

READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER

*... always being ready to make a defense [answer] to everyone who asks
you to give an account for the hope that is in you . . .*

1 Peter 3:15

STATEMENT #1

“Is there one God or three?”

“TRINITY” A theological term used to define God as an undivided unity expressed in the threefold nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As a distinctive Christian doctrine, the Trinity is considered as a divine mystery beyond human comprehension to be reflected upon only through scriptural revelation. While the term trinity does not appear in Scripture, the trinitarian structure appears throughout the New Testament to affirm that God Himself is manifested through Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit.

The Old Testament

The word of God is recognized as the agent of creation (Psa. 33:6,9; compare Prov. 3:19; 8:27), revelation, and salvation (Psa. 107:20). This same vocabulary is given distinct personality in John's prologue (Joh.1:1-4) in the person of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament

The New Testament does not present a systematic presentation of the Trinity. The scattered segments from various writers that appear throughout the New Testament reflect a seemingly accepted understanding that exists without a full-length discussion. It is embedded in the framework of the Christian experience and simply assumed as true. The New Testament writers focus on statements drawn from the obvious existence of the trinitarian experience as opposed to a detailed exposition.

1. Trinitarian formula.

Matthew 28:19, for example, follows the triple formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that distinguishes Christian baptism. The risen Lord commissioned the disciples to baptize converts with a trinitarian emphasis that carries the distinctiveness of each person of the Godhead while associating their inner relationship.

2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul finalized his thoughts to the Corinthian church with an appeal that is grounded in *“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”* NASB

1 Peter 1:2, the trinitarian formula is followed with reference to each person of the Godhead. The scattered Christians are reminded through reference to the Trinity that their election and redemption should lead to holy living obedience to the Son.

Revelation 1:4-6. The focus on the triumph of Christianity crystallizes the trinitarian greeting into a doxology that acknowledges the accomplished work and the second coming of Christ.

2. **Passages that refer to the three Persons, but not in the definitive formula.** Eph. 4:4-6, 1Co.12:3-6

Each Scripture balances the unity of the church. Emphasis is placed on the administration of gifts by the Godhead.

3. **Passages that mention the three persons of the Godhead, but without a clear structure.**

Mat.3:3-17; Mar.1:9-11; and Luk.3:21-22

The three synoptic writers recorded the presence of the Trinity when the Son was baptized, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke with approval.

The references, Gal.4:4-6, 2Th.2:13-15, Tit.3:4-6, Jde.:20-21, outline the work of the Trinity in the aspect of the sending Father. They portray each member of the Trinity in relation to a particular redemptive function.

4. **Passages in the farewell discourse of Jesus to His disciples.** Joh.14:16; 15:26; 16:13-15
Jesus expounded the work and ministry of the third person of the Godhead as the Agent of God in the continuing ministry of the Son. The Spirit is a Teacher who facilitates understanding on the disciples' part and, in being sent from the Father and the Son, is one in nature with the other Persons of the Trinity. He makes known the Son and "at the same time makes known the Father who is revealed in the Son" (16:15).

FOUR STATEMENTS WHICH SUMMARIZE AND CLARIFY:

1. **God is One.** The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. His offer of salvation in the Old Testament receives a fuller revelation in the New Testament in a way that is not different, but more complete. The doctrine of the Trinity does not abandon the monotheistic faith of Israel.
2. **God has three distinct ways of being in the redemptive event, yet He remains an undivided unity.** That God the Father imparts Himself to mankind through Son and Spirit without ceasing to be Himself is at the very heart of the Christian faith. A compromise in either the absolute sameness of the Godhead or the true diversity reduces the reality of salvation.
3. **The primary way of grasping the concept of the Trinity is through the threefold participation in salvation.** The approach of the New Testament is not to discuss the essence of the Godhead, but the particular aspects of the revelatory event that includes the definitive presence of the Father in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.
4. **The doctrine of the Trinity is an absolute mystery.** It is primarily known, not through speculation, but through what is revealed.

STATEMENT #2

“You speak of being pleasing to God on the basis of obeying ‘commands, examples and necessary inferences.’ Where in the Bible do you find this idea?”

1. Obedience is an integral part of discipleship.

“And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Heb.5:9

2. The idea (expressed command, approved example and necessary inference) is not found as a formula in any passage. However, the concept is clearly expressed in many passages in the New Testament.

