

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Should we believe the trinity?

Should we believe the trinity? - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/19 21:52

I was studing with a friend of mine who does not believe in the trinity. I want to through some scriptures out there that h e used to discredit the trinity. Hopefully this will get us on our toes in answering theological questions.

I'll begin with Ps 110:1. "The LORD says to my Lord." If you look in your bible, you'll see one lord is all caps and the oth er has just the first letter capitalized. Does anyone know why that is?

Re: Should we believe the trinity? - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/19 22:43

Nekras,

Before I answer your questions I need to know a few things:

1. What position are you taking? Trinitarian, Oneness, Arian? You posted this in the debate section so I need to know w hich side you are going to defend; or perhaps are you looking for information on what the Bible teaches about the Godhe ad. If the latter is the case then perhaps we should move this discussion to a different part of the forum. There are many knowledgeable brothers and sisters who are able to work through this topic with you.

2. Your question was rather ambiguous and leading. Being that this is the debate section of the forum, you should prop erly define your position so that I will know how to respond to your question. If your intentions are not to debate, then you will understand my questions as to your position and purpose for this post.(this has been a much discussed topic in the past) I look forward to your response.

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulsey

Re: Should we believe the trinity? - posted by 5nva (), on: 2004/4/20 8:55

Nekaras:

First of all I am not one of those brothers that Hulsey refers to as one who can work through this subject with you. I am not even one to debate very well nor do I want to. I did just want to point out that if you will read Acts 2:30-36 you will cl early see that Psalm 110:1 is a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. To me this demonstrates the trinity.

Mike

Re: Should we believe the trinity? - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/4/20 9:34

Quote:
-----I'll begin with Ps 110:1. "The LORD says to my Lord." If you look in your bible, you'll see one lord is all caps and the other has just t he first letter capitalized. Does anyone know why that is?

The word for LORD (all caps) used in scripture is the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) or 'yood-hay-vav-hay.' This was the mos t sacred name of God used in the Old Testament. To give you an idea how holy that name is the scribes were to ceremo nially immurse themselves before and after they penned the name and every time they penned it.

Because there are no vowels between the consonants no one knows how to properly say that name. The Jews believes that when Messiah comes He will teach them how to say it. This is where the whole issue over using the name Jehovah or Yahweh comes from.

Many other names are used in the Old Testament to describe God. This is where you will read in other places "capitol 'L' and small case 'ord' (Lord). The first name used to describe God was Elohyim (yim denotes plural) and then Adonai, etc

. Eloyim denotes the plurality of God's greatness and majesty and is used also as an Old Testament word for the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Here we read "Let 'us' make God in 'our' image." There is one substance and three persons. These things we cannot fully comprehend, but we can apprehend them.

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/20 9:44

I am going to take my friend's position. I thought my question was pretty straight. You will notice lord is written in all caps in the OT. Why is it written like this sometimes and not others. For example, Ps 110:1 uses lord twice. Are they both the same lord? What makes them different?

Re: - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/4/20 11:40

Hi nekaras, Both Robert and Jeremy have posted clear responses to your request. Personally I am sorry that you want to take your friend's position without further debate. There ARE plenty of able folk on this site who will help you with your request if genuine.

There is also a site Carm.org which deals very thoroughly with this issue and particular cults who deny the trinity. Also this site has some trustworthy material on it :-)

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/20 14:20

Quote:

-----You will notice lord is written in all caps in the OT. Why is it written like this sometimes and not others.

As I understand it (from the prefaces of several Bibles that use this practice), LORD is used where the divine name (yod-he-waw-he, YHWH) is present in the original Hebrew. Personally I'd prefer they put the Tetragrammaton. However, this is at least somewhat consistent with what the Jews started doing (at least since the Masorites), where they would write the consonants YHWH but would put the vowel pointings for Adonai (root: aleph-dalet-nun, Hebrew word meaning 'my lord') so that people would know not to pronounce the divine name.

Quote:

-----For example, Ps 110:1 uses lord twice. Are they both the same lord? What makes them different?

I wish I could just paste the Hebrew text in here, but I'm not sure how to do that. Nonetheless, the first 'Lord' in Psalm 110:1 is the divine name, and the second is Adonai.

As for choosing between a Trinitarian or Oneness interpretation, I think (and this is just me) the decision can be boiled down to a few simple questions:

1. Is the Father (YHWH) God?
2. Is the Son (Jesus, or Yeshua) God?
3. Is the Holy Spirit God?
4. Is Jesus the Father?
5. Is Jesus the Holy Spirit?

There are others, but I think that's all we need here. The Trinitarian answers, for what they're worth are: yes, yes, yes, no, no.

The big one for Jesus-only "Oneness," at least the Pentacostal one I've discussed the matter with, is #4.

So, according to Scripture, can Jesus be the Father? Can the Son and the Father literally be the same person?

I trust, if your position is 'yes', that you know Scriptures to seem to support that, so I'll focus on Scriptures that seem to

ay 'no'.

