

Study Guide 3 Answers

A. Please read "Triunity" (chap. 11 from R. C. Sproul's book).

1a. How is the word "Tritheism" being used?

It is the idea that there are three separate beings that make up God.

1b. Why has this way of thinking about God been given this name?

Tri (three) theism (gods)

1c. Why is Tritheism a wrong way of thinking about God?

There is only One God. The three Persons do not exist separately.

2a. What is Modalism? It suggests that Father, Son, and Spirit are nothing more than three ways God expresses Himself.

2b. Why is Modalism a wrong way of thinking about God?

This view does not recognize the three Persons of the Godhead.

3. Look at the paragraph on "subsistence." Why is it not correct to think of "person" in the usual way when we speak of the three Persons of the Trinity?

The three Persons of the Trinity are not separate beings or existences like human persons are. They are one and the same existence. The difference between them is a real difference, but it is not an essential difference (*i.e.*, not a different in essence). This is why the word "subsist" is used. The three exist under or in the same one existence.

4. Please write out the first sentence in the second last paragraph.

The Trinity does not refer to parts of God or even to roles.

5a. Why are the two parts of the second summary statement important as we talk about what we believe to those who are not Christians?

Non-Christians will immediately consider this a contradiction. Non-Christians need to be encouraged to receive this revelation about God as a reality that is a mystery to us, but an important feature of His eternal existence which we apprehend and confess by faith.

5b. Is there any other being or is it conceivable that there would be another being for whom this would not be a contradiction? No.

6. Please mark statements in Sproul or in the lecture notes that you find most helpful.

7. Make a note of sentences or sections you don't understand.

B. Old Testament revelation

8. What hint of a distinction emerges in Genesis 1:1-3? We read about God creating the heavens, the earth, and light, but then we are also told that the Spirit of God was in a specific position near one planet in that vast universe. He was moving over the earth's water.

9a. Please write out the first statement God makes in Genesis 1:26.

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

9b. Please write out the first statement in Genesis 1:27.

"And God created man in His Own image, in the image of God He created him."

9c. How do we become aware of plurality here?

God speaks of Himself using plural pronouns: "Us" and "Our."

9d. How do we know that God is only One? The report of God acting in creation refers to Him as a singular Being: "He" and "His" (not "They" and "Their").

10. What do you find in this regard in Genesis 11:7 and 8?

We find exactly the same thing. When God is considering what He will do, He says, "Come, let Us go down . . ." (11:7). But then when we read about Him taking action, we do not read that "the Lords scattered them" (v. 8), but that "the Lord scattered them."

11. What does the Lord explicitly declare about Himself in Deuteronomy 6:4?

that He is One Lord, One God

12. What do David's words in Psalm 110:1 reveal about God?

It is revealed to David:

- that the One he calls "my Lord" is being addressed by the Lord;
- that the one he calls "my Lord" will be seated at the Lord's right hand;
- that the Lord will make this Lord's enemies a footstool for His feet.

So David, who knows that God is One, is also made aware that there are two distinct Persons.

C. Father, Son, and Spirit in the New Testament

13a. Please read John 1:34. What do John's words here reveal that he is able to distinguish and declare about God? John realizes that God is Father and Son.

13b. Please read John 1:32. What do John's words here reveal that he is able to distinguish and declare about God?

John recognizes that the Spirit of God is distinct from the Son of God.

13c. Please read John 1:33. What do John's words here reveal that he is able to distinguish and declare about God? When God speaks to John He refers to the Spirit of God (not to Himself) descending on the Man Who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. So John is aware of three distinct persons: the One Who speaks to Him about the Spirit and the One on Whom the Spirit descends (Who is a Person able to send God's Spirit on men).

14. Read Matthew 3:16-17. What distinctions does John witness about God here?

Each was manifested in a different way at the same time:

- the Son of God was the man Jesus standing in front of John;
- the Spirit of God was visibly present in the dove coming down out of the open heavens;
- the voice that spoke from heaven was unmistakably the Father's, because He spoke of His Son.

15. Read Matthew 28:19. Would the disciples have understood why Jesus is saying they should baptize in this name? Please explain.

Yes. They have understood and confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, so they also recognize God as Father. Jesus has instructed them about the Holy Spirit Whom He will send to them.

16. With what words does the Ethiopian eunuch, who has just heard the gospel for the first time, confess his faith (Acts 8:37)? "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

17. Please read Romans 1:1-4. What relationship do you see between the gospel proclamation and an understanding of the Trinity?

- The gospel is God's.
- He promised it through the Old Testament prophets (through the Holy Spirit).
- The gospel is concerning His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord.
- The Son was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (by the power of the Holy Spirit).
- Jesus' Sonship is declared with power in His resurrection.
- The Spirit of holiness bears witness to Jesus' Sonship through the Resurrection.

18a. Please write out the words of 2 Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

18b. What are Paul and other apostles recognizing in these benedictions?

They are aware that there are even distinctions in the way each Person of the Trinity relates to, sustains, and blesses Christians.

19a. Please write down the confession of faith in 1 Corinthians 8:6.

"There is but one God, the Father, from Whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

19b. What distinctions do Paul's words make between the Father and the Son here?

- The Father is the Source of creation. The Son is the Agent.
- We exist through Jesus for the Father's sake. Christ is our life, enabling us to exist for the Father.

20. Philippians 2:6-11 may have been a hymn New Testament Christians sang. Write down each important statement that is made about the relationship and the interaction between Jesus and God.

- Jesus existed in the form of God.
- He did not count it robbery to be equal with God.
- God highly exalted Him.
- God bestowed on Him the name that is above every name.
- The Father purposed that every knee should bow at the name of Jesus.
- The Father purposed that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- This will be to the glory of God the Father.

21. One of the statements about Jesus in Philippians 2:6 is often translated, "He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." In the Greek text the words say, "He did not count it robbery to be equal with God." Why is the original wording an even stronger statement?

The translation emphasizes the Son's decision not to grasp at equality. It is not suggesting that the Son *wasn't* equal with God, but it is saying that He chose not to make it a consideration or something he would guard for Himself. It is a weaker expression than the original because it may give the impression that the Son had to grasp for this to have it.

The Greek text emphasizes the Son's awareness that He is God and equal with God. He knew that He was God. He knew it wasn't robbery for Him to be equal. He was not overreaching or taking something that wasn't His. It was Who He was; and in this awareness, He emptied and humbled Himself.

22a. Please read 1 John 4:1-2. What confession identifies the presence and witness of God's Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the One from God bearing witness that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

22b. What does John go on to say in 1 John 4:15?

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God."

23. Please write down each thing John says about God, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father in 1 John 4:12-14.

- God abides in us.
- We know that we abide in Him and that He abides in us because He has given us the Spirit.
- The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior.

24. Why is the statement John makes in 1 John 4:15 so assuring in the light of his previous statements?

It establishes the personal commitment God makes to take over our lives and to live His life in us and through us, whom He has sought out and enabled to know that Jesus is His Son. This is what He wants and His relationship with us is abiding and enduring.

25. What expectations are implicit in these facts about Christians?

- We are no longer our own and our lives are not ours to live as we want.
- Christ's character will become ours.
- The power of the Holy Spirit will work through each one in whom He abides to accomplish God's will in the world.