

Who

is

GOD

?

Moreland City Church
www.morelandcitychurch.org.au

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Who is God?

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... the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light ...

1 Timothy 6:15-16

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Revelation 21:23

1. God's Name, Titles and Attributes

God is not a machine, an animal, a plant, energy, or a lifeless object like a rock; God is separate from his creation. God is an omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (present everywhere), spiritual, personal being with self-consciousness and will. The Bible is full of examples which show us that God is a person: he has knowledge (*1 Samuel 2:3*), he talks and creates (*Genesis 1*), he thinks (*Isaiah 55:8-9*), he listens (*Philippians 4:6-7*), he loves us (*John 3:16*), he communicates with us (*Genesis 3:8-19*) and importantly, God wants to have a loving relationship with us (*Matthew 22:34-38; Acts 17:26-27*). God has all the characteristics associated with personality: he knows, he feels, he wills, he acts.

1. God's Personal Name

We all have personal names like Peter, Joshua and Melinda. Did you know that God also has a personal name? This is further proof that God is a personal being. Read the conversation that Moses has with God in Exodus 3:13-15.

Moses asks God what his name is. What was God's response? (v.15)

Notice that "LORD" in verse 15 is all in capital letters and is not spelt "Lord", with only one capital letter, or "lord" with no capital letters. Throughout the Bible you will see 3 different spellings of this word: lord, Lord and LORD.

What is the definition of "lord"?

What is the definition of "Lord"?

Wherever you see "LORD" in the Bible (as in Exodus 3:15) this refers to God's personal name.

Why Is God's Personal Name Spelt As "LORD"?

- The Hebrew word for God's personal name is יהוה (or HWHY in English).
- Hebrew is written and read from right to left, so God's personal name in English is YHWH.
- The Hebrew alphabet does not have vowels, so there are no vowels in God's name. Therefore, the exact pronunciation of God's name is uncertain. Vowels must be added in order to be able to pronounce it.
- Possible pronunciations of YHWH are Yahowah, Yehowah, Yahweh etc.
- "Jehovah" is also another attempt to pronounce God's name, however it's not considered to be very accurate. Many people believe that "Yahweh" is probably the most accurate pronunciation of God's name.
- Since the exact pronunciation is not known, many translations of the Bible will instead replace "YHWH" with "LORD" or "the LORD". Only a small number of Bibles will translate God's name and may use *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*.
- So in the Bible:
 - When we read "lord", it means lord.
 - When we read "Lord", it means Lord.
 - When we read "LORD", it means YHWH - God's personal name.

So whenever we read "LORD" or "the LORD", we should consciously recognise that we are reading God's personal name of YHWH and not simply reading it as *Lord*.

Finally, when the Hebrew word for "Lord" occurs next to God's name "YHWH" in the Bible, instead of expressing it as "Lord LORD", it is expressed as "Lord God" (e.g. Judges 16:28), with "God" spelt using capital letters.

What Does YHWH Mean?

A lot of names given to people in the Bible have meanings to them. What is the meaning of your name?

God's name, YHWH, is connected to the Hebrew verb "to be", giving it the meaning of "I was, I am, I continue to be", which follows the description God gave Moses in Exodus 3:14.

What do you think this meaning tells us about God?

2. God's Titles

Titles are different from personal names. A title describes who you are or what position you hold, such as "doctor", "president", "secretary" etc. The Bible is full of many titles for God and each has a meaning behind it. Read the following passages and write down what titles God has and what they tell us about God.

- Deuteronomy 32:4

- Psalm 23:1

- Psalm 27:1

- 1 Timothy 6:15

- Revelation 1:8

What other titles does God have that you know of? Why does he have these titles?

3. God's Attributes

Attributes are characteristics or qualities that a person possesses. God has several attributes which make him unique compared to his creation, but some of God's attributes are reflected in us. Read the following passages and write down what attributes God has and what they tell us about him.

