

Session 1

March 7, 2021

THE NATURE OF GOD

John 14:8-11, 16-20, 23-26

The doctrine of the trinity is easy to state: *There is one true God who exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three Persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essent.* But what is easy to state can be tough to understand and even more difficult to explain! You may have heard the doctrine explained with an object lesson, like an egg. There's the shell, the yolk, and the white. Three distinct parts, but all egg. Or the parts of an apple (skin, core, fruit) or water (ice, liquid, steam). But none of these simple illustrations captures the concept very well. Regardless of the difficulties in understanding the trinity, one God in three persons is Bible truth. And like electricity, we don't have to understand how it all works to enjoy its benefits.

In John 14, Jesus is giving comfort and encouragement to His disciples just prior to His arrest and crucifixion. While the word "trinity" is not used, the concept is clearly taught.

The Son reveals the Father (vv. 8-11). Jesus' reference to the *Father* in verses 6 and 7, is followed by the assertion that the disciples had actually "seen" Him. Philip's interruption (v. 8) is genuine. Like the prophets of old, he was anxious to see some physical manifestation of God's presence. To me, the reply of Jesus in verse 9 is more an expression of disappointment than a rebuke. After spending three years with the disciples, they still didn't grasp the reality that Jesus—in His character, words, miracles, and ministry—revealed His deity. This He pointed out explicitly in verse 10: the Father and Son share the same *essence* ("I am in the Father...the Father is in Me"). Hence the *words* of Jesus and His *works* reveal the Father who lives (*continually abides*) in Him. In verse 11, Jesus made the same concession He made to the unbelieving Jews; if they could not accept His testimony, then at least they should consider His miraculous works (see John 10:37-38). For reflection: *Why do you think the disciples had such a hard time accepting the deity of Christ? Do you think miraculous works today would convince the lost that Jesus is God in the flesh?*

The Father sends the Spirit (vv. 16-20). While the truths of these verses are intermingled, some distinct teachings are present. First, the Holy Spirit is a *counselor* (v. 16). The word can mean advocate, helper, or intercessor, and in this case means all three...and more! "Another" implies of the same kind. (Interestingly, the same role is applied to Jesus Himself in 1 John 2:1). Second, He will abide with them *forever*. This is in contrast to the fact that Jesus, the Incarnate One, would be soon departing (v. 19). Third, He is the *Spirit of truth*, just as both Jesus and the word of God given by the Father are truth (v. 17; see John 14:6; 17:17). Fourth, *those who do not know God, cannot receive the Holy Spirit* (v. 17; see also 1 Cor. 2:14). Fifth, while the Spirit is with them already, He will be *in* them. Some see this as a future indwelling. (I believe the Spirit indwelt believers in the Old Testament as well as the New...but that's a different lesson!). Regardless, the coming of the Spirit mentioned here marked a new movement of God and a special empowerment of the church (see Acts 2). Sixth, by His resurrection, He guarantees those

who are *in Him* are filled by the life-giving Spirit shared with the Father and Son. For reflection: *Can you think of anywhere else in Scripture where the believer is more intimately connected to all three Persons of the trinity?*

The Spirit honors the Son (vv. 23-26). This section brings the discourse full circle, back to Christ. Notice the believer's connection with the godhead is relational. *God's love* is connected to the *believer's obedience* to the *word of God*, which is revealed by the *Son of God*. The Holy Spirit here, is more than a Helper; He is an *indweller* (v. 23), a *teacher*, and a *reminder* of everything Christ taught (v. 26). And so He remains today! For reflection: *Can you think of times when in conversation or teaching, that the Holy Spirit reminded you of the Bible truth you needed at that very moment?*