(please note that I'm not trying to be argumentative or mean, just pointing out places where Scripture does not seem to accommodate the idea of Jesus being the Father and the Son)

Let us prayerfully consider these (and all) Scriptures:

Psalm 110:1

The LORD said unto my Lord, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

Luke

41 And He said unto them, "How say they that Christ is David's son?

42 For David himself saith in the book of Psalms: `The LORD said unto my Lord, "Sit Thou on My right hand,

43 until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

44 If David therefore calleth Him `Lord,' how is He then his son?"

Jesus, the Son, clearly claims to be the second "Lord" named, and the first one is the divine name, which refers to the Father. If the Father and the Son were the same person, why would He talk to (and even command) Himself?

John 8

16 And yet if I judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me.

17 It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true.

18 I am One that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me."

If Jesus literally is the Father, He would have been at least somewhat deceptive here, because the part of the law that He was appealing to required "two," and all He gave was Himself and the Father. If They are one Person, how would They satisfy the "two" witnesses clause?

Luke 22

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed,

42 saying, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done."

To restate a common Jewish objection, why would God pray to Himself? It makes some degree of sense if the Father and Son are separate Persons, but if They're the same?

Far more importantly, though: "not My will, but Thine be done." Jesus' will was different than the Father's! How can one person have two different wills?

Mark 13:32

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man -- no, not the angels who are in Heaven, neither the Son, but only the Father.

Only the Father knew, not even the Son. How can the same person both know and not know a particular fact?

I think that's enough, at least until I have a clearer idea of how your position differs from the trinitarian position.

God's grace be with you all,

-Keith

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/4/20 14:27

Quote:

-----Let us prayerfully consider these (and all) Scriptures:

Brother Keith, great list of scriptures showing the trinity. I went through in one of my old bibles in the New Testament and highlighted EVERY verse that had mention of the Jesus (Son), Spirit (Holy Spirit), and GOD (Father). You will be amazed how many there are when you look for those three-in-one verse. It's too bad I gave that bible away would have come in

handy here in this discussion. hehe :-P

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/20 14:36

<http://www.biblegateway.com/cgi-bin/bible>

The search function will give you all the verses with a certain combination of words. You can restrict the search to certain books, as well.

Wildly useful website.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/20 14:47

Hi Keith

Wildly useful website. :-D

I think it is widely used also. ;-)

Re: - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/4/20 16:20

Hi Keith

Thanks for the list its great, Also Robert w the historical and hebrew stuff is foundational to this sort of debate thanks guys, bless you :-D

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/20 22:53

KeithLaMothe,

You bring up some very interesting points.

1. *Is the Father (YHWH) God?*

So you think YHWH is the Father but not the Son? I thought YHWH was/is God. That is his name given in Exodus 3. I thought Trinitarians believed that Father is YHWH, Son is YHWH, and Holy Spirit is YHWH.

Let me know what you think before I reply to the scriptures.

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/20 22:57

It's just my own habit to think of the divine name as referring to the Father. I may be incorrect in that, if so just ignore the distinction.

Re: - posted by openairboy, on: 2004/4/20 23:36

YHWH can readily refer to the Godhead. I realize many will not like this answer, but the Church has already settled the issue. The Nicene Creed is clear in its formulation of the Trinity. There is no need to try to reinvent the wheel in every generation. Yes, we need to articulate in every generation, but it's silly to question issues the Church has settled. Isaiah 6 and John 12 are abundantly clear that Jesus is YHWH. The Gospel of John, starting with the first verse is abundantly clear that the Word with (pros) God, and the Word was God. I don't understand the difficulty.

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/20 23:43

As I said, it's just a habit of mine to think YHWH = Father, I'm not dogmatic about it nor do I have a problem with someone using it to refer to the Trinity as a whole, so long as they have a Scriptural basis for doing so. Thank you for the correction.

I think the topic at hand, though, was whether Trinitarianism is true doctrine at all. Yes, the Church settled this loooooong ago, and yes, that's generally enough for me to think it a reasonable doctrine (still to be investigated, but not to be rejected out of hand before that). But it's not enough for a lot of people, apparently. Indeed, one of the arguments a person I know uses *against* the Trinity doctrine is that it was first officially stated by the Catholic Church well after the Apostolic period.

Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/21 0:40

The Old Testament names of God refer to His character and nature. They are not personal names like we understand personal names per se. God is called by many names in the Old Testament, some would be: YHWH, Adonai, Ellohim,...etc. All are referring to the nature of God. Therefore it is correct to call Jesus, YHWH, or dare I say, use the German translation of Jehova.

The Trinity can be rightly understood, it just cannot be understood comprehensively. In other words, we cannot have exhaustive knowledge about the Trinity, it's just simply beyond us. To the trinitarian, this concept is completely acceptable because one of the characteristics of God is His incomprehensibility.

So now that we can call Jesus, the Father, or the Spirit YHWH, does that establish modalism (oneness theology)? Certainly not. When you call Jesus YHWH, you are calling Him God according to His nature. The same is true of the Father and the Spirit.

