

LESSON 8

THE TRINITY

Reading : *John 14, 15,16*

Memory verses : *John 14: 15,16*

Theme : *To learn and believe that God is one and the three personalities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are wonderfully joined together as one.*

Introduction: We have learned some natural and moral attributes of God. May these lessons help us to honour, love and worship God truly. In addition, let it enable us to reflect the Lord's glory, being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory (2 Cor: 3:18). Now let us prayerfully approach the wonderful subject of the Trinity of God.

GOD IS ONE:

Man drifted away from God because of sin. As he failed in his attempts to find God, man started worshipping gods of his imagination.

In the circumstances, Abraham received the revelation of true God and that belief was kept alive in the world by his successors (the Hebrews). The vision of God became clearer when Jesus Christ took incarnation as man through the same nation. Thus the truth of 'One God' is evident in both the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 4:35, 6:4, Isa. 44:6-8, 46:14-18, Mark 10:18, 12:29, 1Tim. 2:5)

GOD IS TRINITY:

Trinity is a mystery. The topic is a difficult one for our understanding. If we try to think and learn with a prayerful attitude, it will unfold itself. Don't we find many things in nature difficult to understand with our limited abilities? What are thunder and lightning? You may say it is the working of electricity. But then, what is electricity? How is it generated? What is the power behind its production? Can we find satisfactory answers to all these questions? Can you explain how large amount of energy is contained inside the atom? They are all realities even if we cannot understand them fully. Likewise, difficult matters concerning God can be understood if we approach them with humility and faith and also realize that they are logical and scriptural.

COMPOUND ONENESS:

Bible reveals that the oneness of God is a 'Compound Oneness'. We can find examples of such compound oneness in the nature also.

1. Electricity is invisible. But we see it as light in an electric bulb, as heat in an oven and as sound in a radio. Light is not sound or heat and heat is not light or sound.
2. Water is a familiar substance. We know its forms as ice, water and steam. Ice is not water and water is not steam, but they are all forms of the same chemical substance.
3. Man has a compound oneness of body, soul and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). Body, soul and spirit have separate existence, but form one person.
4. In Geometry, we know about squares and cubes. A square has four sides and two dimensions, length and breadth. A cube has six sides and three dimensions, length, breadth and height. They are all different dimensions of the same object, a square or a cube. Trinity does not present three Gods, but three aspects of the same God.

5. Consider a unilateral triangle: It has three equal sides: Each side is distinct, but they join together to make the picture of a triangle. Separate sides do not deny the oneness of the triangle. As an analogy, we may consider the triangle as representing God and the three sides representing Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

TRINITY SEEN IN NATURE:

We observe reflections of trinity in the nature:

1. Man: Body, Soul and Spirit (1Thes. 5:23)
2. Universe : Space, Time and Matter
3. Space : Length, Breadth and Height
4. Time : Past, Present and Future
5. Matter : Energy, Motion and Order

PROOF OF TRINITY IN THE BIBLE :

A. From the old Testament :

Even though the Jews do not believe in the doctrine of trinity, there are several evidences in the old Testament which point towards the concept of trinity.

1. There are two words in the original language to describe 'one' The word 'Yacheed' means absolute unity. The other word 'Echad' means compound unity . Wherever the oneness of God is mentioned in the old testament (Deut. 6:4) the word used is 'Echad'. The adjective and the verbs used in association with this word usually are in plural form.
2. The word used for 'God' is in the plural form. For example, in Gen. 1:1, 'God' is referred to as Elohim which is a plural word. Some usage is found in Deut.4:32, Isa. 45:15, etc.
3. When God refers to himself, the pronouns used are also in plural form . E.g.. Gen. 1:26; 3:22, 11:7, Isa. 48:12-16, 6:8
4. Read the verses: Isa. 48: 12-16, 63: 8-10. "The Lord God, and his spirit, hath sent me". Me refers to Messiah . Thus the verse includes father god, son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In Isa. 63:9,10 the 'angel of his presence' refers to Christ and Lord God and his Spirit are also mentioned. We read about the Son of God

in Psa. 2:7-12, Prov. 30:4 and Dan. 7:13, about the Spirit of God in Neh. 9:10, Gen. 1:2, 41:38 and Jud. 13:25 and about Father God in Deut. 33:6 and Mal. 2:10. Hence we see that the trinity of God is mentioned in several places in the old testament, too.

5. We also read that the angel of God who appeared to Abraham, Hager, Jacob and judges was not just one of the angels, but was called God and was worthy of worship. Therefore the 'angel of God' mentioned in those passages must be the Son of God who has same status as God, himself (Gen. 18:1, 13,17-21, 16:7-13, 31:11-13, Jud. 6:12-24).

B. In the New Testament :

The doctrine of Trinity which was partly revealed in the old testament is fully visible in the New Testament:

1. The verse, Luke 1:34, which describes the birth of Jesus Christ mentions about the parts played by Father, Son and the Holy Spirit
2. At the time of the baptism of Jesus Christ, all the three personalities are in action (Matt. 3:16-17).
3. Jesus Christ, himself talks about his oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit as follows:
 - a) Oneness in nature: John 10:30, 14:6-11,17:21-23.
 - b) Oneness in love :John 15:9-12.
 - c) Oneness in aims and activities : John 14:10,26, 16:13-15.
 - d) Christ and the Holy Spirit will dwell with a believer:(John 14:16-23).
 - e) Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together : (John 14:16, 26, 15:26).
 - f) Before his incarnation as man ,Jesus was with the father in glory (John 17:5,16:27-28).
4. When Jesus gave the commandment about baptism, He asked his disciples to baptize in the 'name' of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt.28:19). The singular word'name'(and not 'names') points to the compound oneness of God.
5. The apostolic benediction is given in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit (2Cor.13:14).

6. Apostles taught that the salvation of man is the combined work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14, Acts 2:38-39, 5:30-32, 1Pet. 1:2). Stephen was received into heaven by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55-56). When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his saviour and lord, he is sealed by the Holy Spirit and gains access to the presence of God. A child of God who has received salvation, has continuous fellowship, happiness and peace with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
7. Both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have equality and divinity as God the Father (Heb. 1:8, Titus 2:12, Col. 1:14-17, Acts 5:3-4, John 14:16-17).

Father, Son and the Holy Spirit have deity and individual personality. At the same time God is one. Therefore, from the apostolic days, the church which believes in the deity of Jesus Christ, accepts the unity of trinity and the trinity of unity of God. This doctrine is scriptural and logical.

Questions

1. Quote three verses showing the oneness of God.
2. Explain the words: 'absolute unity' and 'compound unity'. Which is the word used for the oneness of God in the original language? Give examples of compound unity in nature.
3. Nature exhibits the trinity of God. Explain.
4. Quote passages from the Old Testament pointing to the trinity of God.
5. Describe how Jesus Christ has explained the triune nature of God in His talk to His disciples after the Passover feast.
6. Establish the doctrine of trinity as revealed in the New Testament.

