

Episode 4

Trinity in Christianity

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+ Announcer : My dear viewer you're most welcome to our program "Questions about faith" . It's our pleasure to answer all your questions and inquires. It's also our pleasure and honor to have reverent father Zakaria Botros, you're welcome father.

+ Father : Thank you pleasure.

+ Announcer : In the previous three episodes, we talked about God and Christianity and that Christianity believes in one faithful God and Christianity does not associate others with God, and that there are no three Gods in Christianity.

If you'd excuse me father, would you please give a short summary of what we talked about so that people could keep up with the discussion.

+ Father : As a summary of the three previous episodes, there's a questions is a frequently asked why we do complicate things by saying there is a trinity in the godhead? Isn't it much simpler to say that God is one? In that respect, I said that in its childhood stage mankind accepted only simple facts, but as a developed and matured, it started to examine things. The Bible says that the Spirit examined everything, even the depth of God. So when we see can understanding to realize the benefits that we can gain. In the previous episodes, we tackled the question about the trinity -- is it tantamount to believing in three gods? And we came to the conclusion that trinity does not mean three gods; the trinity is rather three personal attributes in the one Godhead.

The one God has the attribute of existence or self-existence; He must necessarily exist. In this sense, we call Him the Father, that is the source of existence. And in so calling Him Father, we do not mean by it any sexual connotation, or physical connotation or procreative one; the same way we would be calling a man, father.

As we said, words may not always necessarily be taken in the literal meaning; they may have figurative meaning. The attribute of existence in the godhead is what we call the father; the attribute of cognizance, knowledge or intellect is what we call the Son, the attribute of life is what we call the Holy Spirit. So God is one, with three intrinsic personal attributes: existence, intellect and life. This is our trinity.

+ Announcer : It's very important to emphasize to our beloved Muslim friends that our God is one; that Christianity believes in one God. The question for now, Father, is as follows: The Quran says in Sura 5, "Those who say God is the third of three, have disbelieved; there is no deity except God alone." What do you say about that?

+ Father : This is a good question. Of course, the Quran or Islam evolved in the Arabian Peninsula. In the Arabian Peninsula, people worshipped idols and Kaba was the house, or the Pantheon, of the gods; it had more than 360 idols inside of it. Almost like an idol for every day. This was the major Kaba, but there were other smaller ones in the Arabian Peninsula. Among the idols they had was the moon god whom they called Elah, and the goddess of the sun and they called it Elat, she was the wife of the moon; and they had children, Manat was one, Al-Uzza and Al-Lat.

Arabs at that time believed that the moon married the sun and gave birth to these three goddesses, Manat, Al-Uzza and Al-Lat. Of course when Islam came preaching of the oneness of god, it naturally said that there aren't three gods; hence our verse here "Those who say god is the third of three have disbelieved."

This verse could also be talking about the Mariamite Heresy

+ Announcer : Mariamites heresy which you mentioned before

+ Father : That believed in three gods. Those Mariamites before, before, embracing Christianity, they worshipped the goddess of the sky or heaven which is Venus.

+ Announcer : Just a brief Question then, the verse that says, "Those who say that God is the third of three have disbelieved," doesn't have anything to do with Christians?

+ Father : Not at all.

+ Announcer : But they apply this to us.

+ Father : Well, this heresy emerged in the Fifth Century AD

+ Announcer : And it has nothing to do with Christianity.

+ Father : Christianity has actually refuted this heresy, banned it and condemned followers of this heresy. They used to say that God married St Mary because they took Mary to be like their goddess of heaven, Venus, and they gave birth to Christ. This is nonsense and it's totally unacceptable. This is not what we believe.

Therefore, the Quran says in Sura 5, verse 116, "When god said, Essa son of Mariam, have you told people take me and my mother as two gods instead of god alone?"

Of course, this never happened. St Mary is not a goddess

+ Announcer : And the strange thing is, that Quran itself refutes this, they answered

+ Father : That Jesus refuted it

+ Announcer : They said that he didn't say so.

+ Father : So this is nothing at all what we believe.

+ Announcer : So our dear Muslims brothers and sisters who tell us that you worship three gods, are mistaken.

+ Father : Surely

+ Announcer : The Quran denied such a concept about Christ.

+ Father : Also, I'd like to say that before a man judges something he should refer first to history. The history behind it is that there was a heresy in the Fifth Century, this heresy was refuted and repudiated by the church, but, there remained some pockets in Arabia and when Islam immerged, it simply repeated what Christianity had already said, namely this was a false doctrine. And Islam testifies that Christ said: No, I have not told people to take me and my mother as two gods apart from you. Then it's not apply to us as Christians.