Earthly comparisons ultimately breakdown. I've heard analogies of ice, water, steam; light's primary colors, a father who is a husband and a co-worker. All of these analogies, if followed to their logical conclusion, break down into modalism. God is totally unique from His creation. That would logically follow since God is not made up of any part of creation, therefore there is nothing to compare Him to. The best way to describe the Trinity is to simply state it the way it is. You have God and He has one and only one nature. The nature of God exists in three persons. They don't each share the essence i.e. Jesus has a third, the Father has a third, and the Spirit has a third of the essence. But Each one possesses the entire nature of God. This is where it goes beyond our ability to grasp. We see singular beings possessed by singular persons every day, but we've never seen singular beings possessed by multiple persons.

So it is correct to say that Jesus is God, The Father is God, The Holy Spirit is God. It is also correct to say that Jesus is not the Father or the Spirit; The Father is not the Jesus or the Spirit; and The Spirit is not the Father or Jesus.

I'll get into this more tomorrow after I've had some sleep. :-D It's getting late here.

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulsey

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/21 1:52

At the risk of being labeled "Calvinist" (:-) I'll post Q&A's 4-6 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which still accurately sums up my position on this particular issue. The numbers are numbers of Scripture references that can be found in the bottom frame here:

http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC_frames.html

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/4/21 8:11

The Hebrew language has two words that can be translated "ONE": echad and yachid. Whereas yachid (yah-keed) refers to the number one (i.e., absolute unity), echad (ek-kawd) refers to a composite unity. An example of this is in the book of Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, where it says that a couple joined together in marriage shall become one flesh. Since the Shema uses the word echad, not yachid, it is reasonable to say that God's essence or nature is that of a composite unity.

For centuries, the rabbis have struggled with Genesis 1:26, where God says, ". . . Let us make man in our image, after our

ur likeness: . . ." The plural noun Elohim (God), used in conjunction with the plural pronouns "us" and "our," argues persuasively for the existence of a plurality within the Godhead.

But doesn't the idea of divine plurality contradict the Jewish Shema, which declares that ". . . The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4)? Not when we realize that the Hebrew word echad (one) is often used to designate a compound unity rather than a simple unity. Note that the same word is used in Genesis 2:24 when Adam and Eve were married and became basar echad, or "one flesh."

I have a whole teaching on this issue that I will post in the Jewish Roots section as it is a major stumbling block for Jews to accept God in three persons.

God Bless,

-Robert

Notes:

Gary Hedrick "Seven Things God Was Doing Before Genesis 1:1"

<http://www.cjf.org/pages/7things.htm>

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/21 9:09

Earlier Greg said:

Quote:
-----I went through in one of my old bibles in the New Testament and highlighted EVERY verse that had mention of the Jesus (Son), Spirit (Holy Spirit), and GOD (Father). You will be amazed how many there are when you look for those three-in-one verse. It's too bad I gave that bible away would have come in handy here in this discussion. hehe

On the heels of that comment:

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Eph 3:14-19*

Re: Trinity in the Old Testament - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/21 12:58

If God has always existed in three persons then why don't we see it in the Old Testament?

This is a good question. And the fact is, while the revelation of the trinity is not fully disclosed, we see through progressive revelation that God is multi-personal in the Old Testament.

If God is multi-personal then trinitarians would expect to find in the Old Testament references to the multi-personal nature of God. When we look what do we find?

Deut. 6:4 Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Well that settles it. Here is the capstone of the Oneness camps' theology. On the surface this seems to forever destroy any notions of the multi-personal nature of God. However, as RobertW rightly pointed out, the word for one used here means a unity. There are nine words for one in the Hebrew. Eight of them can mean solitary or a singularity. Not the one used here. Robert Morray puts it this way:

Quote:
-----In the list of Hebrew words which speak of oneness, the word 'ehad refers to a compound oneness in which a number of things together are described as "one." The following sample passages illustrate this compound meaning of oneness:

Gen.2:24 Adam and Eve became "one" flesh
Gen.34:16,22 The Shechemites wanted to become "one people" with the Jews.
II Chron. 30:12: God gave the people "one heart"

(he goes on to list several more)

A Unitarian would never apply the Hebrew word 'ehad to God because it means a compound or unified oneness. If the authors of the Bible were Unitarians, we would not expect to find 'ehad applied to God.

On the other hand, if the writers of Scripture believed that God was multi-personal, then we would expect to find that they would apply 'ehad...

Not only is this word used to describe God, but it is used in one of the most important verses found in the Old Testament. This is Israel's great confession.

If God was only one God then the authors of Scripture would express this by using singular nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in reference to God. You would expect to find words like I, Me, His, Myself, and We. Both Unitarians and Trinitarians would agree to this. And we find God spoken of in this manner.

But, if they also believed that God was multi-personal, the only way this idea could be indicated in the Hebrew was to use plural nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. God would be spoken of in words like, They, Them, We, Us, and Ours. Unitarians would not expect God to be described with such words. What do we find when we look at the Bible?

Genesis 20:13a And it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house

The divine name for God here and the verb which modifies it are both plural. It can be read: "When They(God) caused me to wander..."

