

Problems People have with the "Trinity" Doctrine (Part 3)

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In the last part we concluded from Scripture there is only one God; infinite in both power and wisdom, among His other attributes. See, for example, Psalm 147:5 (“Our Lord is great and has awesome power; there is no limit to his wisdom.” NET); Daniel 2:20 (“Let the name of God be praised forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to him.” NET) and Romans 11:33. Before moving on from those statements about God in Scripture, I want to add the following: **All of God’s attributes are constantly functioning together in unison!** Though we as humans often focus on a particular thought or action, within God, none of His attributes take precedence over another. He has, and always will be, just as holy and righteous in dealing with sin as He is loving and merciful. He is just as compassionate as He is full of righteous anger.

What does “is” mean?

Sometimes the verb “is” may be used to establish one’s **identity**. For example, a witness in a court case points at a particular person and states, “That’s [that **is**] him!” in order to identify that person as being the accused. (But keep in mind, this certainly does not mean that’s all we could say about that person; it may be true that he *is also* the husband of a particular woman, father of a particular child. Or, the owner of that car, etc.) On the other hand, a teacher in some school might say, “And 1 plus 2 is 3” (where “is” is being used as an *abbreviation* for “**is equal to**” or simply “**equals**”; the teacher expecting the students to understand “is” in the *mathematical sense* of: $1 + 2 = 3$).

However, most of the time, we use the word “is” to describe an **attribute** that something or someone has; or, we may use “was” of an attribute (or *condition*) we know they had in the past. When someone tells a child, “The sky **is** blue,” does that mean anything blue is also the sky? Of course not! We are not saying sky *equals* blue! We are stating an **attribute** about the sky; just like saying “The sky **is** cloudy!” (And we obviously expect people to understand we mean only a part of the sky which we can see at that particular time.) We could also say at a different time, “The sky is red and orange,” but you certainly wouldn’t expect anyone to think you meant everywhere on earth. By viewing the nature of the world around us and the many *states of being* people find themselves in, we learn that unlike God,¹ both objects in our physical universe and *human attributes* are often **changing!**

¹ See James 1:17 (“... the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.” NET – Note: *Greek* “variation or shadow of turning” refers to the motions of heavenly bodies causing variations of light and darkness.) Compare: Malachi 3:6.

Unfortunately, many have twisted Scripture by either misunderstanding or purposely throwing out the fact; as explained above, that the word “is” often means an attribute will follow; **not** that an *identity* is being made.

In **John 3:33**, we read, “God is true.”² Does this mean that anything true is God? No; of course not. Does it mean that someone is witnessing for or praising or glorifying God in what is being said, if a statement is true? No, not necessarily. But since God does not change, we do know from this statement that God will always be true! (We could have also concluded this from previous passages which state that God never lies, but as humans we don’t seem to remember — or learn — very well, so need to hear things over and over.)

Likewise, 1 John 4:8 and 4:16 both state that “God is love.”³ Does this mean that anytime someone shows “love” that God must be actively involved? (God certainly blessed all humanity with the capability of showing *true love*; by which I mean *sacrificial* — with no kind of expectation or reward; simply performing an *act of love* with no thought about what may follow.) I can only answer: *Possibly*. Do the words “God is love” mean that God = Love and Love = God? No! That would be ripping this statement **out of context**, and ultimately it is the context of a writing we must look to in order to understand its meaning:

First, the context of the whole chapter shows **John is talking only about Christians here** and that they must love each other. We must also see John’s statement in light of the fact that he provided an additional explanation for what he meant by writing in 2 John 1:6 (and elsewhere): “Now **this is love**: that we **walk according to his commandments**.” And in regards to salvation, John 3:36 states: “He who **believes in the Son** has eternal life; but he who **does not obey the Son will not see life**, but the wrath of God abides on him.” The obedience John mentions is an outward display of the love that a Christian has for God, for the Holy Spirit working in their lives.

Furthermore, John stated in 1 John 4:9-10: “By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his **Son** to be the **atoning sacrifice** for our sins.” So, we know there is a lot more than simply loving someone involved in salvation from the penalty of sin.

² “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true.” (John 3:33; NAU)

³ “The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8), and “God is love, and the one who resides in love resides in God, and God resides in him.” (1 John 4:16b).

