

Trinity in Christianity

Episode 1

+ **Announcer** : My dear viewers, we welcome you to the program “Questions About Faith”.

It’s an honor and a privilege to have with us Reverend Zakaria Botros, to answer all your questions.

My dear viewers, I would like to introduce myself first. My name is Nahed Mahmoud Metwally. I used to work as a principal of a secondary school in Cairo. And on 7th of January 1988, I encountered the Lord of glory and He revealed Himself to me, and by the grace of God, I converted to the Christian faith, and started to believe in the Lord Jesus as Lord, God and Savior.

Certainly, this wasn’t easy at all, many problems followed suit; I had to leave my country, I had to leave my family and my children, in order to follow Christ, and by the grace of God, since 1988 until today I have been serving the Lord.

Welcome to you Father Zakaria.

Father Zakaria is well known. He has been serving the Lord for 45 years, may The Lord grant you a long life in order to serve Him and His name.

Father, we have received many questions from our brothers, who come from a Muslim background. Their first question is:

Why complicate Christianity by such a term as “Trinity”? Why don’t you say that God is simply One, and that’s it? As a matter of fact, this question has been asked by many people and we would like your holiness to respond to it.

+ **Father** : Many people all over the place ask us about this truth. This issue has a lot to do with Islamic theology.

How can God be three yet one at the same time?

We definitely love our Muslim brothers and sisters, just as much as we love our fellow Christians. Therefore, we only try to explain faith to them, and what we believe, so that our Muslim brother would know that we are not infidels, or that we believe in many gods. But how come we believe in one God, yet this God is Trinity, I would love to respond to this question that has been put forward.

The brother says that the Trinity is complicated, yet the Trinity is not complicated at all. Why don’t we say that God is one and never mind about this complicated concept of Trinity which is very hard to grasp?

I’d like to tell you something very important, which I’d like to tell everybody who is watching us now.

I hope that you will be able to realize why we say so, and why the Bible said so. There is an essential truth, which we must intuitively understand. When you have little children, and you want to explain to them a scientific truth, the little child is unable to grasp it. His comprehension is still simple so we try to simplify the issue to him. For example, if I want to tell a little child that I love him so much, I can't say to him, for example, I have a deeply-seated emotion towards you but to a little child I can say, "I love you this much," the child will be happy because he understood it, some would even say I love you as much as this big room. So now he got the idea, when we simplified the truth. When a person grows up, his mind reaches a certain level of maturity, to such a person, a university graduate for example, you cannot say I love you this much, you'd be mocking his intelligence, such a person would like to know what you mean by I love you, would like to know your motivations, how you love him and when he does, do we ask him why complicate things? Why not simply say I love you? There's no complication at all. We are simply examining the essence of the statement. The same thing applies exactly to the understanding of the things of God. When humanity was at a childhood stage intellectually, God had to communicate His truth in a simplified form, God fills the earth and that's it.

+ Announcer : Could you explain to us Father what you mean by this simplification?

+ Father : Yes, for example that God is One, He fills the universe, He fills heaven and earth, when humanity was at the stage of childhood, they accepted this truth that God is One, and that He has no associates, when mankind started to grow up culturally, intellectually and scientifically, logically they wanted to examine the statement that God is One, what does it mean? What does God mean? Who is God? Is He simply like us? Is He intelligent? Is He alive, or is He just a concept? So many questions and we have to answer them and then the biblical revelation came to mankind, at a stage of human maturity and started to explain who God is, started to respond to those questions just the same as you have just asked me, and just as our beloved viewers are eager to know, such questions require intellectual, logical answers, but more importantly spiritual answers, therefore the Bible started to explain the fact that mankind were at a stage of childhood and after a while started to grow up, this specific fact is actually spoken about in the Bible. Paul says in the first epistle to the Corinthians chapter 3 and verses 1 and 2 "And I brethren (this is the apostle Paul speaking) And I brethren could not speak to you as to spiritual people (that means mature, spiritually mature) but as to carnal (what does that mean? Let's complete the verse) as to babes in Christ (I could only talk to you simply) I fed you with milk, and not with solid food (because a baby drinks milk, it would be insane to try to feed a little baby, a piece of solid meat for example. If you try

and do that you will lose the baby, but when the baby grows up, then we could give him solid food). Therefore, the apostle Paul says, I fed you with milk and not with solid food for until now you were not able to receive it.”

