

The Doctrine of God: A Biblical and Historical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

Genesis 1-3: God is the Creator, speaking all things into existence from nothing. He is pre-existent and desires a relationship with His creation, giving it purpose and instructions. Made in His image, humanity reflects His nature. God is gracious, loving, merciful, and also just.

Exodus 34: God reveals Himself as Yahweh, the self-existing "I AM." He is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, rich in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving sins, and fulfilling His covenant promises.

Deuteronomy 6: The Shema declares, "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one." God demands exclusive worship and loyalty, emphasizing His singularity and sovereignty.

Matthew 3: At Jesus' baptism, the Trinity is displayed: the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends like a dove, and the Father declares His pleasure in His Son.

John 1: Jesus, the Word, is both with God and is God. He is the creative force behind all creation, pre-existent and incarnate, fully divine and fully human.

John 4: Jesus equates Himself with God, executing the will of the Father. The Father raises the dead, the Son gives life, and judgment is entrusted to the Son. Belief in the Son grants eternal life.

What Has the Church Said?

The Nicene Creed (381 AD): Affirms one God, the Father Almighty, and one Lord Jesus Christ, eternally begotten of the Father, fully God and fully man. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life, worshiped with the Father and the Son.

The Apostles' Creed: Confesses faith in God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, risen, and ascended. It acknowledges the Holy Spirit, the Church, forgiveness, resurrection, and everlasting life.

The Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD): Declares Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man, with two distinct natures united in one person, without confusion, change, division, or separation.

How Does It All Fit Together?

From a Protestant Evangelical Baptist perspective, understanding the doctrine of God is crucial. As adopted children of God, we must accurately confess His nature, particularly the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God exists eternally as three distinct, equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They share the same essence yet remain distinct.

Jesus, the Son, is begotten but not created, fully God and fully man. The Holy Spirit is equally God, proceeding from the Father (and the Son, as per Western tradition), guiding and empowering believers. This doctrine guards against heresies such as modalism, adoptionism, and subordinationism, which distort the truth of God's triune nature.

Ministry Application

Teaching and preaching the Trinity is essential in ministry. We must not assume our congregations fully grasp this mystery; indeed, we ourselves approach it with humility and awe. Regular meditation on the Trinity helps guard against heresy and nurtures sound doctrine.

Our understanding of God informs our total reliance on Him. Submitting to the Spirit's guidance, obeying the Son, and glorifying the Father ensures our ministry remains faithful and effective. If we neglect this, we risk misleading those entrusted to our care.