Genesis 35:7 can be translated: "They(God) revealed Themselves to him" Once again the Noun and the Verb are in the plural.

Plural of Majesty

This brings up a point that someone tried to argue in an earlier debate on this subject. He tried to explain the plural descriptions of God as a way to magnify His majesty by the writers. Robert Morray has something to say about this:

Quote:
-----During the nineteenth century debates between Unitarians and Trinitarians, the principle of pluralis majestaticus was revealed to be a hoax popularized by the famous Jewish scholar Gesenius. It became clear that he used it as a ruse de guerre against Christianity.

The fundamental error resided in the attempt to take a modern monarchical idiosyncrasy and read it back into an ancient text when such an idiosyncrasy was unknown at that time. Richard Davies in 1891 pointed out, "indeed, this royal style is unknown in Scripture."

What is astounding is that, one hundred years later, the anti-Trinitarians are still using this hoax to dodge the significance of the use of plural pronouns in reference to God. They seem to be totally ignorant of the fact that it is a recent grammatical invention and, thus, cannot be read back into ancient times or texts.

We must also point out that anti-Trinitarians now apply the principle of pluralis majestaticus to all plural words of God when the principle really only relates to direct discourse, i.e., "Us" and "Our" passages. It is even invoked as a way to explain away the significance of the plural word Elohim in such places as Genesis 1:1. But since Genesis 1:1 is not a direct discourse, the appeal to a supposed "plurality of majesty" is nothing more than a ruse.

To be continued...:-D

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulsey

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/21 23:13

openairboy,

I can sense hostility.

Some translations of John 1:1 read "the word was a god." The translators say god is used like its used for Paul in Acts and the Jewish leaders in John 8.

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/21 23:17

KeithLaMothe,

The 'Church' established it? This is the same 'church' that started baptizing babies around the same time. The same church that start forcing people to be christians. To say the church established this long ago is not a valid argument unless you go before the Nicene period.

Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/22 0:10

nekaras,

I'm getting a little ahead of what I was going to type; however, I will attempt to answer your questions.

John's Gospel was written very late in his life. The early form of Gnosticism was taking shape about this time. Gnostics claimed that Jesus did not come in the flesh, but was spirit, because flesh was evil. In John chapter 1 the author is emphatically saying that God came in the flesh.

I assume that you are a Jehovah's Witness since you cited their false interpretation of John 1:1. They make much of the article missing in front of God in the last part of that verse. If that is true then the Father cannot be God because there are multiple times in the Greek where the word for God is used referring to Him, but the article is missing.

The Greek word in question here is "Theos." What is the significance of Theos with or without the article? Not much.

The New Testament's Usage Of The Word Theos

The Septuagint's usage of the word "Theos" formed the basis of its usage in the New Testament as a generic term indicating any and all deities in general, including the true God. It was a title of deity and not a personal name of God. Thus, it is used of Satan (II Cor. 4:40), men (Acts 14:11), pagan deities (I Cor 8:4), and even the belly, i.e., fleshly appetites (Phil. 3:19)

One question frequently asked is "If the word Theos does not have a definite article, does this mean that something less than true deity is in view? Could Jesus be "Theos" but not "the Theos"?

The word theos appears 1,315 times in the New Testament. Seventy-eight percent of the time it appears with a definite article and 21.6 percent of the time without an article. Those unfamiliar with the Greek language often assume that when the true God is in view, the word Theos will have the article. When Theos appears without the article, the word Theos does not refer to the true God. Thus, the typical Jehovah's Witness defends his organization's translation of John 1:1c "the Word was a god," on the basis that the word Theos does not have the article.

After his detailed analysis of the presence or absence of the article, Murray Harris concludes that generally speaking:

Quote:

-----"The Theos" and "Theos" are often used interchangeably. It is therefore not possible to maintain that whenever Theos is without the article, it differs from "the Theos" in meaning or emphasis.

The statistical evidence bears this out. For example, the Father is referred as Theos without the article in such places as John 1:6, while Jesus is referred to as Theos with the article in such places as John 20:28. **If the presence or absence of the article indicates whether true deity is in view, then the Father is only "a god" and Jesus is the true "God!"** :-D

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulsey

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/22 0:15

Quote:

-----KeithLaMothe,
The 'Church' established it?

I wasn't the one who presented that argument, as far as I recall. Instead, I presented Scriptures that seem to contradict Jesus-only Oneness. Do you have explanations that resolve those apparent contradictions? Or shall we defer dealing with those problems with your position (and what exactly is your position? I'm arguing against Jesus-only because I'm used to arguing with Oneness Pentacostals if I have to defend the Trinity at all), and move on to other difficulties it faces?

And, for the record, I'm not trying to be hostile or mean towards you, though obviously I am obligated to "contend" for what I believe is "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3).

Re: Why there is no article before Theos in John 1:1c - posted by jeremyhulse (), on: 2004/4/22 0:44

The word Theos in John 1:1c does not have a definite article in front of it. This does not mean that we should follow the Jehovah's Witnesses and downsize it to "a god." We have already pointed out that the word "Father" is modified by Theos without the article. Do the Arians (JW's are Arians) downsize Him into "a god" because of this? No. Then on what grounds do they do this to Christ?