+ Announcer : I would like our audience to grasp this idea because we are accused very often of worshipping three gods on account of this verse.

+ Father : You are right. Some people, among our beloved Muslims friends, simply do not want to understand. Honestly, they just want to object instead of opening their minds, and they are afraid of understanding, thus, they will come to the truth and this truth may be contrary to what they believe. So from the beginning he shuts up the door, he plugs up his ears, and let's his mouth run; he is not even willing to listen, and if he listens, he is not willing to understand, and if he understands, he is not willing to accept; he only protests, and objects and he finds fault. Yet, there is a big section of our beloved Muslims

+ Announcer : Thank God.

+ Father : Who want to know the truth; they want to get to the truth. But seek their knowledge from Islamic sources; therefore, they don't get it right. Those fanatical teachers do not communicate it right to them, but we try to come closer to our believed friends and we, we, try to remove all the obstacles that have been accumulated with time. And we try to reach an agreement. This is what we believe. Do you find fault with it?

+ Announcer : You are right, Father. I do remember even as a child we were fed with our milk something that reaches deep even to our bone marrow , that Christianity is blasphemous and polytheistic . So, explain it a bit more so that we can say to the people who believe so, "What you believe about us is wrong."

+ Father : That is the point of our programs, we are trying to approach our brothers and sisters, try to explain our Christianity from within Islam, and say, "See this is our Christianity; it is devoid of association or idol-worship."

And I do thank you for this program, for the preparation, for everything that you have done in order to reach our Muslims brothers.

+ Announcer : Back to the question then, about the verse that says, "Those who say that god is the third of three have disbelieved."

+ Father : Right. This verse denies marriage between a god and another goddess with the result of having children. In this respect, there is another verse in the Quran, in sura 4, verse 101 which says, "Devisor of heaven and earth (talking about god of

course), how can he have a son, while he has no consort?” (of course consort means wife.) This is what Islam denies and this is also what Christianity denies.

Islam repeats this belief in Sura 112, where it says, “Say, ‘God is unique (or one); God is the source for everything; He has not fathered anyone nor was He fathered; there is nothing comparable to him.’” (“comparable to him” can mean someone equal to him.) It says here, “He has not fathered anyone nor was he fathered.” He is not talking about us here. We do not believe in physical birth between the Father and Son, for a very simple reason. We believe that God is Spirit, how can a spirit get married and have a physical son?

In Sura 5, verse 73, it says, “Those who say God is the third of three have disbelieved; there is no deity except God alone.” This is our Christian faith. We do not believe in three gods, but we believe in one God -- existent, knowledgeable, living. And, nobody could object to that.

+ Announcer : So, dear brothers and sisters in Islam, this verse is not talking about us. We do confirm this verse. We do not believe that god is a third of three.

+ Father : Therefore, we Christians can join Muslims and say there is no god but God alone, and He has no associates. And He has no associates.

+ Announcer : Now we come to our final question, Father. Our brother here asks, “With all do respect to all these discussions, it is still difficult. Isn’t it so?” Could you, Father, simplify it so that we can say to our brother, it isn’t really that complicated.

+ Father : First of all, anything that has to do with God must necessarily be difficult. Why? Because He is high above our human comprehension, and even though divine things are above reason, they do not ever go against reason.

+ Announcer : Would you please explain this a little bit more?

+ Father : When things are against reason, it means they are unreasonable. For example, the claim that God got married and had a child, this is illogic, unreasonable; because logic tells us otherwise -- that God is spirit, and how can a spirit get married and have a son physically? This argument is moot.

But, the things of God are far above reason because reason is limited and God is unlimited. Therefore, it is very difficult and very hard for man to try to grasp God who is above reason. He needs divine grace to help him understand; he needs illumination.

The kind of illumination that the Sufis spoke of. The Sufi is a very close to spiritual truth that has to do with knowing secrets of God. Sufis talk about the principle of illumination. And it goes hand in hand with what Christianity holds; for the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

So, God gives us this illumination. But, what is our role there? to say, "Lord, let your light shine over my life."

+ Announcer : Yes, Father, it is very important to tell people what their role is.

+ Father : Let me give some illustrations to make this easier.

