

EQTH105 Basic Bible Doctrine

Unit 3 Reading 1 — Don Stewart
Does the Bible Teach that the Father
Is Distinct from the Son?

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Don Stewart :: Does the Bible Teach That God the Father Is a Distinct Person from God the Son, Jesus Christ?

The Trinity: One God in Three Persons – Question 8

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There are those who declare that God the Father and Jesus Christ, are the same Person. They contend that Jesus is merely a manifestation, or development, or role, of the Father. Yet, the first verse of the Gospel of John teaches otherwise. It says,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God. ([John 1:1-2](#) NRSV)

The Word is distinct from God, yet the Word was God.

The Father Is Distinct from the Son

Indeed, the Bible says that God the Father and Jesus Christ, God the Son, are distinct from each other. They are not the same Person in this sense of the term but rather are distinctive. There are several ways in which the Bible illustrates this truth:

1. The Father Sent the Son

One distinction we have between the Father and the Son is that the Father is the sender while Jesus, the Son, is the one sent.

The Testimony of Jesus

Jesus said that it was God the Father who sent Him into the world. John records Jesus claiming that He was doing the work of the one who sent Him:

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.”
([John 4:34 NET](#))

In another place in the Gospel of John, Jesus emphasized this again. He was sent by God the Father:

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” ([John 5:30 NASB](#))

Jesus made it clear the Father had set Him apart and sent Him into the world. We read about this another time in John’s gospel. It says,

“...can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?” ([John 10:36 NRSV](#))

Jesus claimed that His words came from the Father, the One who sent Him. He said,

“I don’t speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me gave me his own instructions as to what I should say.” ([John 12:49 NLT](#))

It was God the Father who sent the Son.

The Testimony of Paul

The Apostle Paul also testified that the Father sent the Son into the world. He wrote the following to the Galatians:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law... ([Galatians 4:4 NRSV](#))

The idea to send the Son to the earth was made before the foundation of the world. Peter wrote of this:

God chose him [Jesus] for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. ([1 Peter 1:20 NLT](#))

Therefore the Father is distinct from the Son.

2. The Father Testified to the Son

The Father not only sent God the Son, the Bible speaks of the Father testifying of the Son. Jesus said that the Father testified of Him:

“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies about me, and I know the testimony he testifies about me is true...And the Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You people have never heard his voice nor seen his form at any time.” ([John 5:31-32, 37 NET](#))

In this passage, Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders. He says that He is not the only one who is testifying concerning Himself. Jesus mentions the testimony of John the Baptist and the testimony of God the Father. Jesus contrasts His testimony from that of the Father showing that they are two distinct Persons. The Father provides additional testimony to the character of Jesus.

3. Jesus Prayed to the Father

The two divine Persons, God the Father and God the Son, exist eternally and distinctly in an interpersonal relationship. For example, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus did not pray to Himself, but rather to God the Father.

In Jesus’ prayer to God the Father, the clear distinction is made between the two of them. The Lord Jesus prayed these words:

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” ([John 17:20-23 NRSV](#))

It is clear that two distinct Persons are in view here. The Son is not the Father.

4. The Son Is Our Advocate with God the Father

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the one who is the Advocate for believers. In other words, He is the One who pleads our case before the Father. John wrote,

My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous One. ([1 John 2:1 HCSB](#))

Jesus does not plead the case with Himself! He is pleading it to someone who is distinct from God. This Person is God the Father.

The writer to the Hebrews says that the present ministry of Jesus Christ is to make intercession on behalf of believers. He wrote,

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ([Hebrews 7:25 NASB](#))

Someone who intercedes is a go-between. He talks to one person about another person. Thus, Jesus must intercede to someone else on our behalf. Again, this Person is God the Father. This being the case, the Son has to be a distinct Person from the Father. He does not intercede to Himself.