The article was not placed in front of Theos for two very good reasons. First, in terms of Greek grammar and syntax, Colwell's Rule 20 states that when a noun is taken out of its normal word order and placed **before** its verb, 97% of the time it does not have an article. This is what we find in John 1:1c.

What this means is that instead of beginning with the a priori assumption that Theos should have the article and then seeking to explain why it does not have one, we should begin the other way around and assume that it should not normally have the article (In John 1:1c Theos appears before the verb invoking Colwell's Rule 20). The Arian is pressed to explain why there should be an article in front of Theos here when according to Greek grammar there should not be one.

The second reason Theos does not have the article is that it would lead the reader to the mistaken idea that the Word was the Father. Murray Harris explains in a rather technical way:

Quote:

-----Having just distinguished the Logos(the Son) from the Father in vers 1b, would he be likely immediately afterward to dissolve that personal distinction? For him to have used the article in the predicate of verse 1c would have implied either that subject and predicate were identical or coextensive or that this predicate referred to none other than the Father in the preceding clause. As it is, in verse 1c John maintains the distinction between the Logos and the Father that he has drawn in verse 1b, while at the same time affirming the participation of the Logos in the divine essence.

John did not place the article in front of Theos in order to maintain the distinction between the Father and the Son. This is why he made that distinction once again in John 1:2.

This passage of Scripture is believed to have been an ancient hymn of the early Church. It is also the clarion passage for reestablishing the Bible's teaching of the Trinity. Oneness and Arian teachings are left totally bankrupt at the feet of the opening of the Gospel of John. John was so empathic about Jesus being the eternal God that the last part of John 1:1 should read "...and the Word was with God. **God** was the Word." This also answers your second question as to where and when the belief in the triune nature of God came into being. It wasn't at Nicea, but from the Scriptures and the Apostles.

And finally, here is Kenneth Wuest's* translation of John 1:1

Quote:
-----In the beginning the Word was existing. And the Word was in fellowship (the Greek word for "with" strongly denotes intimate fellowship) with God the Father. And the Word was as to His essence absolute deity. This Word was in the beginning in fellowship with God the Father. All things through His intermediate agency came into being, and without Him there came into being not even one thing which has come into existence.

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulseay

*Kenneth Wuest was one of the best Greek scholars that ever lived in our time.

Re: - posted by HakkaMin (), on: 2004/4/22 1:25

Thanks so much for your clear response, Jeremy! You took some pretty complex ideas and brought them down to where even I could understand. :-) I appreciate your spending the time - and your gifts - in helping us out on this one. Bless you!

Re: the order of the words - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/22 3:59

In English the order of the words determines the meaning. eg 'the dog bit the boy' can only mean one thing. However in Biblical Greek the meaning is usually determined by the 'case endings' of the words. In the above example the ending of the word 'dog' would show that this was the subject of the sentence, and the ending of the word 'boy' would show that this was the object of the sentence. Consequently, in Biblical Greek the word order might be 'the boy bit the dog' but the case endings of the nouns would make it crystal clear that it was the dog that did the biting. The order of the words in Biblical Greek is not primarily to convey meaning but emphasis. So eg in our illustration if the full story was 'a boy and a girl were playing with a dog; the boy bit the dog'. If the case ending showed that 'the dog' was the subject then this would have the effect of saying "both were playing with the dog, but the dog bit the boy".

However in a sentence like 'god was the word' something else gives us the meaning. In these "equation" statements eg "the dog is an animal" the same case ending would be used for both; the nominative. This would make it impossible to know who bit whom, but the Greeks had a way around that too. The subject noun would be given the definite article 'the'. Now the word order of the sentence can be used to give the required emphasis but we can still identify the subject.

The Greek for John 1:1 is "and god was the word". This is an "equation sentence" so how can we know which is the subject? Easy, the subject has the definite article. So why not write "the word was God"? Because the writer wants to emphasize something else. It is a way of saying "what God was, the Word was". The lack of the definite article stops us from identifying the person of 'the Word' (Jesus) with the person of 'God' (the Father).

The word order tells us that the Word has all the divine attributes of the Father; the word order tells us that the 'the Word' is not 'the Father'. Martin Luther once wrote that the lack of the definite article disproves Sabellianism and the word order disproves Arianism.

Here's a little more Bible algebra. If it had said
"and the Word was the God" -> Sabellianism (Jesus-Only/Oneness)
"and the Word was a god" -> Arianism (and JWs etc)
"and god was the Word" -> orthodox trinitarian.

Biblical Greek is capable of mathematical precision.

Re: - posted by HakkaMin (), on: 2004/4/22 4:33

Well, slap me silly with a Greek lexicon ... you guys are good, Ron! Thanks for the insight! I really enjoy working through posts like this. They give me a greater hunger and appreciation for the Word. (And a strange craving to - gulp - start studying Greek.) :-)

Re: - posted by openairboy, on: 2004/4/22 8:58

Nekaras,

You can call it hostility if you want, but it's unbelievable that people are trying to reinvent the wheel. The NWT, which translates John 1:1 in your manner, is completely arbitrary in their use of the Greek text and is clearly prejudiced to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ. I think that is fine, because from their own Scriptures it can be shown that Jesus Christ is God.