It was impossible, therefore he had to simplify things, therefore we say that God is One, but we say that he is a Trinity - a triunity - and this is not a complex thing.

+ **Announcer** : Please Father, we'd like you to explain a little bit more about the Trinity, because it's a great obstacle, which many Muslims have to encounter. What they understand, is that we Christians, worship three gods, and we would like you to explain the Trinity in a simple way so that the people could accept it and receive it.

+ **Father** : May I just point something out, before I speak about the Trinity?

+ **Announcer** : Please, go ahead.

+ **Father** : This point is, do we really believe in three gods or not?

+ **Announcer** : You are right this is a good question.

+ **Father** : If I venture out and talk about the Trinity right away, people may still have this question in their minds.

+ **Announcer** : You are exactly right.

+ **Father** : What we are going to explain now is that Christianity believes that we worship one God, who has no associates with Him. There cannot be 2 or 3 gods because God is essentially unlimited, infinite, if God as a concept, must be necessarily infinite, how can we have another god who must also be infinite, and how can there be a 3rd infinite god? God being infinite, fills the whole universe, if so, then there is no place for another god with Him. This is our doctrine and the Bible explains this, that we believe in one God, the Lord Jesus in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. I have explained that point that we believe in one God,

+ **Announcer** : Oh yes, Father

+ **Father** : Shall we read some portions from the Scripture, to explain this to the viewers?

+ **Announcer** : Many times we are challenged to prove from the Bible that God is One, we need Scriptures from the New Testament to prove the unity of God.

+ **Father** : In the Gospel of Saint Mark chapter 12 and verse 29. Someone came to ask the Lord Jesus, and the question was: What is the greatest commandment in the Old Testament? What's the greatest commandment? "Jesus answered him" The Bible says, "Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with your entire mind, and with all your strength"

This is the first commandment. So the Lord Jesus reiterated the Old Testament teaching which is in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 to 9. He repeated the verses verbatim, the Lord our God, the Lord is One, the same thing has been reiterated by the apostles. The apostle Paul said in the epistle to the Romans chapter 3 verse 29, "Since there is one God." The apostle James said exactly the same, in chapter 2 verse 19, "You believe that there is one God, you do well."

+ **Announcer** : As a matter of fact this is a very important point.

+ **Father** : Oh yes, this is what we keep saying, this is what we keep repeating in our creed. The creed says, "We truly believe in one God, Creator of heaven and earth, that which is visible and that which is invisible." Hence, Christianity believes in only one God, and Islam itself bears witness and testifies that we do believe so.

+ **Announcer** : But as a matter of fact, holy Father, our beloved Muslim friends keep saying to us, "You worship three gods." We are accused everywhere that we worship three gods; that's why we need to emphasize this point that we worship only one God.

+ **Father** : We certainly believe in one God, but let's go back to your question the issue of the three gods – I have not forgotten.

+ **Announcer** : Go ahead.

+ **Father** : What is this business with the Trinity, isn't that your question?

+ **Announcer** : Namely that, does Christianity believe that there is only One God with no associates?

+ **Father** : This is true and we have covered this question.

+ **Announcer** : Isn't the doctrine of the Trinity a type of infidelity and association of other gods with the one true God? Shall we tackle the question bit by bit or shall I keep going?

+ **Father** : No no, keep going.

+ **Announcer** : Ok, and who claimed or said that God is a Trinity? And what is the concept of Trinity in Christianity?

+ **Father** : This is a very good and integral question.

+ **Announcer** : Shall we tackle the first part then?

+ **Father** : Ok, let's begin at three gods, we don't believe in three gods, as I have explained before in the previous question. We believe in only one God, no associates. This business of three gods has never occurred in Christianity. It could be that our beloved Muslims misinterpreted the word Trinity, and understood it as three gods and this led us to the second part of the question: what is the concept of Trinity in Christianity? Where does this come from? And who's the first person who said that? The first person to tell us about this, is the Lord Jesus Himself, in the gospel according to Matthew chapter 28 verse 19, He says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." He said in the name, that's in the singular, He did not say in the names. Had they been three different beings, Jesus would have said, "In the names," but because they are one, He could only say in the singular, "In the name." In the epistle of Saint John, it also says that "Witnesses in heaven are three, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One." How come then?

+ **Announcer** : Oh yes, I was about to ask you the same question: how come?

+ **Father** : What is the concept you just asked about now?

