

Introduction

God in his great wisdom as our teacher doesn't tell us everything at once. In an ordered sequence He adds to his revelation until a fuller picture emerges. For example, the information about the Messiah is given from Genesis to Malachi, in outline at first and then in greater detail. In the same way, God's revelation of Himself comes over time also.

In this study, we will look at how the truth of God came about and how in time we see clearly His Being as the blessed Triune God.

Getting to know God

Job 11:7-8 “Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?”

The Starting point

Creation

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Psalm 19:1

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. Romans 1:19 -20

Creation

This is where Paul begins when introducing pagan Greeks to the truth about God.

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Acts 17:23-25

Scripture

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; Psalm 19:7

**We see descriptions about God using human terms to help us understand him
These are called Anthropomorphisms.**

Isaiah 53:1 And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Psalm 17:6 O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words.

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

What is God like ?

2 Samuel 7:22 Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

There is One God – not many, the Creator

Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.

Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

**This is called General Revelation - People have no excuse.
The atheist is called a fool.**

Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”

But to really know Him we need Special Revelation

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:20-24

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-11

Special Revelation

God chose to reveal Himself through his word and through the patriarchs and the nation Israel

By his personal working in our hearts

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 16:15-17

By personal revelation to chosen individuals –

“Theophanies” - making the Invisible visible.

We will look at these later under the Angel of the Covenant

Our problem

He is infinite. We are finite and fallen

Jeremiah 10:6 No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power.

Isaiah 46:9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

You can think that He is just like you. God in man's image ?

Old Testament revelation

Right from the start we see somethings are 'odd':-

Genesis 1:2-3 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

God's Spirit appears to be 'in one place' and God somewhere else.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

God's use of the plural (us, we) is very unusual.

Genesis 2:23-24 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Husband and wife 2=1 . One but NOT identical

The Angel of the Covenant

In relation to Israel we are introduced to the Angel of the covenant

All angels are created spirits BUT this one :-

A, Appears to the patriarchs and speaks as God

Eg. Genesis 18:1-3 And the LORD appeared to him (Abraham) by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

Genesis 32:28-30 Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

The Angel of the Covenant

B, Appears to Moses and speaks as God

Exodus 3:4-6 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

C, Leads the Israelites in the desert

Exodus 23:20-22 “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

Is he Just God's representative ?

He Accepts worship

Judges 13:17-22 And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honour you?" And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground. The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."

Who is The Messiah ?

Matthew 22:42-45 Jesus says , “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ““The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet””? (Psalm 110:1)
If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

John 12:41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a **child is born**, to us a **son is given**; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Who is The Messiah ?

It is from Daniel's vision that Jesus takes the title 'Son of Man'

Daniel 7:13-14 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Jesus' birth is unique (The Angel of the Covenant isn't seen in the New Testament)

Matthew 1:20-23 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

In Jesus we have a dual revelation- man and God united in one person

Hebrews 4:14-15 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **(Fully Human)**

And he calls God his Father

John 5:18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Paul speaks of Jesus' dual nature

Romans 1:1-4 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul speaks of his sorrow at fellow Jewish rejection of Jesus' deity.

Romans 9:3-5 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

The Relationship of Jesus to the Father

His Role of submission

John 14:28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

His Identity of will, purpose etc. with the Father

John 17:21-22 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,

John 10:30-33 I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

The divine economy - way things operate

The roles of the three persons in redemption

Redemption, accomplished and applied

The Father plans/initiates

Psalm 40:7-8 Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

The Son carries it out – in submission to Father's will (submission is not inferiority)

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

The Spirit comes and applies it to us

2 Corinthians 3:6 *we are* ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

THE Big Problem was there already but is focused in the NT.

There is only one God but in 3 persons,
each of whom is different but of the same essence.

Father is usually referred to as 'God'

Jesus is usually referred to as 'Lord'

Philippians 2:6-11 *Jesus*, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Note: The Name = Deity

THE Big Problem

There is only one God but in 3 persons,
each of whom is different but is addressed as God.

Cf. Thomas and John's testimonies

John 20:27-31 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The place of the Holy Spirit

He is not just energy or a force

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit **and** with power.

He stays in the background, pointing us to Jesus

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The place of the Holy Spirit

The Personal representative of Jesus - 'another' of the same kind

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another** Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

He is a Person – capable of personal reactions

Act 5:4, 9 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”

But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit applies God's blessings to individuals

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Romans 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8:15-16 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

He is the means by which God dwells in us

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

3 equal 1 but the word 'trinity' is not found in the Bible

The Church had to try to describe the evidence faithfully and to avoid error

A 'verse' to avoid *It's not in most manuscripts*

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

But its truth is found throughout the Bible

Eg. At Jesus baptism

Matthew 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

In the work of salvation

Hebrews 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The Problem restated: -

There are separate persons: The Father is not the Son, etc.

But they are one in essence - omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, loving
BOTH statements are true!

And so the Trinity is built into the fabric of the Christian's life

In worship and mission

Matthew 28:17-20 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

In worship and praise

Numbers 6:24-27 The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Isaiah 6:3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Revelation 5:13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!”

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.

'solutions'

There have been 2 basic human 'solutions' to the mystery: How can 3 be 1 ?

1, It's **not** 3

demote Jesus to a glorious creature and the Holy Spirit to an impersonal force
cf. Judaism after AD 70, Arians in the early centuries, unitarians, JW's

2, It's **only** 1 person - just three forms of appearing – modalism

cf. light and coloured filters

(but they appear together at the same time cf. Jesus' baptism)

How can 3 be 1 ?

There is no human solution to the mystery

**The closest biblical comparison of God is of a Father and Son
(the Holy Spirit stays in the background as the revealer of them)**

Also cf. in marriage

Ephesians 5:31-32 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

If “two in one” is a mystery then ... we are beaten !

A wonderful result from this truth

God in himself is a relational being

There is an Eternal fellowship of the Father and Son and Spirit - past

John 17:4-5 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (the answer to the indefinite article issue in verse 1)

There is an Eternal fellowship of the Father and Son and Spirit - future

1 Corinthians 15:28 When all things are subjected to him (Jesus), then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

A wonderful result from the truth

Since God in himself is a relational being

So mankind is designed for relationship

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 3:8-9 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Why knowing the truth about the Trinity is so important

If someone doesn't know the triune God they don't know him at all.

1 John 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 5:12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit

John 17:3 And this is eternal life,
that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.