

Does the Bible Support the Trinity?

The doctrine of the Trinity—God as three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in one divine essence—is central to many Christian denominations. This article examines key scriptures cited to support the Trinity. It also explores the doctrine's historical development.

Scriptures Cited to Support the Trinity

Trinitarians often point to verses which imply multiple divine persons, or Christ's divinity. Below are the passages most often used to support the Trinitarian belief. Each verse is analyzed using Greek terms and context to assess their strength.

(Matthew 28:19) Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Trinitarian View: The three entities in one "*name*" imply co-equal divinity.

Analysis: The verse lists three entities but does not define their relationship or equality. The singular "*name*" (*onoma*) suggests a shared purpose or authority, not essence. The text supports distinct roles under one divine authority. At John 5:43 Jesus came in the name of his Father (not in his own name) and they did not receive him. Yet if someone came without the authority of the Father, coming only in their own name, they would receive that one, says Jesus. This shows Jesus viewed "*the name of the Father*" to be separate from his own. Acts 8:16 also shows that "*the name of*" Jesus stands out as distinctly his own. (Eph 5:20)

Conclusion: Suggests distinction, not Trinitarian unity.

(John 1:1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Trinitarian View: The "*Word*" (*Logos*) is Jesus, co-eternal and divine, sharing God's essence.

Analysis: The Greek *theos* (God) lacks the definite article (*ton*) when describing the Word, unlike when referring to "*God*" (*ton theon*). This suggests a qualitative sense—"divine" or "godlike"—not identity as the Father. The Word being "*with*" God also denotes individuality. The reaffirmation in John 1:2 that the Word was "*with God*" adds a second confirmation that the Word as a distinct person separate from God. (Jn 1:18)

Conclusion: Identifies distinction, not a co-equal Trinity.

(John 10:30) I and the Father are one.

Trinitarian View: identifies a shared divine essence.

Analysis: The Greek *hen* (one) is neuter here implying unity of purpose or will, not essence. For clarity Jesus defines what he means by *hen* (one) at John 17:11, John 17:21, John 17:22, and John 17:23 where he prays for believers to be "*one*" (*hen*) "*as*" he and the Father are, clearly

meaning harmony, not ontological unity. (Jn 11:52; Ro 12:5; 1Co 3:8; 6:16, 17; 1Jo 5:8) The context (Jn 10:28-29) shows Jesus and the Father aligned in protecting the sheep, not claiming co-equality. The verse's context and related verses identify metaphorical unity.

Conclusion: Supports unity of purpose, not Trinity.

(John 20:28) My Lord and my God.

Trinitarian View: Thomas' words prove Jesus is fully God.

Analysis: Being a god (*theos*) does not make Jesus Almighty God. (Jn 1:18) A few verses before this at John 20:17 Jesus makes his position on the matter clear: *"I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God."*

Conclusion: Points to Jesus' divine nature as *"the only begotten god"* (Jn 1:18) and Son of Almighty God. Not definitive for Trinity.

(Acts 28:25) The holy spirit aptly spoke through Isaiah the prophet.

Trinitarian View: Paul identifies "Jehovah", from Isaiah 6:8, as the holy spirit.

Analysis: Humans are physical and use parts of our body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, etc.) to accomplish tasks. God is a spirit and uses His spirit (holy spirit) to accomplish what He purposes. (Ge 1:2; Ex 31:18; Job 33:4; Ps 33:6; Ps 104:30) He can even put part of His spirit into humans (Isa 32:15; Isa 44:3; Mic 3:8; Mt 3:11; Mt 12:28; Lu 1:35; Lu 11:20; Ac 1:8; Ac 2:17; Ac 4:8; Ac 7:55), just as Christ as a spirit is also able to do. (Ac 1:23; Col 3:1)

Conclusion: Paul merely acknowledged that God used His holy spirit to speak. Does not support the Trinity doctrine.

(2 Corinthians 13:14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Trinitarian View: Verse suggests three co-equal persons.

Analysis: This verse lists three sources of blessing, not a theological statement of essence. The Greek (*charis, agapē, koinōnia*) emphasizes distinct roles, not unity. Similar lists (e.g., 1 Timothy 5:21) mention God, Jesus, and angels without readers claiming their equality. The verse is a functional grouping.

Conclusion: Identifies distinct aspects of each, not one person with multiple characteristics.

(Colossians 2:9) In him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Deity bodily.