Also, I was the one that referred to the Church having settled the issue long ago. It was in response to this heresy that Athanasius was *contra mundum*. He was the minority, but won the day. Remember, even the Scriptures teach that the Church is "the pillar and foundation of truth."

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/4/22 9:29

This is a teaching I shared in my Theology class some years ago. It is just an interesting observation that I borrowed from a scientist friend of mine who is also an apologist.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead (Theiotes) ; so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

Consider the following Scientific observation of God's creation:

• God created the Universe as a Trinity of Trinities

Everything we observe with our natural senses consists of MATTER, SPACE, AND TIME.

MATTER EXISTS AS: Solid, liquid, Gas

As solid is not a liquid, a liquid is not a gas, and a gas is not a solid; but they are all matter.

SPACE EXISTS AS: Length X Width X Height

Length is not height, height is not width, and width is not length; but they are all space.

TIME EXISTS AS: Past, Present, and Future

The past is not the present, the present is not the future, and the future is not the past; but they are all time.

Likewise: The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father; but they are all God.

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/22 11:05

This is outstanding you guys!

May I interject something from a common city dweller who lacks a formal education?

Please don't misunderstand, I and many surely appreciate the time and effort of all this scholarly exegesis and Lord knows we need it with all the deviating doctrines that abound these days. And I appreciate this so much, it has broadened my understanding. So if you like, this is just a little wedge to throw in the mix.

*1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.*

Of the many, John 1:1-14 has to be my favorite set's of scripture, these have got to be the most incredible words ever strung together and applied to parchment. More than that the meaning(s) that they carry and become even more expressive as we get to verse 14.

What majesty, what beauty, what an incredible revelation is revealed here. Every time I read them, it's like the very first time, like I have never seen them before. It stops me dead in my tracks. Such a sense of awe...

I can never get past the thought that it is impossible that a mere man could have penned these words out of his own imaginings...

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:14 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.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us

Amazing, unimaginable, incredible... I am besides myself.

I guess what I really wanted to say was that I never understood it otherwise than as it was written from the get go. The first time I heard a JW version that changed it to 'a god' it was like desecrating the temple, it caused my soul to deeply grieve, this cannot be, you cannot do this! I didn't have the foggiest idea of any of the syntax, the Greek, the how's, what's or whys. Just a flat out repulsion of spirit, if we lived in a different day, I would have run for my sword and not spared any till it was eradicated from the earth, perhaps I still feel that way, but the Lord would have me *"Put away thy sword"*

Forgive me if my zeal has eaten me up.

Just a spiritual point of view from a silly fisherman...

Re: Trinity of Trinities - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/22 11:06

Robert,

I like it, many thanks. It has gone straight into my quotebook.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/22 11:10

Mike writes Forgive me if my zeal has eaten me up.

Just a spiritual point of view from a silly fisherman...

you're in good company... a simple fisherman wrote this...

The wonder of the book is that every level its precision and cohesion becomes more and more thrilling. It is the same water on the surface as in the depths.

Re: Robert's quote - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/4/22 11:19

ME to! that was cut and pasted as soon as i read it! FANTASTIC Robert

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/22 11:21

Quote:
-----The wonder of the book is that every level its precision and cohesion becomes more and more thrilling. It is the same water on the surface as in the depths.

And this is going straight into my quotes file!
Thanks Ron.

Edit: Thanks for the reminder you guy's, Robert, much thanks for this, can be sure it will come in handy.

Re: - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/4/22 11:24

Nekaras,your first post included the following

Quote:
-----I was studing with a friend of mine who does not believe in the trinity. I want to through some scriptures out there that he used to dis credit the trinity. Hopefully this will get us on our toes in answering theological questions.

After so much meat are you getting satisfied? Surely your friend will be persuaded
The second post from Jeremy asked you about your position,remember?(i know its way back)
What is your stance now Friend? :-)

Re: diety of Christ - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2004/4/22 11:28

Here is a link to an article written by Greg Koukl that lays out a argument for the diety of Christ using John 1:3. It is very effective with Arians, it's worth a read;

(http://www.str.org/free/solid_ground/SG0007.htm) Diety of Christ

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/22 21:53

crsschk:
Just a spiritual point of view from a silly fisherman...
Are you really a fisherman.

RobertW:
Consider the following Scientific observation of God's creation . . .
That is really cool.

openairboy:
The NWT, which translates John 1:1 in your manner, is completely arbitrary in their use of the Greek text and is clearly prejudiced to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ.
I know someone would bring up JW's. 'Your manner?' I am not a translator. Nor do I believe Jesus was a god. I have read many papers about the translation and most point to God and not a god. Some of them are not even believers! In the beginning, I said I would take my friends point of view, not my own.

