

The Holy Trinity

Matt 28:18-20 Psalm 8:1-9 Exodus 34:5-7

May 30, 2021

Pastor Dave Bolte



ALL IDOLS AND FALSE GODS ARE DEMONS.

I know that is a **bold statement** that might catch you off guard. But it's true. *All idols and false gods are demonic.* There is no such thing as "other gods". It is not like there is a pantheon of gods and as Christians we follow the one called the "Holy Trinity." ***There are no other gods.*** The New Testament teaches us that anything that is called a "god" or an "idol" is really a **demon**.

The sacrifices to pagan gods are offered to demons, not to God

1 Corinthians 10:20

The Bible condemns false gods and idolatry in the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." The Bible has only harsh words of condemnation for idols and idolatry; and at the same time, the Holy Scriptures reveal that the **One, True and Only God is the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the God of Creation, Salvation, and Sanctification.**

The Holy Trinity reveals Himself to us in Holy Scripture. In fact, the first verse of the Bible teaches it to us. Genesis 1:1 says, *In the Beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth.* There are two fascinating things at work in this passage that teaches us WHO God is.

- ⇒ The word "*God*" is plural, indicating the "three-ness" of God
- ⇒ The verb "*created*" is singular, indicating the "one-ness" of God

Later, as Scripture unfolds, we learn that there are 3 Persons, 1 God: God is "Tri-une": 3 in 1. God is the Holy "Trinity"

**The very first verse in the Bible begins to teach us about
Who God is!**

Ultimately, it is Jesus Himself Who reveals God fully to us. In the Great Commission, Jesus teaches us that there is One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

For most of history, people didn't have Bibles so readily available like we have them today. So "Creeds" were developed to help teach people about God, and to help them understand the Holy Trinity. Two of those creeds we use weekly and frequently: The Apostle's Creed and The Nicene Creed.

But there is another Creed, seldom used because of its length, called the **Athanasian Creed**. The Athanasian Creed really focuses on teaching us about Who God is. *Let's take a closer look at this Creed today. Please take out the handout called "The Athanasian Creed"*.

Let's read the "first part: The Holy Trinity" **responsively**. -->

This part of the Creed talks about WHO GOD IS: it helps us understand the Holy Trinity.

The Athanasian Creed Part 1 --> The Holy Trinity

Pastor: Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the [Christian] faith.
People: **Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish Everlastingly.**
Pastor: And the [Christian] faith is this:
People: **That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.**
Pastor: For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.
People: **But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.**
Pastor: Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.
People: **The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.**
Pastor: The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
People: **The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.**
Pastor: And yet they are not three eternals, but one Eternal.
People: **As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible.**
Pastor: So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty.
People: **And yet they are not three almighties, but one Almighty.**
Pastor: So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.
People: **And yet they are not three gods, but one God.**
Pastor: So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord.
People: **And yet not three lords, but one Lord.**
Pastor: For as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each Person by Himself to be both God and Lord,
People: **so we are also forbidden by the [Christian] religion to say that there are three gods or three lords.**
Pastor: The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.
People: **The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.**
Pastor: The Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
People: **So there is one Father, not three fathers; one Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.**
Pastor: And in the Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another,
People: **but all three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.**
Pastor: So that in all things, as is aforesaid,
People: **the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved is compelled thus to think of the Trinity.**

At first, this creed sounds wordy. But remember that it is a teaching tool that millions of Christians throughout history have used, even memorized, so that they could learn Who God is. Even though they did not have personal Bibles --> they could memorize creeds.

One of the strengths of this Creed is the **Definition and Distinction** style and format at work in the Creed. Here is a sample:

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. <-- DEFINITION
And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. <-- DISTINCTION

“Definition and Distinction” means that you *define* the truth, and then clarify it by making *distinctions*.

“Definition and Distinction” is a good way to think about your own faith and beliefs, especially in light of the deteriorating state of the Christian church and the depraved world we live in. It is important to **clarify** what you believe and what your convictions are based on God’s Holy Word, and then think through the **distinctions**, those things that you do *not* believe and you know to be *false and contrary* to God’s Holy Word.