- Psalm 90:2

- Jeremiah 32:17

- Psalm 147:5

- Jeremiah 23:24

- Psalm 89:14

- Psalm 99:9

What other attributes does God have that you know of?

In what ways does an understanding of God's name (YHWH), titles and attributes affect your relationship with God and your worship of him?

2. The Trinity

Even though God (YHWH) is one, the Bible teaches that he eternally exists as 3 persons – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Christian church commonly calls this the “Trinity” (“tri” meaning 3). The word “Trinity” doesn’t actually occur in the Bible, but the concept does. The Trinity consists of 3 **divine** and **distinct** persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in 1 God.

It’s important to know what Biblical support there is for the Trinity, since it’s commonly attacked by non-Christians and those who belong to Christian cults (such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons). This is why this chapter has a lot of Biblical passages listed.

1. How Many Gods Are There?

Read the following passages and write down how many Gods, or gods, there are.

- Isaiah 43:10
-

- Isaiah 45:5-6
-

- Mark 12:29
-

- Romans 3:29-30
-

The Bible is very clear - there is only **ONE** God. Not even gods exist! God does not share his authority or divinity with any part of his creation.

2. How Does This One God Reveal Himself To Us?

a) God The Father

How is God described in the following verses?

- Isaiah 63:16; 64:8
-

- 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Peter 1:17

What other examples in the Bible show that the Father is God?

b) God The Son (Jesus Christ)

How is Jesus Christ shown to be God in the following examples?

- Isaiah 9:6 (*this is a prophecy of the birth of Jesus Christ about 700 years before he was born*)

-
-
- John 1:1-2,14

-
-
- John 8:48-59

-
-
- John 20:26-29

-
-
- Revelation 1:8 compared with Revelation 22:12-16

-
-
- Isaiah 44:6 compared with Revelation 1:17-18
-
-

- Luke 4:5-8 + Revelation 19:9-10 compared with Luke 24:45-52 + Hebrews 1:5-6

- Isaiah 44:8 compared with 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

If you have time and like a challenge, see if you can show that Jesus Christ is God from the following group of verses:

1. Acts 2:14-21; 4:11-12 compared with Joel 2:28-32

2. John 6:46 + 1 John 4:12 compared with Genesis 18; 32:22-30 + Exodus 24:9-11

What other examples in the Bible show that Jesus Christ is God?

c) God The Holy Spirit

How is the Holy Spirit shown to be God in the following examples?

- Acts 5:1-6

- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
-
-

- 1 Corinthians 12:4,11,18,28
-
-

What other examples in the Bible show that the Holy Spirit is God?

d) Further Evidence Of The Trinity

From the following passages, what further evidence is there that the Trinity exists?

- Genesis 1:26-27 compared with Malachi 2:10
-
-

- Genesis 3:22-23
-

- Genesis 11:5-9
-

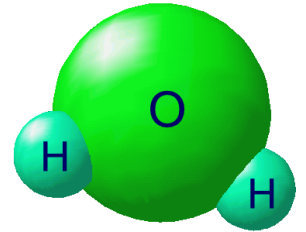
- Matthew 28:19
-

The Bible says there is one God, but it also shows that the Father is called God, the Son is called God and the Holy Spirit is called God. They are not 3 Gods, but 1 God who reveals himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible does not teach that there are 3 Gods in 1. It teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 3 divine persons who are all equal, all eternal and all exist together as 1 God. No member of the Trinity is inferior or superior to the others.

4. Trinity Analogies

Many people use many different analogies to help describe or explain the Trinity. All of these analogies are helpful but have their limitations in trying to describe God's existence as Trinity. One simple analogy to help describe the Trinity is to think of the 3 different states of water. Water (H₂O), can exist as:

1. **Ice** (a solid) – used to cool drinks, food etc.
2. **Liquid water** (a liquid) – used for drinking, cooking etc.
3. **Steam** (a gas) – used to power engines, generate electricity, sterilise equipment etc.