Trinitarian View: Christ embodies divine essence, proving divinity.

Analysis: The Greek *theotetos* (deity) denotes divine quality or nature, and *"dwells bodily"*

(*sōmatikōs*) implies the Father's divine nature operates within Jesus, aligning better with Jesus as a distinct vessel of God's power. The context (v. 8-10) emphasizes Jesus' role as God's representative, and Colossians 1:19 clarifies that God's "*fullness*" was granted to Christ, showing delegation and therefore subordination, not coequality.

Conclusion: Not conclusive for Trinity.

(Hebrews 1:8) But to the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever."

Trinitarian View: God calling the Son "*O God*" proves Jesus' divinity.

Analysis: The Greek *ho theos* (O God) quotes Psalm 45:6 which addresses a human king with divine authority. Being the Son of God ("*the only-begotten god*" who is at his father's side Jn 1:18) his divinity is progenic, similar in nature but a separate entity. Being "*the image of God*" the Son naturally also has "*a scepter of uprightness*". (Ps 45:6; He 1:8, Col 1:15; He 1:3; 2Co 4:4) The context (He 1:9, "*God, your God, has anointed you*") shows Jesus as exalted but subordinate, not equal.

Conclusion: Ambiguous; supports exalted status, not Trinity.

(Hebrews 1:10) And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;

Trinitarian View: Identifying the Son as the one who created the heavens and the earth proves the Son is God. (Ge 1:1)

Analysis: Trinitarians ignore the scriptures that speak of the role the Son played in the creation process (Ge 1:26; Pr 8:30; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16) which easily explains Hebrews 1:10.

Conclusion: Supports the Son's presence and role in the creation process, not Trinity.

(Isaiah 9:6) ... His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Trinitarian View: Jesus is called God and Father, proving divinity.

Analysis: "*Wonderful Counselor*" is clarified at Isaiah 11:2 and references what the Father will give the Son. Hebrew *el gibbor* (Mighty God) describes the Son as the powerful being that he is. (Jn 1:18). "*Everlasting Father*" applies to Jesus because he gave his life for us, therefore "*all will be made alive*." (1Co 15:22; He 9:12) That life he gave us, just as the life a father gives, will last forever. (Re 1:18) He is not called "*Almighty*" (*Shadday*) God, as the Father is called. As the beginning of the verse points out, these are names given to a "*child*" and "*son*" who is born to them. They are not names given to the child's father. "*Prince of Peace*" also identifies his position as a subordinate one (that of a prince).

Conclusion: Symbolic, not Trinitarian.

(1 John 5:7, 8) For there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.

Trinitarian View: Explicitly supports the Trinity.

Analysis: This verse, known as the Johannine Comma, is a later addition, absent from early Greek manuscripts (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus). Most scholars, including Trinitarians, acknowledge the words in the verse are not original. The authentic text discusses earthly witnesses (spirit, water, blood), not a triune God. Trinitarians relying on this verse use a textual error, undermining their case. Even if authentic, “one” (hen) suggests unity, not essence. (see John 10:30 above)

Conclusion: Verse not in original manuscripts. Added later in an attempt to create scriptural support for the Trinity doctrine.

(Matthew 3:16-17) he saw God’s spirit descending like a dove and coming upon him. ¹⁷ Look! Also, a voice from the heavens said: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.”

Trinitarian View: The Father’s voice, Jesus on Earth, and the Spirit descending as a dove show three persons in one God.

Analysis: The verse depicts three distinct entities: Jesus physically present, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking from heaven. The Greek *phōnē* (voice) and *pneuma* (spirit) emphasize separate actions, not a unified essence. The text offers no indication of a shared essence. The Son received God's approval, showing distinction. Jesus was anointed with God's spirit (Lu 4:18; Ac 10:38) giving him wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. (Isa 11:2)

Conclusion: The verse does not depict a triune God.

(Colossians 1:15-16) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶because by him all things were created

Trinitarian View: Jesus as the “*image of the invisible God*” and creator of all things proves his divinity.

Analysis: The Greek *eikōn* (image) implies a separate representation, not identity, and *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs* (firstborn of all creation) identifies Jesus as part of creation, created first. The phrase “*by him all things were created*” (*di’ autou*) indicates Jesus as an agent, not the source, of creation, showing him to be subordinate to the Father.

Conclusion: The original Greek and context depict a distinct, created being empowered by God and used by God to create all things. Does not support the Trinity doctrine.