For instance, every “Christian” will say they love Jesus. But what Jesus are they talking about? You have to make distinctions:

- † The “Jesus” who never worked miracles nor rose from the dead?
- † The “Jesus” who was only a good man and only a role model for us
- † The “Jesus” who motivates you to be the “best person you can be”?
- † The “Jesus” who loves everyone, who is tolerant, and loves diversity, and would never condemn sin or offend you or ask you to repent?
- † The Jesus who’s primary concern is that you are “healthy and wealthy”?
- † **Or as we believe, the “Jesus” who’s death, burial and resurrection brings repentance and the forgiveness of sin to all people?**

“Definition and Distinction” helps you sort through the lies and the false teachings in “Christianity” today. It also helps you in sorting through the moral issues that we face each day. It is also a good way to think about your own faith and beliefs. “Definition and Distinction” means that you *define* the truth of Holy Scripture, and then clarify it by making *distinctions* of what you do not believe.

When it comes to the Holy Trinity, the Bible maintains two truths about God: The one-ness of God, there is **One God**; and at the same time, the three-ness of God: there are **Three Persons**. *The mystery of God is that He is 3 and 1 at the same time.*

A proper understanding of the Holy Trinity will lead to a proper understanding of **WHO JESUS IS**. *That is the second part of the Athanasian Creed.* The second part of the Athanasian Creed focuses on **WHO** Jesus is, and **WHAT** He has done for us. This is a clear confession of the gospel of salvation in Christ alone. Please

take out the handout called “The Athanasian Creed” again. This time, let’s read the backside that says “Part 2: The Son of God” responsively.

The second part of the Athanasian Creed focuses on WHO Jesus is, and WHAT He has done for us. It clearly teaches the Gospel to us.

It teaches us that God Himself is our Savior who has come into our world to do the work of salvation for us! The Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, gives us the gifts of salvation through His suffering, death and resurrection.

The Athanasian Creed Part 2 --> The Son of God

P: Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man;

P: God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;

C: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world;

P: perfect God and perfect man,

C: of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting.

P: Equal to the Father, as touching His godhead;

C: and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood;

P: who, although He is God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;

C: one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God;

P: one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

C: For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;

P: who suffered for our salvation,

C: descended into hell,

P: rose again the third day from the dead.

C: He ascended into heaven,

P: He sits at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the quick and the dead.

C: At His coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works.

P: And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting;

C: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

P: This is the [Christian] faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

C: AMEN!

The Creeds teach us WHO GOD IS and WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!

Because we have Bibles everywhere today, creeds are not as important as they once were.

- But they still stand as **clear witnesses** than *define* the truth of God’s Holy Word and makes important *distinctions* between false teachers
- They still teach the faithful, including us today, about **Who** God is and **what** He has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ
- And the Creeds **connect us** to Christians throughout history who have used the **same words** to confess **WHO GOD IS** and **WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!**

On this Holy Trinity Sunday, we thank God that He has revealed Himself to us through His Word, and that we can confess our faith in Creeds.

AMEN!

Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in Scripture, and teaching us to confess You in the Creeds. Teach us more and more about Who you are and What you have done for us, so that we may remain faithful throughout our lives and live with you forever in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Exodus 34:5-7

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

Psalm 8

1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. 2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Athanasian Creed Part 1 --> The Holy Trinity

Pastor: Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the [Christian] faith.

People: Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish Everlastingly.

Pastor: And the [Christian] faith is this:

People: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

Pastor: For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.

People: But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Pastor: Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.

People: The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

Pastor: The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

People: The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.

Pastor: And yet they are not three eternals, but one Eternal.

People: As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible.

Pastor: So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty.

People: And yet they are not three almighties, but one Almighty.

Pastor: So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

People: And yet they are not three gods, but one God.

Pastor: So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord.

People: And yet not three lords, but one Lord.

Pastor: For as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each Person by Himself to be both God and Lord,

People: so we are also forbidden by the [Christian] religion to say that there are three gods or three lords.

Pastor: The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.

People: The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.

Pastor: The Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

People: So there is one Father, not three fathers; one Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

Pastor: And in the Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another,

People: but all three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

Pastor: So that in all things, as is aforesaid,

People: the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved is compelled thus to think of the Trinity.

The Athanasian Creed Part 2 --> The Son of God

P: Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man;

P: God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;

C: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world;

P: perfect God and perfect man,

C: of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting.

P: Equal to the Father, as touching His godhead;

C: and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood;

P: who, although He is God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;

C: one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God;

P: one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

C: For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;

P: who suffered for our salvation,

C: descended into hell,

P: rose again the third day from the dead.

C: He ascended into heaven,

P: He sits at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the quick and the dead.

C: At His coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works.

P: And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting;

C: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

P: This is the [Christian] faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

C: AMEN!