Ice, liquid water and steam all have different properties and uses, but they are all made of the same thing - H₂O. In some ways God is like this. The Father, Son & Holy Spirit have some common and different roles, but they are all God.

Also, these 3 states of H₂O can all exist at the same time together! This happens at the **triple point of water**. The triple point of a substance is the temperature and pressure at which all three phases of a substance (solid, liquid and gas) can exist together at the one time. It can be achieved in a vacuum tube (a tube that has no air) under special conditions. For water, the triple point occurs at 0°C and about 610 Pascals of pressure. The result is ice, liquid water and steam together in the one tube at the same time! Just as the 3 states of H₂O can all exist at the same time together, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all exist at the same time together!

What other analogies do you find useful to help describe the Trinity?

5. What Others Believe

The God of the Bible, YHWH, is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the God we worship. Belief in God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is what separates Christianity from most, if not all, other religions, philosophies and cults. The doctrine of the Trinity is very widely attacked by the cults and non-Christian religions.

The Jehovah's Witness religion teaches that only the Father is God, Jesus is Michael the Archangel who was created by God the Father, and the Holy Spirit is God's force! The Mormon religion teaches that there are many Gods and that we can become Gods ourselves! Mormonism teaches that God the Father had sex with his goddess wife, giving birth to the Son and the Holy Spirit who then became Gods! Some other religions teach that Jesus was nothing more than a prophet or a good man with good advice.

What beliefs do you know of that other people have of who God is, or who the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are? How do they compare with what the Bible teaches?





It's important that we have the correct understanding of who God is, so that we believe in, and worship, the true God of the Bible; otherwise we are in danger of creating our own God and religious belief system and will therefore be subject to God's judgement. The Bible is full of examples of people who worshipped other gods, not the God of the Bible, and were therefore condemned by God (*1 Kings 18:20-40; 2 Chronicles 7:19-22; Romans 1:21-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10*).

Also, the Bible tells us that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ – to believe in who Jesus is and in what he did (*John 3:16,36; 5:24; 8:12-24; 14:1-6; 17:1-3*). If we don't believe that Jesus Christ is the God-man who he claimed to be, then our faith is not in the Jesus Christ of the Bible, but in another Jesus Christ who **we** have created. *This faith in a different Jesus will not save us.*

Finally, if Jesus Christ is not God then how could his sacrifice on the cross be of any value to pay for the sins of the whole world for all time? If Jesus Christ was just one of God's creatures, then he could not offer anything of himself that would have enough value to restore mankind back to God. However, since Jesus Christ is God, he is perfect and sinless. He could therefore offer the only acceptable sacrifice that was of infinite value to pay for everybody's sins (*Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:13-14; 1 Peter 2:21-22*).

**There is one God.
God eternally exists as three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Each person is fully God.**

3. The Work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Since the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each fully God, they all have the same attributes such as being eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, loving, just, faithful etc. However, some of their roles and how they exist differ. Read the following verses and write down in what form they exist and what their roles are.

1a) God The Father's Form

- John 4:23-24

What is the definition of a "spirit" (read Luke 24:36-40)? What does this tell us about God's form?

b) God The Father's Roles

- 1 Corinthians 8:6

- Matthew 6:6,9

- John 3:16

- John 15:1-2

There are many other roles the Father has. What others do you know of?

2a) God The Son's Form

- Luke 24:36-43
-
-

- Philippians 3:20-21
-

Please note that Jesus Christ was given a physical body when he came to Earth (i.e. when he was conceived in Mary's womb). Before this time Jesus did not have a physical body (*John 1:1-2,14; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 10:5-7*). When Jesus rose from the dead he was given a **new body** that no longer suffered pain, death etc. (*Matthew 28:1-9; Luke 24:36-44; John 2:18-22; Acts 2:27-31; Romans 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-49*). So Jesus Christ was, and continues to be, both God and man. He is 1 person with 2 distinct natures (the nature of God and the nature of man).

b) God The Son's Roles

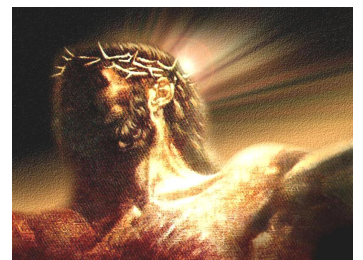
- Colossians 1:15-16
-

- John 6:38
-

- John 3:16-17
-

- 1 Peter 3:18
-

- Romans 8:34
-



- John 14:2-3

- John 14:13-14

There are many other roles the Son has. What others do you know of?