(Revelation 1:17) I am the First and the Last.

Trinitarian View: Jesus calls himself “*the First and the Last*”, identifying himself as God.

Analysis: The Book of Revelation is God's revelation which He gave to Jesus, which an angel was sent to present to John. (Re 1:1) So the words "*I am the First and the Last*" were spoken to John by the angel. The angel was not claiming to be the First and Last, he was merely quoting God in the revelation that He (God) gave to Jesus.

Conclusion: "*I am the First and the Last*" is the angel quoting God, not Jesus speaking.

(Revelation 21:22) And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb.

Trinitarian View: God Almighty is identified as the Lamb

Analysis: The Greek structure uses a singular verb ("is" / ἐστίν) with a compound subject connected by "*and*" (καί), which is common for closely united entities. This emphasizes their shared divine role but does not merge their identities into one person. Thus Revelation 21:22 is describing New Jerusalem as having no physical temple because **both** "*the Lord God the Almighty*" **and** "*the Lamb*" (as distinct individuals) collectively serve as the temple and source of light. (Re 21:23-24; Isa 60:19-20; 2Sa 22:29; Eze 37:26-27; Re 22:1) Trinitarians rely on verses which identify God's singular rulership and Christ's singular rulership to claim they are the same individual while ignoring 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

Conclusion: Does not identify "*the Lord God Almighty*" as "*the Lamb*."

Scriptures Supporting a Non-Trinitarian View

The following verses depict Jesus and the Father as distinct, with Jesus subordinate or limited, contradicting the Trinity's co-equality and co-essence claims:

(Matthew 26:39) Not as I will, but as you will.

Analysis: Jesus' will is distinct from and submissive to the Father's.

(Mark 10:18) Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

Analysis: Jesus distinguishes himself from God's unique goodness.

(Mark 13:32) Of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Analysis: Jesus' limited knowledge contrasts with the Father's omniscience, undermining co-equality.

(John 5:30) I can do nothing on my own... I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Analysis: Jesus' dependence on the Father contradicts co-equality.

(John 14:28) The Father is greater than I.

Analysis: Jesus acknowledges the Father's superiority, contradicting co-equality. Greek *Meizon* (greater) denotes authority, not just role.

(John 17:3) This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Analysis: Jesus identifies the Father as the "*only true God*," distinct from himself, the sent (subordinate) one.

(John 20:17) I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

Analysis: Jesus calls the Father his God, implying distinction and hierarchy.

(Acts 2:36) God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Analysis: Jesus' lordship is granted by God, not inherent.

(1 Corinthians 11:3) The head of Christ is God.

Analysis: Explicit hierarchy; Christ is subordinate to God (Father).

(1 Corinthians 15:28) The Son himself will be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him.

Analysis: Jesus' ultimate subordination to the Father contradicts co-equality. (1Co 15:27)

(Colossians 1:15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Analysis: Being described as the "*Image (eikón) of*", or likeness of, God separates Jesus from God. And "*Firstborn (prototokos) of all creation*" identifies Jesus as being created, not co-eternal.

(1 Timothy 2:5) There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Analysis: Jesus as mediator is distinct from the one God who he mediates for.

(Revelation 3:14) the beginning of God's creation

Analysis: Jesus is identified as a creation of God, not co-eternal.

Those verses consistently portray Jesus as a distinct, subordinate figure—created, empowered, or exalted by the Father—not a co-equal person in a triune God. There are many more such verses, such as the following: **Mt** 5:16; 6:6, 9; 7:21; 10:32, 33; 11:25-27; 12:15; 16:17; 18:10; 20:23; 24:36; 26:42, 53; 27:46; **Mr** 8:38; 14:36; 15:34; **Lu** 2:49; 10:21, 22; 22:29, 42; 23:34, 46; **Jn** 2:16; 3:35; 4:34;

5:17, 19, 21, 22-23, 26, 36, 37; 6:27, 32, 37, 38, 44, 57; 7:16, 17; 8:16, 18, 28, 29, 42; 10:15, 17, 18, 29, 36; 11:41, 42; 12:26-28; 14:26, 49, 50; 14:6, 10, 16, 21, 23, 26; 15:1, 9, 10, 15, 23, 24, 26; 16:27, 28; 16:32; 17:1, 4-5, 11, 15; 18:11; 20:21; **Ac** 1:4; 2:33; **1Co** 3:23; 8:6; **1Co** 15:24, 25; **Eph** 1:17; **Col** 1:3; **He** 5:7, 8; **Re** 1:1; 3:21