The purpose of this was to see the responses. Some are pretty cool. Most are arguments not using scripture. That's the

e difficult part. Sure, John seems to be pretty clear. Plus, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are used in the same sentence. Peter has a sentence or two that seem to equate Jesus with God. The point is, most of the clarity has come from others, expounding on the scriptures. Whether it was from the Church or looking at the structure of our world. Not the scriptures directly. The same goes for those who say Jesus is not God. They "go beyond what is written."

Hey, maybe I'm going to take the words of Jesus too far, but here goes. "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us." (Mark 9) JW do not speak ill of Jesus. They believe he is the Son of God. They believe He is great in his glory. They believe He is the means of salvation. Are they really against us? Are we really against them? JW are amazing servants of God and I bet many of you are too. Yes, the JW have things on wrong, but who doesn't? I meet a lot of people whose salvation rests on Rom 10:9. I know others whose rest on Mk 16:16. Yet others, Eph 2:8-9, Rom 10:9, Mk 16:16, Jam 2:24 etc. Which one is right? I believe, the one that encompasses all the scriptures. That includes the ones about fits of rage and sexual immorality. That includes the ones about gentleness and patience. That includes the words of Jesus above. I'm not against you and we shouldn't be against others who are trying to follow Christ, Including JW, who ask the question, "Should We Believe in the Trinity."

Re: - posted by openairboy, on: 2004/4/22 22:42

Quote:
-----Hey, maybe I'm going to take the words of Jesus too far, but here goes. "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us." (Mark 9) JW do not speak ill of Jesus. They believe he is the Son of God. They believe He is great in his glory. They believe He is the means of salvation. Are they really against us? Are we really against them? JW are amazing servants of God and I bet many of you are too. Yes, the JW have things on wrong, but who doesn't? I meet a lot of people whose salvation rests on Rom 10:9. I know others whose rest on Mk 16:16. Yet others, Eph 2:8-9, Rom 10:9, Mk 16:16, Jam 2:24 etc. Which one is right? I believe, the one that encompasses all the scriptures. That includes the ones about fits of rage and sexual immorality. That includes the ones about gentleness and patience. That includes the words of Jesus above. I'm not against you and we shouldn't be against others who are trying to follow Christ, Including JW, who ask the question, "Should We Believe in the Trinity."

The fact of the matter is, we have different Jesus'. The Orthodox confession that Jesus is Lord, kurios in the greek, which is the LXX equivalent of the OT translation of YHWH/kurios, so there is no truck between us. The JW's see us as blasphemers, because we say Jesus is God. It cuts to the heart of worship, the heart of salvation, and the heart of Christianity. If Jesus Christ is not the God-man, then we have no one to mediate between the Father and us (Job 9, especially v. 33). Much more could be set, but the JW's are not believers. They confess a different Jesus, a mere creation.

The Scriptures are pretty clear, the Church is the pillar and foundation of Truth. The JW's deny this, as well as the Mormons, Muslims, Christadelphians, and a whole host of heretical teachings that the Church has already dealt with.

The Scriptures do not exist in a vacuum. They are not "timeless" truths, but the historical revelation of God. So, the answer to, should we believe in the Trinity? The answer is Yes. It starts with the issue of the Jesus. If he isn't God, then he can't make atonement for sin and has no power to forgive and mediate. If he isn't man, then he can't die in our place and hasn't been made like us in every way.

The JW's are the modern version of the arians, which has been done with. We are against one another. You will think this is "hostile", and so be it. It's like Paul to the Galatians, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? If anyone preaches another Gospel, be it US or an ANGEL from heaven let them be accursed. I tell you again, if anyone preaches another Gospel let them be accursed."

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/22 23:15

Quote:
-----crsschk:Just a spiritual point of view from a silly fisherman...
Are you really a fisherman.

:-) Well, I used to be an avid fisherman it's been awhile, definitely miss it.

Just a colloquialism

Re: - posted by shazbot, on: 2004/4/22 23:44

I was thinking about the matter, space, and time thing in relation to Einstein's theories (which have no conflicting evidence of yet, and some supporting evidence) of space-time. This seems unbalanced, so it would appear that just as gravity is a distortion of space-time, matter must also be directly related to space and time, to form a matter-space-time bond. Just a theory...

Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/23 0:18

Quote:

-----Hey, maybe IÂ'm going to take the words of Jesus too far, but here goes. "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us.Â" (Mark 9) JW do not speak ill of Jesus.

nekaras,

I would have to disagree with you on this one. As others have just previously posted, the Jesus that JW's preach is another Jesus. He is the first of God's creation and the Archangel Micheal according to the JW's. They do speak ill of Him by denying His diety and physical resurrection.

Quote:

-----Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1Cor. 15:12-19)

The Jehova's Witnesses teach that Jesus did not raise from the dead physically but that his spirit came up and his body somehow just disappeared and dissolved. The word for resurrection does not support this idea but implies a physical resurrection. This is the hope of the Church that the JW's seek to deny.

The Jehova's Witness does not hope in the work of Calvary but denies it. The JW must work for his salvation and hope that he has done enough good that in the day of judgement he can be found worthy of life. The Christian's hope is only Jesus. There is only one way and that is His work on Calvary. There is a world of difference between The Jehova's Witnesses and a Christian.