3a) God The Holy Spirit's Form

Simply from the Holy Spirit's name, the Holy Spirit is obviously a spirit.

b) God The Holy Spirit's Roles

- John 14:26



- John 16:7-15

- Ephesians 1:13-14

- Romans 8:26-27

- Galatians 5:22-23

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are many other roles the Holy Spirit has. What others do you know of?

Therefore, while the 3 persons of the Trinity are each fully God, they do differ in some of their roles (how they relate to each other and how they relate to creation). For example, the Son submits to the Father and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and Son. The Father sent the Son to Earth to die on the cross and rise from the dead for the forgiveness of our sins. When the Son returned to the Father, they sent the Holy Spirit to continue the work of God in us.

Many people find it difficult to understand and believe that God exists as 3 persons in 1 God. However we need to understand that nothing is impossible for God (*Job 42:1-2; Luke 18:27*) and that our minds will not always understand everything about God (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). This should humble us before God.

Discuss what you find difficult to understand about the Trinity and how these difficulties may be answered.

Considering everything you have looked at in this study, why do you think God exists as the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit? There may not be an answer to this question!

***There is one God.
God eternally exists as three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Each person is fully God.
Each person has common and different roles.***

Frequently Asked Questions

There are a few other questions you may have about God. Below are some of these with answers that may be helpful.

1. Is God male or female?

Jesus said that God is a spirit (*John 4:24*) and that spirits do not have physical bodies (*Luke 24:36-40*). This means that God does not have a male or female body as human beings do. God is a spiritual being.

However, sometimes figurative language used in the Bible assigns human characteristics to God in order to make it possible for us to understand him. For example, the Bible speaks of God's face (*Exod. 33:20*), eyes (*Psa. 11:4*), ears (*Isa. 59:1*), mouth (*Deut. 8:3*), hand (*Num. 11:23*) etc. God does not have physical ears and eyes but he has the **ability** to hear and see. Using human characteristics to describe God is called "anthropomorphism." Anthropomorphism is simply a way for God (a spiritual being) to communicate truth about his nature to mankind (a physical being), helping us understand who he is and what he does.

Many other metaphors are used in the Bible to help us understand God. If we mistakenly take them literally then we must believe that God is a rock (*Psa. 18:2*), a shepherd (*Psa. 23:1*), a loaf of bread (*John 6:51*) and that he has wings (*Psa. 57:1*). Physical imagery is used all over the Bible to help describe who God is and what he does.

Also, some people say that since man and woman were created in God's image (*Gen. 1:26-27*), then God must be both male and female. However, we have already seen that God does not have a physical body. Being created in God's image does not mean that God has a physical body like us, but that we are like God in other ways, such as:

- Our physical body reflects God's characteristics of hearing, seeing, speaking, doing etc.
- We have a spirit (*1 Thes. 5:23*).
- We can distinguish between right and wrong.
- We have the ability to reason, think and have freewill.
- We can love and have relationships with others and God.
- The sexuality of men and women reflects God's creativity by which He brings forth sons and daughters (*John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17*).
- The love of a husband for his wife pictures God's love for His people (*Ezek. 16; Hos. 1-3; Eph. 5:25-33*).

