose today to become a part of this great divine-human family?

DIFFICULT TEXTS/OBJECTIONS:

CL 1:15-18: Jesus is called “the firstborn of every creature” (KJV).

Newer translations render this text “the firstborn of /over all creation” (NKJV, NASB, ESV, NIV). Some say this refers to the fact that Jesus is not divine, but a created being. However, a careful reading of the context clears things up. The following verse explains this phrase by saying “For (because) all things were created... through Him and for Him...” And all things are held together “in Him... that in all things He may have the *preeminence*.” In other words, Paul uses the phrase “firstborn of /over every creature” not for the purpose of saying Jesus was created, but to refer to Christ’s role as Creator, and as the firstborn in a royal family who is heir to the throne.

“... A figurative expression describing Jesus Christ as first in rank, the figure being drawn from the dignity and office held by the first-born in a human family, or, more precisely, the first-born in a royal family. Christ’s position is unique, authoritative, and absolute. He has been entrusted with all prerogatives and authority in heaven and earth. Paul emphasizes the position of Christ because he is seeking to meet the arguments of the false teachers, who declared that Christ was created, and who denied His supremacy.”
– *SDA Bible Commentary, vo. 7, p. 191.*

It is very clear from the context that Paul couldn’t be referring to Christ as a created being, for he says “all things were created... through Him and for Him.” Who, then, would have created *Him*? Did He create Himself? I think not.

“The Lord is one” (DT 6:4)

Some claim that God (Jehovah, Yahweh, YHWH, all translated LORD in most Bibles) can only be one being – there is only one Jehovah. However, in IS 44:6, there are two beings both referred to as Jehovah (“LORD”). And in GN 19:24, Jehovah on earth calls down fire from Jehovah in heaven. The study has already addressed how three beings can be considered one.

There are a number of texts in both Old and New Testaments that speak of three distinct persons. Both IS 42:1 and 48:16 speak of every member of the Godhead.

“No one has seen God at any time” (1 JN 4:12; 1:18).

Jesus added in JN 5:37 “You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” All three passages are speaking of the Father. Yet it could be argued that Abraham spoke to God face to face (GN 18:1f); Moses saw Him, talked with Him, and heard His voice (EX 3:10f; 33:11); the leaders of Israel saw and heard Him (EX 24:9); and all the people of Israel heard His voice (DT 5:24-26). The simple solution is that they were speaking with God the Son, who was also present (refer to JN 8:58; 1 CO 10:4).

“The Holy Spirit is really just the Spirit of Jesus (GL 4:6) or the Father (MT 10:20), and not a third person.”

In JN 14:16, Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says that the Father will send “another helper” – that is, another besides Jesus. The Holy Spirit, then, must be a personal being besides Jesus.

In RM 8:26, Paul says the Spirit intercedes between us and God. We have already established that the Spirit must be a person other than Jesus. Further, the Spirit can’t be a manifestation of the Father, or God would simply be mediating for Himself, which the Bible says He can’t do (GL 3:20).

Therefore the Spirit must also be a separate personal being from the Father – a third divine being. This is very evident from the account of Christ’s baptism, where all three are distinctly identified – Jesus in the water, the Spirit in the form of a dove above Him, and the Father’s voice heard above them all (MT 3:13-17).