I'm sorry for the bad words that have been pointed your way, I do not want this to become a matter of simply winning an argument because the condition of your soul and where you will spend an eternity is the most important issue you will ever deal with. It's one that you had better make sure that you are right on because there's no second chances once you die.

In Christ,
Jeremy Hulsey

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/23 0:53

nekaras wrote:

Quote:

-----IÂ'm not against you and we shouldn't be against others who are trying to follow Christ, Including JW, who ask the question, "Should We Believe in the Trinity.Â"

Openairboy wrote:

Quote:

-----The fact of the matter is, we have different Jesus'

Indeed, I don't believe it's a matter of 'against' them, they (their hierarchy) have a system that amounts to brainwashing, I feel for the people that get caught up in this. If anything their teaching would be 'against' us, as they state it is.

A good nutshell of their main teachings:

<http://www.carm.org/jw/nutshell.htm>

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/23 4:58

Quote:

-----I was thinking about the matter, space, and time thing in relation to Einstein's theories (which have no conflicting evidence of yet, and some supporting evidence) of space-time. This seems unbalanced, so it would appear that just as gravity is a distortion of space-time, matter must also be directly related to space and time, to form a matter-space-time bond. Just a theory...

er, thanks, I think...

I thought the theory of relativity was the explanation of why time seems to go more slowly when you are with your relatives? :-D

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/4/23 8:09

I don't really want to discuss quantum theory, but, with that Einstein thing I was reminded about another conversation I had with the same friend (his name is Damon by the way); Damon once asked me how it was possible for all these positively charged particles inside the nucleus of an atom (that repel each other) to be so tightly packed together? Because science does not know what holds them together- it only knows that when you split the bond an atomic explosion takes place. I have no clue I said. To him it was a simple answer: Hebrews 1:3... God is upholding all things by the word of His power.

This was not original but it was a great answer. God is holding everything together. How could a person not realize that there is something or someone holding all this together? It is all clearly seen on a Newtonian level. With our natural senses we are able to see this in plain sight. I think that to delve deeper into wave and particle theory is to reach beyond what the passage intends; though it is all still interesting.:-)

God Bless,

-Robert

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v22/i3/gravity.asp>

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2004/4/24 23:48

Quote:

"The purpose of this was to see the responses. Some are pretty cool. Most are arguments not using scripture. That's the difficult part. Sure, John seems to be pretty clear. Plus, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are used in the same sentence. Peter has a sentence or two that seem to equate Jesus with God. The point is, most of the clarity has come from others, expounding on the scriptures."

I just ran across this Scripture today and I can't see how it's conceivable to deny the trinity with this single verse in mind.

Mark 13:32

"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, **nor the Son, but the Father alone.**"

I don't know if that verse has already come up. I am really interested to see how a Oneness adherent understands this verse and attempt to assimilate it into their theological grid.

The Scripture clearly states here that there are things which God the Father knows that God the Son does not know. There are things that the Father knows **alone**. Therefore, mustn't the Father and the Son be different persons?

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/4/25 9:08

Quote:

I just ran across this Scripture today and I can't see how it's conceivable to deny the trinity with this single verse in mind.

Mark 13:32

"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, **nor the Son, but the Father alone.**"

I don't know if that verse has already come up.

I recall mentioning it back on the first page or thereabouts, along with a few other verses that require explaining by the Oneness camp.

Quote:

I am really interested to see how a Oneness adherent understands this verse and attempt to assimilate it into their theological grid.

As am I. The one Oneness fellow I talked to recently about all this responded to Mark 13:32 (and other such verses) with something along the lines of "we can't expect to understand it with our limited intellects, it's a mystery." He used to be Trinitarian, and was fairly lukewarm then, but got a lot more serious about living pleasing to God when he went Oneness (not because of that, I believe, a lot of change happened at once). He's a good man, as far as I know, he just got indoctrinated into this thing so deep that he won't even seriously reason about it.

I don't expect to fully comprehend an infinite God, but I think it's pretty clear that one person cannot both know and not know a single fact. The only ways to dispute that is to redefine the term "person" or to show that the patently obvious interpretation of Mark 13:32 isn't correct.

edit:

And nekaras, not to be impatient or rude, but you still haven't addressed those Scriptures, and I'd really like to know if Unitarians can actually explain all of them.

Re: - posted by nekaras, on: 2004/4/26 0:21

And nekaras, not to be impatient or rude, but you still haven't addressed those Scriptures, and I'd really like to know if Unitarians can actually explain all of them.

Do you mean Unitarians or the believers that claim Oneness? If you mean Unitarians, then the scriptures you wrote are the very ones they use to contradict the trinity. The scriptures you sent give a problem to people who say Jesus is all-knowing God. Uni's say God is all-knowing and Jesus is the Son of God using those very same scriptures.

Honestly, there is a very fine line between Uni's and Trin's. The initial description sounds very different, but when each camp elaborates, they say nearly the same thing.

In case anybody missed it, I'm a trinity.