So it's clear that God doesn't have a male or female body. However, it should be noted that throughout the Bible, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always referred to with masculine pronouns (he, his, him) and never with feminine pronouns (she, hers, her). God is also given masculine titles (such as Father, Lord and King) and never feminine titles (such as Mother, Lady and Queen). Jesus is called the **Son** of God (never the Daughter of God) and took a male form when

he walked the Earth. This assigning of masculine titles and pronouns to God occurs thousands of times in the Bible.

Feminine metaphors describing God are only used a few times. God compares himself to a comforting mother (*Isa. 66:13*) and a female bear (*Hos. 13:8*) and Jesus compared himself to a hen (*Mat. 23:37*). God is using these examples to describe his love and care for his people.

In summary:

- God is a spirit, so he does not have a physical body.
- Since God does not have a physical body, he does not look like a man or a woman.
- The Bible uses metaphors and titles to help us understand who God is and what he does. For example, the masculine title of "Father" expresses God's authority, source and provision (*Isa. 64:8; Mat. 6:9-13; 7:7-11; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 12:3-11; Jam. 1:17*).
- Only a few feminine metaphors are used of God.
- God is always described using masculine pronouns (he, his, him), never feminine pronouns.
- God is described using masculine titles (Father, Lord, King), never feminine titles.
- Jesus Christ (the Son of God) came to Earth as a male.

All of these examples show us that God's attributes and functions are primarily masculine. So God is neither male nor female, but primarily expresses himself in a masculine form. Therefore, we should never call God our Mother, Lady or Queen, since God has not revealed himself to us in this way. We should address him as Father, Lord, King etc. as shown in the Bible.

2. How can Jesus Christ be God if he suffered pain, got tired, died etc.?

It is said that if Jesus Christ really was God he should never have experienced these things or should have been able to overcome all these things. There are several important passages of Scripture which should be read to help explain these apparent problems.

- **John 1:1-18** tells us that the Word was God and came to us in human form (Jesus Christ).
- **John 5:30-38; 6:37-40; 8:23-30** (and many other passages) tell us that the Son came to earth to do the will of God the Father. Jesus Christ was in submission to the Father, so that he might be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. So we see that even though Jesus Christ is God, he submitted himself to the Father. This voluntary submission automatically limits Jesus Christ in what he can and can't do.
- **Philippians 2:5-11** says that even though Jesus Christ was God, he didn't allow that fact to stop him from humbling himself to become a servant, being born in

the form of a human. Coming to us in the form of a human was a humbling experience for God the Son. He humbled himself by becoming human so that he could be crucified for the sins of the world. This humbling experience allowed him to suffer the pain and death that he went through. If he didn't humble himself he could not have experienced these things, since pain and suffering happens to humans and not to God!

- **Hebrews 2:9** tells us that Jesus Christ was made lower than the angels, while he was on earth, so that he could be crucified for the sins of the world. Again we can see that even though Jesus Christ is God, his time and work on earth involved humility.

These passages of Scripture detail the Son of God coming to us in human form – this is known as the *incarnation*.

These passages show us that in order for God the Son to come to Earth, live with man, and be crucified he had to take on a human nature (other passages to consider include Rom. 8:3-4 and Heb. 2:14-18). By taking on a human nature it put some limitations on the functioning of his Godly characteristics. For example, Jesus still had the power to be everywhere (omnipresence), but he was limited because he had a human body. The Son of God did not lose his Godly characteristics when he came to Earth, but he was limited in some things and experienced pain, hunger and death because he took on a human nature.

An analogy to help explain this would be a three-legged race. Picture the world's fastest sprinter who has decided to enter a three-legged race, in which one of his legs is tied to a leg of another person. Although the world's fastest sprinter is still physically strong and quick, his ability to run quickly is now reduced, because he has been limited by having his leg tied to another person. In a similar way, even though Christ was still God while he was on earth, the human body he took upon himself limited some of the things he could do.

However, all this changed once he rose from the dead. After his resurrection Jesus told his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (*Mat. 28:18*). Hebrews 1:3-4 tells us that Jesus Christ is now superior to the angels. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that he was made lower than the angels for a *little while* only. Philippians 2:9-11 tells us that Jesus has been exalted and that everybody will submit to him!