3. Express command. When it is clearly stated that the followers of Christ are to do, or refrain from doing, a certain thing.

Mar.16:15-16 the one who has done what is commanded is saved.

1Co.11:23-24 “this do...” all disciples are to heed the command.

Heb.13:17 “obey your leaders [those shepherds who watch over your soul]

Act.2:28 “repent and be baptized” is not optional to one seeking forgiveness

4. Approved example. When it is established that what was done is what the Lord wants His disciples to do also.

Paul enjoins Christians to follow examples. Phi.3:17, 2Th.3:7, 9

Jesus taught by example. Joh.13:15, 1Pe.2:21

Jesus taught that His followers should remember him in the communion.

1Co.11:23-26

Act.20:7 the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread.

5. Necessary inference. Where it can be determined that on the basis of what has been revealed, one of necessity infer something to be true.

Example:

A store is open on six days a week. Employees do not work on Sunday.

Necessary infer that the store is closed on Sunday.

Biblical example: Mar.15:15-16

(1) Believe and baptized: saved

(2) Believe not: condemned

(3) Necessarily inferred: believe, but not baptized: not saved.

(4) Inference is consistent with Joh.12:42-43,48

Another Biblical example:

(1) Communion is commanded of Christians.

(2) Communion was to be taken when they came together.

(3) Christians met on the first day of the week (Sunday).

(4) Communion is to taken on the first day of the week (every week).

(5) “Remember the sabbath” is understood to observe it as often as it occurred. Christians are to partake as often as the day occurs.

STATEMENT #3

“Why all the talk about obedience? We are not under law, but under grace. We have freedom in Christ.”

1. **Law and grace are not mutually exclusive. It is not a matter one or the other.**
*For the **law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Rom.8:2*
*“to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the **law of Christ**. 1Co.9:21*
*Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the **law of Christ**. Gal 6:2*
2. **The Law of Moses (a perfect law given by God) was imperfect because of the sins of the people.**
For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them . . . Heb.8:7-8
3. **Law-keeping cannot make one just.**
because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. Rom.2:20
4. **Obedience is integral part of discipleship. Obedience to what?**
If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. Joh.14:15
5. **Obedience to and love of Christ cannot be separated.**
He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. Joh.14:24
6. **One cannot “see life” without obedience.**
He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Joh.3:26
7. **Faith without works is dead.**
But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. Jam.2:20-24
8. **Our obedience is done on the basis of faith. Obedience by itself cannot save, no more than Law keeping under the Old Testament. Anyone seeking to “earn” salvation by works of obedience will not succeed.**
Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. Gal.2:16

STATEMENT #4

“When you say others are wrong in what they are doing, are you not violating the New Testament by judging others?”

1. It is alleged that the following passages are violated.

Mat.7:1 *“Do not **judge**. . . (lest you be judged.)”*

Rom.14:4 *Who are you to **judge** the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

Jam.4:12 *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but **who are you who judge your neighbor?***

2. Vine’s Expository Dictionary: **judge krino = primarily denotes to separate, select, choose; hence, to determine, and so to judge, pronounce judgment.**

3. Judge by actions:

Mat.12:41-42 ***The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.***

Joh.3:19 *“And **this is the judgment**, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.”*

1Co.6:2 *Or do you not know that the **saints will judge the world?** And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?*

4. The apostles were to judge.

Mat.19:28 *And Jesus said to [apostles] them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**”*

5. We are to judge rightly.

Luk.12:56-57 *“You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time? And why do you not even on your own initiative **judge what is right?**”*

Joh.7:24 *“Do not judge according to appearance, but **judge with righteous judgment.**”*

Rom.12:3 *For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but **to think so as to have sound judgment**, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

1Co.11:13 ***Judge for yourselves:** is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?*

1Co.14:29 *And let two or three prophets speak, and let the **others pass judgment.***

6. We must avoid judging wrongly.

Rom.14:1-4,13 *Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but **not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions**. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. . . .Therefore **let us not judge** one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

1Co.4:5 *Therefore **do not go on passing judgment** before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*

Jam.2:4 *have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become **judges with evil motives?***

STATEMENT #5

“Why don’t you baptize babies, since the Bible says we are born in sin: ‘Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.’ Psalms 51:5”