+ **Announcer** : This is it certainly

+ **Father** : What's the concept of the Trinity? How can it be? What is the Trinity and how can they be One? Right? Ok. This is a very important part and I believe that's what makes our Muslim brothers and sisters, unable to swallow or buy into this concept, but it's really a simple thing. There is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and of course the first thing that I want to emphasize

to our Muslim brothers, is that when I say this I don't mean at all any sexual or physical relationship at all. It is a well known fact in all languages and specifically in Arabic, that there are two types or two styles of speech, either literal or rhetorical or figurative that would carry another meaning. So let's start with the word Father and Son. If we are talking literally, then there is a man who married a woman and gave birth to a son, but we are not talking literally, and this is not what we mean by it. Even the Quran itself says so. The Quran says that it's impossible for God to have a child or to have a wife or a consort. We never say that God, may He be exalted, has married and had a child. This is not what we say. Ok then, where did the Quran get this from? I will tell you, there was a heresy in the 5th century before Islam because Islam emerged in the 7th century. There was a heresy in the 5th century. A heresy means a strange teaching, unbiblical teaching and that heresy was called the **Mariamite heresy**. Those Mariamites worshiped idols, and they had an unbiblical Trinity like Isis, Osiris and Horus. Osiris was god of goodness, Isis was his wife; they married and they had a child whom they called Horus, and we know that the ancient Egyptians believed in such a Trinity. There were other people like ancient Egyptians, who believed in similar things; they worshiped the goddess of heaven but when they came to know about Christianity they applied the one false trinity to the true one. They said, "Well this is very simple, we already believe that heaven is a goddess. Ok then, Mary must be a goddess, and then God must have married Mary, and gave birth to Jesus. This is the Mariamite heresy, but Christianity fought against such a heresy and banned it. And when Islam emerged, there were still pockets of those heretics who believed in such things. Islam in turn fought against those people not against Christianity, and **I shall place those who follow You ahead – or literally above – those who disbelieve.**" **So we are not the same as those who disbelieve.**

Our beloved Muslims also have a verse in the Quran that says, "You will find the most violently hostile people towards those who believe, are the Jews and those who associate others with God, then those are the most hostile, while you will find the most affectionate of them towards those who believe are those who say we are Christians, that is because some of them are priests and monks they don't behave so proudly." Had the Christians been among those who associate others with God, then they would have been also among those who are most violently hostile. But it says that you will find the most violently hostile people towards those who believe are the Jews, and those who associate others with God, and on the other hand, you will find among the most affectionate of them the Christians. The Quran says "Don't argue with the people of the Book unless it's in the politest manner. Say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us and in what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is the same One.'"

+ **Announcer** : Please, Father, we still need more explanation on the topic of the Trinity, because I still see that that topic is a bit difficult still.

+ **Father** : Certainly it is, but I am not done yet. It is just going bit by bit. So now we come to the Trinity. The triunity. There is a very simple comparison. It's really easy to understand if one tries to understand it. But you know what the problem is? Whenever I talk to a beloved Muslim man or woman, he stops his ears – why is that ? Because he's already prejudiced against me, that I am an infidel, I associate others with God, he does not want to lend me his ear for fear that he should adopt my infidelity.

This is very true, he is ready to run his mouth and interrupt you, but he is not ready to listen and understand, for fear that he should be persuaded. This is honestly what we face, but it is really a simple issue. The Bible said that God created man in His likeness and in His image, but we know that God doesn't have a physical image; He has no nose and no ears. What then did God mean by that? He meant that man has an intellect, speech and a spirit, this is the trinity.

Intellect, speech and spirit. Man also has a body, a physical being that has an intellect, with which he thinks and he has a spirit, by which he lives. So the same one man has the three. I cannot then say Nahed is three. Nahed is one, but she has a physical existence and a thinking mind, a mind by which she thinks and asks questions, and a spirit by which she lives. This living being must have an existence, must be intelligent, and must be living. This is exactly the same with God. When we maturely think about God, we understand that God has existence. We can't simply believe that He is a mere idea; He must have an existence. He is not just an abstract idea like peace. You can't go to peace and shake hands with it, you cannot. Is God a mere idea like peace? No, God has true existence, He's a living Being; He fills heaven and earth and this existence is what we call the Father, because the Father is the source of existence. This is exactly what I told you before that I am not talking literally, but rhetorically. That has a spiritual meaning. When we are talking about the Father, we mean by that, the source of existence. He is self-existent and He is the source of existence, just the same as the father of the house is the source of existence of the family, we just took on the simile or the likeness and we call God the Father, in His capacity as the source of existence. God must also be intelligent, otherwise how could He have created intelligent beings like mankind? And in talking about the intellect, we use the metaphorical language and we call it the Son. How come we use such a term? If one sits still and doesn't talk, could anyone else know or tell, if he is intelligent or insane? But once he talks, people could tell, if he's sane or insane. And we know that the word expresses the mind and the intellect. The word reveals the mind and talking metaphorically, we call the word in Arabic the daughter of the lip and we say in Arabic, "he has not uttered a daughter of a lip" meaning a word. This is blasphemous, daughter