Understanding these principles will help explain many other passages in the Bible. Please note that sometimes Jesus Christ's Godly characteristics are emphasised in the Bible, while at other times his human characteristics are emphasised.

So the Son of God was, and continues to be, both God and man. He is 1 person with 2 distinct natures (the nature of God and the nature of man).

3. If Jesus Christ is God, why did he say, “The Father is greater than I?” (John 14:28).

Some people say that because Jesus Christ made this statement, it shows that he was not equal with God, and he was therefore not God. However, as we have already seen in question 1, the Son of God humbled himself and took upon himself the form of a servant. Since he did this, he could correctly say, “The Father is greater than I.” The word “greater” describes *position* rather than *nature* or *quality*. Remember that Jesus Christ submitted himself to the will of God the Father, that’s why the Father was greater than him. The Father was greater than him in terms of positional authority.

Think about the role of a policeman. A policeman would be considered *greater* than most people because of the position he holds. He can pull drivers over, fine people, arrest people etc. His position allows him a certain level of authority over other people – so he is greater than them. However, the policeman is not necessarily *better* than other people because this relates to his quality, character, nature etc.

In a similar way, the Father was greater than Jesus Christ, but their natures were identical - they were both God.

One member of the Trinity may be submissive for a time to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean that they are inferior or superior to one another. Each person of the Trinity has a particular function, or role, unique to himself. We have already seen how God the Son submitted himself to God the Father while on earth to do his will. Similarly, God the Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father and God the Son to achieve their divine purpose in the world and in the church (*John 14-16*).

4. If Jesus Christ is God, why didn’t he know the time of his second coming? (Mark 13:32).

Some people say that because Jesus Christ did not know the time of his second coming, then it shows that he’s not God, since God is omniscient (all-knowing). Again, the answer to this relates back to question 1. Remember that Jesus Christ’s human nature limited him in some ways. One such area seems to be knowledge. We are told in Luke 2:52 that as Jesus Christ grew up he “increased in wisdom.” In other words God the Son was experiencing the growth process of human nature, even in the areas of knowledge and wisdom. However, Jesus Christ was still omniscient but submitted himself to the growth process of human nature, and as a result of this he did not know the time of his second coming, since the Father had not revealed it to him.

Now that Jesus Christ has been exalted, he is no longer under the limitations he once had.

5. What about the verses which show that Jesus Christ was created? If Jesus Christ is God he should be eternal and not created.

Since the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are God, they are all eternal – in other words they were never created. References showing the eternity of the Trinity include Psa. 90:2; John 8:58; Heb. 9:13-14; Rev. 1:8; 22:12-16 etc. The verses sometimes used to show that Jesus Christ was created include:

▪ **John 6:57**

Here Jesus says that he lives because of the Father. Jesus is stating that the Father was the one who sent him to us, and that the Father was the one who gave him his earthly body. The Son of God has always existed, but God the Father gave him a human body to be the sacrifice for our sins (*Heb. 10:5-7*). So Jesus is referring to the provision of his physical body and not about being created.

▪ **Colossians 1:15**

In this verse, Jesus is called *the firstborn of all creation*. It seems to suggest that Jesus was the first creature to be created by God. The word “firstborn” can mean “the first person born”, but it also has the idea of *preeminence* and *priority*. So when the word is applied to Jesus Christ, it means that he is the “Lord of all things”. This idea is reinforced in verses 16-20. This understanding of firstborn can also be seen in Gen. 48:8-20 and Jer. 31:9.

▪ **Revelation 3:14**

In this verse, Jesus calls himself *the beginning of God's creation*. The Greek word for “beginning” has the idea of “origin” or “source”. So we can understand this verse to say that Jesus Christ is the source of God's creation, or that he created all things as is stated in John 1:1-3 and Col. 1:16-17. Jesus is not saying that he is the first creature created by God.