1. **Does this mean that babies are born in sin?**
2. **The doctrine of “original sin” means different things to different people.**
 - (1) Some understand it to refer only to inheriting the “fallen nature” of Adam, and not any personal guilt of his own.
 - (2) But the common conception includes the idea of inheriting the guilt of Adam's sin as well, meaning that babies are born in sin.
 - (3) It is this latter understanding that has led to the practice of infant baptism.
3. **Do babies inherit the personal guilt of their forbearers?**
 - (1) God has clearly said that He does not hold the child guilty for the sins of the father. Eze.18:20
 - (2) Paul described a time in his life when we was alive before he became a sinner. Rom.7:7-11
 - (3) According to the common idea of original sin, this would have been impossible!
 - (4) But not if children are born free from the guilt of sin and remain such until they reach an age of accountability.
4. **If all are “born in sin”:**
 - (1) Then Jesus, born of Mary, inherited “original sin.”
[To circumvent this conclusion, it is said that Mary, miraculously was spared of “original sin.”]
 - (2) Baptism is “for the remission of sins” believing that Jesus died for one’s sins. This belief is the result of one becoming cognizant of his/her sins, such realization coming about by hearing the “report” of the Good News (Gospel)
 - (3) This process of “conversion” cannot be accomplished by an infant. Hearing and believing are always mentioned as preceding baptism. Cf. Rom.10:10-17
5. **Repentance (of past sins committed) is a prerequisite to baptism.** Act.17:30, 2:38, etc.
 - (1) If infants have no “past sins,” there is no need to repent. Rom.5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, **because all sinned**-- (note text)*

STATEMENT #6

“If we are saved by baptism, then we are saved by works. This is not what the New Testament says: ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.’ Ephesians 2:8-9”

1. There are three kinds of works:

(1) Works done in accordance with the Law of Moses. Rom.3:20,28, Gal.2:16

(2) Works done to merit (earn) salvation. Eph.2:8-9

(3) Works done in carrying out one’s faith. Jam.2:14-17ff, 24,26

2. Baptism is preceded by faith, and faith must be preceded by hearing (Gal.3:2,5).

(1) Therefore, baptism is a “work” done to “perfect” one’s faith.

(2) Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith. Rom.4:1-3

(However, Abraham’s faith was “working” when he offered up His son. This, and other actions “perfected” his faith. Heb.11:17-19)

3. Baptism saves because it is an “appeal to God for a good conscience.” 1Pe.3:21

4. Baptism alone cannot save anyone.

(1) If it did, then it would be salvation by works.

5. Baptism is not the only “work” one does to gain salvation.

Phi.2:12 ***“work out your salvation with fear and trembling”***

1Co.15:58 ***“always abounding in the work of the Lord”***

Gal.5:6 ***“but faith working through love”***

Eph.2:10 ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”***

Eph.4:12 ***“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service”***

Col.1:10 ***“so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”***

1Ti.2:10 ***“women to adorn themselves . . . by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”***

1Ti.6:18 ***“Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”***

1Pe.1:17 ***“And if you address as Father the One who **impartially judges according to each man's work**, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth”***

6. Works done in accordance with Law-keeping, seek to earn salvation through obedience (with or without faith).

(1) Such effort is futile, because no one can keep the law perfectly.

7. Right-living cannot remove the stain of sin.

(1) That requires God’s grace, goodness, and forgiveness (which are the basic elements of the Gospel)

8. Works done in obedience to the commands God: are done because we believe.

These works give validity to our faith, which is the means of our salvation.

STATEMENT #7

“Baptism is only an outward sign that my sins have been forgiven. It isn’t necessary to be baptized to be saved, but it is a good idea to do it since Jesus commanded it.”

1. **The Greek word *eis*** in Acts 2:38 does not point backward to a point in time. It always is translated with a forward look, i.e., “to, Into” [in order to]
2. **This statement is based on a commonly-held belief** and is a classic example of a belief being formed and then passages being sought out that are construed as supportive.
3. **What basis is there to reason “ it’s a good idea” to do something Christ has commanded?**
Could not other passages be viewed in a similar manner? For example:
“It’s a good idea to partake of the communion, but you don’t have to do it in order to be saved.”
It’s a good idea to remain married to one person, but it isn’t necessary to do it in order to a be saved.”
4. **Fill in the blank (your choice):**
“It’s a good idea to _____, but it isn’t necessary to do it to be saved.”