There are some Identities in Scripture

Before moving on to other words, let's cover a few *identities* which are mentioned in the Gospel of John:

In John 8:12 (and 9:5), Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have **the light of life**." Because this is an identity, it is just as valid to say: The light of the world **is** Jesus Christ. Notice how the statement in John 8 uses the word "**the**" (in the English translation) to refer to a specific meaning of this phrase containing the word "light" rather than light in general. This is an example where *the Greek article* precedes the word for "light."⁴ As noted earlier, when a writer states that someone or something "is" *some word or phrase*, it's often declaring something **about** that person or thing. For example, 1 John 1:5 contains the phrase "**God is light**" without "the" in front of "light," so you cannot say that any kind of "light" is God! It's describing an **attribute** about God in that context, **not** an identity.

Likewise, after reading various passages in John (chapters 10, 14 and 15), we could also say that "the door of the sheep," "the good shepherd," "the true vine" and "the way, the truth and the life" (in *the context* of each of those chapters) are all ways one could refer to Jesus Christ, because he said, "**I am**..." followed by each of those phrases using *the Greek article* (and also supported by the context). "The way" he spoke of in John 14:6 being that of salvation from sin, and the reason why Peter said in Acts 4:12, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Some Notes on the Greek Article

Unlike English, there are *at least 17 different ways to write* the Greek word that is sometimes translated as "the" (though often left *untranslated*) in English! How can there be so many different ways to write a single word? First, just like German, Russian and some other languages (including Latin and Sanskrit), Greek uses one of its *grammatical genders* (which has nothing to do with biology) of *masculine*, *feminine* and *neuter* for each of its nouns. And when the article is used with a noun, it must agree with the "gender" of that associated noun.

Furthermore, there are different forms for both nouns and the Greek article depending upon how the words are used grammatically in a sentence; that is, whether the noun is the subject (usually in the *nominative case*), direct object (usually in the *accusative*

⁴ This work uses only "the Greek article" or simply "the article" to refer to the Greek word which most Greek grammar books call the *Definite Article*. Unlike English though, which has both *definite* ("the") and *indefinite* ("a" or "an") articles, Greek has **only one** (so that's why I decided to use a different *and simpler* term). **Note:** Although the Greek article is sometimes translated into English as "the" when necessary (as seen in the text above; though it's often not translated at all), it has a much wider meaning than the English word "the" in many of its uses in the Greek New Testament.

case), etc. Here are both the singular and plural forms of the article; in **24** of the (let's call them) *grammatical usages* those 17 different spellings can represent:

The Greek Article :

Case	Singular			Plural		
	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.
Nominative	ὁ	ἡ	τό	οἱ	αἱ	τά
Genitive	τοῦ	τῆς	τοῦ	τῶν	τῶν	τῶν
Dative	τῷ	τῇ	τῷ	τοῖς	ταῖς	τοῖς
Accusative	τόν	τήν	τό	τούς	τάς	τά

And as strange as it may seem to an English only speaker, the *gender* of words in other languages is rather arbitrary. For example, in both German and Spanish, a book and a pencil are both masculine, but a pen is feminine, and one must memorize all the *genders* for each noun. By now, you might see why it could actually be easier for children or immigrants from some countries to learn English than for English speakers to learn another language.

The facts above should also provide you with a greater understanding as to why someone who was raised in, say, a Spanish speaking home *may* sometimes refer to a car, boat *or* some other “thing” as “he” *or* “she” instead of “it” (because not only had they already learned to refer to something as having a *male* or *female* gender, but in Spanish they *never* called anything an “it”).⁵

So unlike English, this expected agreement in grammatical gender *and* case makes what was written in Scripture (in both the *Greek* of the New Testament and the *Hebrew and Aramaic* of the Old Testament) much less ambiguous than English.

In our next part, we'll attempt to examine every detail of **John 1:1**; which was written by one who knew Jesus very well, one of His disciples and one of the few of the earliest Christians who lived to an old age. He was also the pastor of a number of churches and one of *The Way's* early apologists against various *heresies* which had already arisen and continued to exist beyond his lifetime; as well as being led by the Spirit to address some false teachings which were yet to come.

⁵ Note: Spanish along with Arabic, French, Hebrew and a number of other languages (including Ancient Egyptian, Aramaic and Coptic) have only the *masculine* and *feminine* grammatical genders. (See here: For a dynamic list of [languages by type of grammatical genders](#).)