

Discipleship:  
An  
Introduction to  
Systematic Theology and  
Apologetics

The Doctrines of God: The Trinity Part 4

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# The Trinity

## Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.

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

- **Firstborn (*protokos in Greek*)** is derived from two Greek words. It is best understood as Christ has the privileges and authority of a **first born**. The NIV translates this as firstborn over all creation.
- And I will make him the **firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:27) **i.e. the highest ranking one or Lord of lords and King of kings.**
- How Christ was eternally begotten has never been fully defined. It somehow refers to something eternally true of the relationship between the Father and the Son in which the Father has some kind of eternal primacy over the Son.

# The Trinity

## Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.
- **The Nicene Creed states that Christ was of “the same substance” as the Father. In Greek he is *homoousios*.**
  - *Homo* = same; *ousios* = nature
  - Arius said he is homoiousios; homoi = similar
  - Much of fourth century theology was consumed by the Greek letter iota leading to the popular saying: **It makes not one iota of difference. BUT it does make a huge difference because Jesus is *homoousios*!**
  - For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, Colossians 2:9



# The Trinity Council of Nicea A.D. 325

The Council of Nicea was the first attempt to officially establish the Doctrine of the Trinity and was greatly influenced by Athanasius

1. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, **begotten of the Father *the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.***
3. And in the Holy Ghost,

# **The Trinity** Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

- **The Council of Constantinople settled two basic issues: the deity of the Holy Spirit and the true humanity of Christ.**
- **It is often referred to as the Nicene Creed of 381" or the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed since it clarified and expanded upon the Nicene Creed of 325.**
- **The changes from the Nicene Creed were as follows:**

**We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. **Becomes****

**We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of **heaven and earth, and of** all things visible and invisible.**

# The Trinity Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father *the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father*, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; **Becomes**

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **only-begotten** Son of God, begotten of the Father **before all worlds**, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;

# The Trinity Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

By whom all things were made *both in heaven and on earth;*

**Becomes**

**by whom all things were made;**

# **The Trinity** Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

**Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;**

**Becomes**

**who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;**

# The Trinity Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;

**Becomes**

he *was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and* suffered, *and was buried,* and the third day he rose again, *according to the Scriptures,* and ascended into heaven, *and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;*

# **The Trinity** Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

**Becomes**

from thence he shall come **again, with glory,** to judge the quick and the dead.

# **The Trinity** Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

And in the Holy Ghost, **Becomes**

**And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.**

# The Trinity Council of Constantinople A.D. 381

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he *was* crucified *for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was* buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

# The Trinity 5 other errors about the Person of Christ

- 1. Apollinarianism:** named after Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea about A.D. 361. The person of Christ had a human body but not a human mind or spirit. Christ's mind and spirit were from the divine nature of the Son of God
- 2. Nestorianism:** named after Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople mid 5<sup>th</sup> century. Christ is a human person and a divine person.
- 3. Monophysitism (Eutychianism):** Leader of the monastery in Constantinople early-mid 5<sup>th</sup> century. Christ had one nature. The human nature of Christ was taken up and absorbed into the divine nature creating a 3<sup>rd</sup> New Nature.
- 4. Docetism:** Jesus' physical humanity was an illusion.
- 5. Ebionism:** Denies the deity of Christ.

# **The Trinity** Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

**We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same **perfect in Godhead** and also **perfect in manhood**; **truly God and truly man**, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son,**

# **The Trinity** Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

**and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.**

# **The Trinity** Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

**The council of Chalcedon taught the church how to talk about the two natures of Christ without falling into errors.**

- 1. One nature of Christ is sometimes seen doing things in which the other nature does not share.**
- 2. Anything either nature does is done by the person of Christ.**
- 3. In the incarnation Christ gave up the glory of divine life but not the possession of divine powers.**
- 4. In the incarnation Christ gained human attributes without giving up divine attributes.**
- 5. The initiative for the incarnation came from God and not man.**