STATEMENT #8

“Do you really believe that God will condemn a person who is sincere, but doesn’t know he is wrong?”

1. **It’s not a matter of what I believe or don’t believe.** Based on human emotions and intellect, one would think that “God would not!”
2. **Sincere (definition):** Not feigned or affected; genuine: sincere indignation. Being without hypocrisy or pretense.
4. **Paul persecuted Christians, thinking he was doing right.** Act.23:1
Acts 26:9 "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
5. **What one thinks, may or may not be right with God.**
 - (1) The Israelites sincerely thought it was a good idea to offer sacrifices from the booty they took from the Amalekites. 1Sa.5:1ff
 - (2) Naaman wasn’t healed in a way he thought. 2Ki.5:11

STATEMENT #9

“Do you believe that the church of Christ is the only church going to heaven?”

1. **God doesn't save churches** (i.e. denominations).
2. **The “Body of Christ, which is the Bride of Christ” will be saved.**
3. **The body of Christ is His church.**
4. **His church is composed of His true disciples, i.e, true believers.**
5. **Here's where the confusion comes in:** The question, “What church do you belong to?” is asked to determine what “denomination” are you. However, when we answer it, we are not saying the “church of Christ denomination.” ***We need to clarify our answer*** when we say that we are the “church of Christ,” the “true church.” Others think we are saying our denomination is the only one God accepts. This has led to some confusion among members of the body of Christ. Mainly because we have not made ourselves clear.
6. **The Lord is coming to claim His bride: the church.** The church is composed of all those who are true disciples (having come to know the Lord, believe and obey Him). All those baptized into Christ (*in* water, and *into* a relationship). All those who have their names written in the “Book of Life” are His.
7. **It's not a matter of church membership or fellowship** with others, but fellowship with the Son that matters.
8. **Salvation is an individual matter.** God does not save “groups”: that is, congregations, denominations, fellowships, conventions, etc.

STATEMENT #10

“Most churches are going to heaven, they are only taking different routes to get there.”

1. **Churches don't “go to heaven.”** Individuals do, on the basis of their faith and obedience.
2. Jesus said “I am the way” Joh.14:6
3. **There is only “one”** body, Spirit, hope of your calling, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father. Eph.4:4-6
4. **There is only one Gospel.**
5. **The idea of “different routes”:**
 - (1) Recognizes that there are differences among churches: different beliefs and practices.
 - (2) It embraces the philosophy: “I'm okay, you're okay”
 - (3) Yet most who hold this position will exclude certain religions, or religious bodies. Some exclude Roman Catholics; others exclude Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons and so-called “fringe groups.” Some exclude cults.
 - (4) The position, to be consistent, forces one to accept religious groups such as the “Church of Satan” in San Francisco, as a group on a different path to heaven.

STATEMENT #11

“How can a loving God allow so much suffering by good people in the world, and allow so many bad people to live in luxury and ease?”

1. **This is a tough question to answer, if one tries to use human reasoning.** However, when one realizes that we aren't able to see the “whole picture;” and we must accept His will and trust in the Lord. Rom.9:18ff
2. **Many Bible characters were made to suffer and didn't fully understand why.**
 - (1) David was one of them, who having suffered, came to a clear answer to this question: Psa.73:1-17ff
 - (2) Job 42:2-6 *“I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me.' "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.”*
3. **Suffering can come about as the result of sin.**
4. **Suffering can come about as a means to gain one's obedience, or repentance.**
5. **Suffering can be a means of refinement of one's character.** Jam.1:1ff
6. **Suffering can come about in the natural course of events.**

STATEMENT #12

“I would never trade what I feel in my heart for what you read in that book (Bible)”

1. This person views religion subjectively, and not objectively.

- (1) Usually this person knows that what they feel in their heart is not the same as what's in the Word. However, to avoid the emotional distress encountered in admitting error in what one believes, this mind-set is formed.
- (2) The position taken is this: “I know what I believe is right. So don't try to confuse me with facts.” Fear of truth is a common malady.

2. “I think” and “I thought” has been used as the basis for many wrong beliefs and actions.

- (1) Paul: *“I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”* Act.26:9
- (2) The Jews thought the religious teacher, Jesus, was worthy of death. Mat.26:66
- (3) Jesus said, *“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”* Joh.16:2
- (4) Jesus said, *“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.”* Joh.5:39-40