5. There Was Mutual Knowledge and Love between the Father and the Son

Scripture speaks of the mutual knowledge and love that God the Father and God the Son have for one another. Jesus said,

“My Father has given me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ([Matthew 11:27 NLT](#))

The Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son. These are obviously two distinct persons in view.

Jesus testified that the Father has given Him everything. He said,

“The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.” ([John 3:35 NASB](#))

Jesus was “given” all things. He did not give it to Himself.

The Father loved the Son before the world was created. Jesus acknowledged this in His prayer to the Father:

“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory that You gave Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world.” ([John 17:24 NET](#))

Again, this shows a distinction between the two of them. Jesus speaks of my glory and the glory of the Father. This is an obvious distinction between the Father and the Son.

6. Jesus Perfectly Represented the Father

Jesus Christ represented God the Father when He was here on the earth. In the Gospel of John, we read the following exchange between Jesus and one of His disciples, Philip:

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.” ([John 14:8-11 NRSV](#))

Jesus did not say He was the Father, but rather He was the One who perfectly represented God the Father. However, Jesus testified that God the Father was with Him in a mystical way.

7. Only Jesus Has Seen the Father

No human being has ever seen God. John made this clear when he wrote the following to the believers:

No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. ([1 John 4:12 NASB](#))

Only Jesus Christ has seen the Father. Jesus Himself made this claim. We read Him saying the following to the religious leaders of His day:

“I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” ([John 8:38 RSV](#))

8. No One Can Get to God the Father except through Jesus the Son

Jesus told people to believe in Him as they believed in God the Father. In the Gospel of John, it records that He spoke the following words to His disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” ([John 14:1 NRSV](#))

They were to believe in God as well as believe in Jesus. The Father and the Son are two distinct persons.

The Bible also makes it plain that one cannot know God the Father apart from Jesus the Son. Jesus claimed to be the only way in which a person can know the living God.

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” ([John 14:6 NLT](#))

To get to the Father, one must come through the Son. They, therefore, must be distinct.

Paul emphasized this same truth. He wrote,

For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. ([1 Timothy 2:5 NLT](#))

It is only through God the Son that one can get to God the Father.

John also wrote about how one comes to God the Father. It is through God the Son:

No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. ([1 John 2:23](#) NRSV)

This further illustrates the distinction between the Father and the Son.

Conclusion: God the Father and God the Son Are Distinct from One Another, Yet They Are Both the One God

The evidence is clear. God the Father and God the Son are distinct persons. They should never be confused. However, though they are two distinct Persons, they are the One God. This is the doctrine of the Trinity.

Summary – Question 8

Does the Bible Teach That God the Father Is a Distinct Person from God the Son, Jesus Christ?

It is the teaching of Scripture that God the Father is a distinct Person from Jesus Christ, God the Son. This is demonstrated in a number of ways:

The Father sent Jesus the Son to earth. The Father is the sender while Jesus is the One whom He sent.

The Father also gave testimony to the Son. He did not testify to Himself. On a number of occasions, He did this verbally. The Son was not verbally testifying to Himself. Indeed, Jesus was not a ventriloquist!

We find that Jesus, the Son, prayed to the Father. One does not pray to Himself! Indeed, in His prayers He addressed God the Father and spoke to Him like one speaks to a distinct personage. There is no doubt that He was speaking to someone else.

There is also mutual love and knowledge between God the Father, and Jesus the Son. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. This is not talking about people loving themselves, self-love.

Jesus, the Son, always did the Father's will, not His own will. This, of course, means that we have two distinct people in mind. There is a contrast between the Father and the Son.

The Bible also says that only Jesus Christ has seen the Father. Again, it is not speaking of seeing Himself.

Finally, we are told that a person cannot know God the Father without the knowledge of Jesus the Son. This can only mean that two distinct personages are in mind.

This is just a small sample of what Scripture teaches on the subject. However, these illustrations should make it abundantly clear that the God the Father and God the Son are two distinct Persons.