

The Holy Spirit

The Godhead

One of the more confusing, hard-to-wrap-your-mind-around concepts in the Bible is the Godhead. How do you describe to someone that there is the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit but all are one and that we serve one God? Many theological papers have been written and discussions had over this question. Is it one God in three? Is it three Gods in one? Is it one God manifesting himself in three different ways? Is it possible for mere humans to understand fully this concept?

First, we want to look at the various terms for the Biblical concept of the “Godhead.” The term *Godhead* originally referred to “Godhood” and the state of being God – Godhood as opposed to manhood. There are three verses in the KJV that use the term “Godhead”, however, all three use different Greek words. The NASB and the ESV do not use the term “Godhead” at all.

The more popular term in the religious world is *Trinity*. Where “Godhead” emphasizes the oneness of God, this term emphasizes the fact that there are three beings in the Biblical designation of God. My preference is the term *Deity* or *Divinity* (though I use Godhead most frequently due to tradition) – these terms do not emphasize the unity or the individuality but the nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The concept of the Godhead is seen very early in the Bible. In Genesis 1:26 God says, “Let us make man in our own image...” In various places the Old Testament talks about the Spirit of God. From the beginning of the New Testament story it is clear that Jesus is the son of God and is called “God” in John 1. And Jesus has a great deal to say about the Holy Spirit in His farewell Discourse of John 14. My point in these references is that the concept of the Godhead – or multiple facets of deity – is not something that Christians have made up, it is clearly present in the scriptures.

Second, we want to look at the four major concepts of the Godhead in the religious world. Tritheism is just what it sounds like – three gods. This is the basic understand of God in the Mormon religion. There is just too much talk of unity and oneness in the Bible for this to be true. Arianism teaches that the Son and Holy Spirit were created in succession. This is what Jehovah’s Witnesses believe. And this is probably where any discussion with a Jehovah’s Witness should begin – was Jesus a created being or is He eternal like God, the Father?

Sabellianism says that there is one God who manifests himself in various ways. God created the earth, then He appeared as Jesus in order to die on the cross, and finally He showed Himself as the Holy Spirit in order to guide His apostles into all truth. The United Pentecostal

Church understands God in this way. But if this is the case, that certainly makes John 14:16-18 odd. *Jesus* said that He would ask *the Father* to send *the Helper*. You see three persons of deity present as Jesus' baptism, in the wilderness temptation, in our baptism (Matthew 28:28-30), and with the glorification of Jesus in Acts 2:32f.

The Biblical view of the Godhead is often referred to as Trinitarianism. This teaches that there are three persons of deity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person is distinct but unified as one entity. Many can make one and we understand this concept: there is one humanity, but billions of people; there is one person made up of body, soul, and spirit; husband and wife make up one flesh; the church is one body, but many members. Likewise, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God.

Next week we will talk about the roles of the persons in the Godhead.