Greek Insights

Key Greek terms in pro-Trinitarian verses (*eikōn*, *prōtotokos*, *theotēs*, *theos*, *hen*, *logos*) describe Jesus as a distinct, often created or subordinate figure:

- *Eikōn* (image) and *prōtotokos* (firstborn) in Colossians 1:15 suggest a created representative, not co-equal deity.
- *Theotēs* (deity) in Colossians 2:9 implies divine quality dwelling in Jesus, not identity with the Father.
- *Hen* (one) in John 10:30 denotes unity of purpose, not essence, per John 17:21-22.
- *Theos* without the definite article in John 1:1 suggests qualitative divinity, not full deity.

These terms align with a non-Trinitarian view, while Trinitarian readings require theological assumptions beyond the text.

Historical Context

The Trinity emerged in the 4th century, formalized at Nicaea (325 CE) and Constantinople (381 CE), centuries after the New Testament. Early Christians, like those in Acts, did not articulate a triune God. The doctrine reflects non-Christian Greek philosophical influences (e.g., substance and essence) merging with Christian theology, not the Bible's Jewish monotheism. Verses like 1 John 5:7 (a later addition) show how texts were altered to support the newly developing Trinitarianism.

- **Early Church:** Figures like Ignatius (c. 110 CE) emphasized Jesus' divinity, but terms like "Trinity" were absent.
- **Council of Nicaea (325 CE):** Defined Jesus as "of the same substance" (*homoousios*) as the Father, influenced by Greek philosophy (e.g., Plato's forms).
- **Council of Constantinople (381 CE):** Formalized the Trinity, adding the Holy Spirit as co-equal.

Non-Trinitarian groups argue this reflects theological evolution, not scriptural mandate. The absence of an explicit Trinity in the Bible supports this view. (He 13:9; Col 2:8)

Trinitarian Counterarguments and Responses

Trinitarian Counterargument: Verses like John 10:30 and Colossians 2:9, combined with early church consensus, confirm the Trinity as biblical.

Response: Those verses are ambiguous (see analyses above), and early church leaders like Tertullian (who coined “Trinity”) relied on philosophical reasoning, not clear scripture. The Nicene Creed reflects a synthesis of scripture and Greek thought, not a biblical mandate.

Trinitarian Counterargument: The Trinity is a mystery, not fully comprehensible but divinely revealed.

Response: That is an excuse for their inability to provide scriptural evidence. Appealing to mystery sidesteps the lack of explicit biblical support. If the Trinity were central we’d expect clear scriptural articulation, as with monotheism. (De 5:7; De 6:4; Isa 42:8; Mr 12:29; Mr 12:32; 1Co 8:6)

Trinitarian Counterargument: The Bible implies the Trinity indirectly.

Response: The many verses above show clear distinctions and subordination, outweighing the vague implications in a few verses. And explicit anti-Trinitarian texts carry more weight than inferred Trinitarian ones.

Trinitarian Counterargument: Early Christians believed in the Trinity.

Response: Historical evidence shows early Christians held diverse views, with Trinitarianism solidifying later. The Bible, not tradition, is the test, and the Christians in the Bible did not express belief in a Trinity.

Trinitarian Counterargument: Non-Trinitarianism denies Jesus’ divinity.

Response: Non-Trinitarian views can affirm Jesus’ divine role (e.g., as God’s agent or exalted Son) without requiring a triune essence. (Jn 1:18)

Conclusion

The Bible, when examined in its original Greek text and context, does not support the Trinity. Pro-Trinitarian verses, like John 1:1, John 10:30, and Colossians 2:9, are misunderstood, often relying on later theology rather than the text’s plain meaning and context. Conversely, a great number of verses (e.g., John 14:28, Mark 13:32) explicitly depict Jesus as distinct and subordinate to the Father, created or empowered, not co-equal or co-eternal. The Trinity is a post-biblical construct rooted in Greek philosophy, not scripture. Readers are urged to study these texts themselves, free from tradition and opinion, to uncover the truth.

Why it matters

If you have ever heard the fictional story of the railroad bridge operator who sacrificed his beloved son to save the lives of a train full of passengers, you will understand. Any good and loving parent would rather themselves be killed instead of their child. By saying that God came to earth and sacrificed Himself, the doctrine of the Trinity robs God of the great sacrifice He made of His son.

What do *you* think?

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