First of all, reason is limited, God infinite, unlimited; therefore, the limited reason or intellect cannot contain the unlimited God. We are told about an intellectual philosopher who wanted to understand God and the things of God. In short, he wanted to grasp God with his intellect. But he .. he couldn't. This almost drove him crazy. After sometime he saw a dream. In the dream, he saw a limitless ocean. He saw a little child who dug a hole on the beach and got a bucket and he kept going to the ocean to bring water and pour it into the hole. The water would fill the hole and it would spill over. He would go again, and bring water and pour it into the hole. He asked the child,

Son, what are doing? I have seen you trying to carry the water over and pour it into the hole. The child said yes, I have been doing that. He asked, what do you mean by it? The child answered, I intend to get all the water from the ocean and pour it into this hole. The man said, son are you crazy? Do you really think you can pour the water of this vast ocean into this very small hole? The child said, why didn't you say that to yourself? You think you can get the vast and huge god and cram him into your limited mind? The philosopher woke up and said forgive me God. These things are truly above our reason and intellect and they need divine help.

I would like to give further illustration.

Think about a man who would leave Egypt and would plan to go to the United States, for example, in his car. He bought a car, a Mercedes, the latest fashion, but people would ask him, "How do you plan to go there?" He would say, "I will just drive my car on until I reach Alex then I would hit the Mediterranean; with the car. I would go along the Mediterranean until I reach the Atlantic Ocean, and I'll keep driving until I reach the United States." How? Are you crazy. The man would answer, "Well, what's difficult about it? I will just drive my car." "But there are limits to the ability of a car; you may be able use it on land but you can't use it on water. You may be able to reach the United States in a different way."

The man would ask, "How?" "You can take the same car of yours and drive it all the way to the airport, and then there you park your car and you would take an airplane that will take you above the clouds, and will take you all the way to the State and drop you off there. But, your car can not get you there."

Our intellect is like our car. It is a Mercedes, it's a respectable car. I can drive it all over the place, but I cannot drive it to heaven. And, the airplane in this illustration is the divine arms of God that carry us from underneath. It is the Lord's power and enablement that will make you understand. It is for this reason that John writes in Revelation, "I was in the spirit on the day of the Lord." And when he was in the spirit the Lord opened up the heavens and he saw all those visions that he wrote about.

So, my role is to use my intellect by which I perceive the tangible truths through logic, through analogy, and thus reach conclusions about tangible and concrete objects. But, in order to grasp transcendent truths, metaphysical truths, I need the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit; we need the divine guidance.

+ Announcer : But, what you are saying is still difficult for our Muslim brothers and sisters; for us it may be easy, but what you are saying is difficult to them. Could you simplify it even further? Or show us a simpler clearer way?

+ Father : Okay, all you need do is pray to God and say to him, “Lord, please teach me, shine your light over my life let me know that which I don’t know.” Let me tell you this very nice story.

There was a highway man, a cutthroat, but he was not feeling comfortable. Who was a worshiper of the sun He could not draw any satisfaction from worshipping the sun. So one day he stood up and he said, “Sun if you are God why don’t you reveal yourself to me.” He was silent for a moment and then he said, “And you, God, whom I don’t know, reveal yourself to me.” A prayer from the heart. He wanted to understand. He didn’t know the way to God. And, all of a sudden, an idea occurs to him, someone speaks to him in his mind and says, “You live on a mountain; you are a highway man. You live in a cave- at a distance from where you live there is a group of monks. They also live in caves the way you do.” But of course they worship God and this guy worshipped the sun- that is the difference. “Go to them and ask them.” , “What a good idea.” Perhaps he liked the idea because he wanted to rob the monks. He had never before thought how he could benefit from the monks, and this just dawned on him. And when an idea hits you like that, this is what we mean by an illumination of light.

So, he went to the monks and he said, “I am confused. I worship the sun but I don’t feel satisfied. I am not comfortable on the inside. I need to feel comfortable. So whom do you worship? One of the fathers said to him, “Come my dear son, stick around

and I will explain it all to you.” The sun worshipper kept on asking and the abbot kept on answering till the abbot answered all his questions; but at the same time the abbot was praying for him- he was petitioning God on his behalf. He said to God, “Just as you brought him here, show him the way. Shine upon his way and help him understand the dimensions of this life.” Well. The bandit kept coming day after day listening; the abbot kept on praying and answering and asking the Lord to reveal himself to him. This kept going on until the bandit began to realize that in His great love, this unlimited God wanted and actually did appear in human form to show himself.

Well you know that in Sura 7, Moses asked God to reveal Himself to him, to show him Himself. God told him, “You can’t see me,” he said, “Look at the mountain, once the mountain settles down, you will see me.” So God revealed himself to the mountain, the mountain shook and Moses was seized with terror. Do you know what Al-Nasafi says? God gave life to the mountain, and gave the mountain knowledge and vision. God gave the inanimate mountain such things. God revealed himself to the mountain! The wording of the Quran does not say that God revealed himself to Moses, He rather revealed himself to the mountain. To the mountain!.. This is the testimony of the Quran: God revealed Himself to an inanimate object.