of a lip; does that mean that the upper lip married the lower lip and they gave birth to a word? Of course not, this is a simile. If I say about somebody, “He is a lion.” This person can’t sue me for a libel and say that I cursed him. Did I mean that he is an animal? A ferocious animal and that has four legs? This is nonsense, but I am using it as a figure of speech. When I say about someone that he’s a lion, I mean he is courageous. In the same way, when we say “daughter of a lip” we mean the word that issues from the lip. And in the same way also, when we say that the intellect is the son of existence, it means that the intellect issues out of the existence. And this is what we mean by the word Son in the Trinity, and I don’t think that we have any problem with the Holy Spirit, Spirit is the spirit of life and it’s quite plain, God lives through His Spirit.

+ **Announcer** : I have just remembered a very important question right now, some beloved Muslims also say, “You Christians say that Jesus is the intellect or the mind of God, and that Jesus was incarnated. Does this mean that God was without mind or intellect.?” They ask this question frequently.

+ **Father** : This is an essential question: God is immaterial, He doesn’t have a physical body, He is infinite, He is a Spirit Who fills all existence. If God exists in a certain realm this doesn’t mean that He can’t exist in another realm.

+ **Announcer** : Can you please explain more?

+ **Father** : Surely, but that will take us out of the topic of Trinity, and we will end up talking about incarnation. But we will still need to touch on it a little bit. Muslims believe that in the third part of the night, God descends to the lower heaven. He descends to the lower heaven. Ok, who is in the higher heaven then? Do you see what I mean? If you take it literally it would not work?

Another example, the Quran says about God, “The mercy-giving Who is seated on the throne.” Seated means sitting, so He is sitting on the chair? The great God sits on a chair, so what’s this chair made of? Wood or steel or aluminum or what? Or how big is it? It must be infinite. But this is not the way Muslims understand it. Seated on the throne means that He reigns; that He is in control. So I should not understand the word literally, but should know the meaning behind it.

If we take it literally, this would necessarily mean that God is not in other places when He is seated on the throne. God’s existence in a specific place doesn’t preclude His existence in all places at the same time. One more thing, in Surah 24 in the Quran in verse 35 it says, “God is the light of heaven and earth, His light may be compared to a niche, a niche means a hole in the wall, in which there’s a lamp. The lamp is in a glass, the lamp like this, the glass above

it. Did it prevent the light? No, the light is just as if it were a glittering star.” So the light was not prevented from radiating. No, it glittered and that’s even more beautiful . So when we say that God is the light of heaven and earth, or that He has light and that His light can be compared to a niche, in which there’s a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass and the glass is just as if it were a glittering star, we can’t mean by that, that God or the light has been limited. No no no, through the glass, He could penetrate everywhere. So God’s existence in a human body did not limit Him. This is the 2nd part. I can’t say that God’s mind was separated from God, and resided in Christ. Man’s mind, as we said, can’t be separated from His words.

+ **Announcer** : Sure. Because there isn’t much time remaining in the program, and there’re still so many questions requiring clarification, in order to get these truths closer to our beloved Muslims, to give them the milk that Paul talked about, that’s to give them simple food.

+ **Father** : Again we must also stand on a common ground. We should meet on a common ground. The Quran says, “Your God and our God is the same One” And this is our common ground.

+ **Announcer** : We thank you, Father, and Lord’s willing in other episodes there will be more chances of explanation.

My dear viewers, it’s our pleasure to respond to all your questions, please send us your questions and everything that comes to your mind. We will pay attention to whatever you ask us. In a while you will see an address, if you want a Bible you can contact us at this address. Thank you. Till we meet again.

+ **Father** : Thank you.