+ Announcer : Why do people think it’s too much for God then to reveal himself in a man.

+ Father : God can reveal himself in a man, God can reveal himself to a Christian, God can reveal himself to a Muslim.

+ Announcer : God created man in the best form, then why shouldn’t he reveal himself in human form!

+ Father : Moses was seized with terror. He was terrified. When he saw God, why would he be terrified if he did not see God? Because God promised him when the mountain settles down, you will see me. So, he must have seen him. God revealed himself, and Moses saw Him. Moses saw him another time in the burning bush, the Quran says that God spoke from the midst of the bush, so the point is to pray to God and say to Him: Lord,

help me see you, or let me see you the way Moses did. You revealed yourself to him in a miraculous way. You made the mountain even see you, not just Moses. I want to see you. I want you to let your light shine upon me.

Back to our illustration about the bandit, and the monks. They said to him: The infinite, invisible God wanted to reveal himself, to appear to mankind, to help them understand his attributes, his character, his goodness. Therefore, he appeared in the body of Christ. He appeared to Moses on the mountain, as well as appearing to him also in the burning bush. In the fullness of time he appeared to man in the form of a pure body which he took from St Mary. And revealed himself through it- we saw him, in him the love of God, the gentleness of God. We saw God's full attributes in the person of Christ. So Christ is the image that reflects to me the attributes of God, the characteristics of God- His love. So he is the way to knowing God.

Let me complete the story, please. That cutthroat, after this encounter, after understanding, after building a relationship with Christ, after he received Christ into his life, he became a saint. And, his name is Saint Moses the Black, because he was black. He was a Negro, and his life was completely transformed. Our intellect may not be able to find the way to knowing God, but through prayer, through asking Him in prayer, I can say to Him, Lord, reveal yourself to me, appear to me, show me yourself, touch my heart, shine your light over my life. Teach me and guide me in the eternal way. When we pray to God and ask Him, He hears and He responds. He is a Father; he loves mankind.

+ Announcer : This is the main point, Father. If our Muslim brothers would realize that God is a Father, a loving father, not proud and tyrannical; He sacrificed the most precious thing, or rather person He had, in order to redeem mankind. Would you please, Father, communicate this, in your own words?

+ Father : I should say that you could say it better than myself. You experienced it in your life; you made a huge jump from your old life into your new life, from the darkness to light.

But, Biblically, the Bible says that God is love. Our beloved Muslim friends claim that God has 99 attributes, such as the avenger, the powerful, the proud, and so forth.

+ Announcer : But there is also the merciful, the forgiving, peace, the humiliator, the uplifter, but they don't include the loving.

+ Father : But why didn't he make it a round figure and just add add one loving? Did he miss that? No, he knew about it, but it would conflict with many other behaviors. But, in Christianity, God is love. He loved the world. And it is my role to pray to God , Lord, teach me, and show me yourself, show me your love.

+ Announcer : There is yet another important point. At the time when I was still in Islam, I used to fear God. Not only fear, I was terrified. Because he is an avenger, and he said that all would go to hell, but now I don't believe that God is so.

I would like you to explain to them that God is not like that. He is not an avenger, he is not tyrannical. He is a loving God, an affectionate Father.

+ Father : The Lord Jesus said so: He said, learn of me, because I am meek, and humble in heart.

“For God so loved the world.” “So” means that much. How much? To the extent that He gave His only son, Christ, so that all who believe in Him would not perish, but have eternal life. “God manifested His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Simply out of love, He did it all. Our beloved Muslim friends can also see that Christians have love. It's evident to them, and they can see that Christ is loving. It is very obvious but the person still has to pray and say: Lord, let me enjoy Your love, overwhelm me with Your love, cover me with Your love, show it to me so that I may be able to love you, too. As the Bible says: We love Him because He first loved us. When man grasps God's love, he will be set aflame with the love of God.

+ Announcer : At the conclusion of our talk today, Father, what advice do you give to our beloved Muslim friends to help them cross over and reach the truth in which we stand.

+ Father : Well, of course, we first emphasize our love to our beloved Muslim brothers, and this love is a reflection and a revelation of God's love to them. What I want to say to them is: Open your ears, open your mind, and start thinking in a way that fits the 21st century. All down the centuries, fourteen centuries went by so far, Muslims were unwilling to think. They still follow the ancient Bedouin thought patterns. But if he opens his eyes, if he understands, he will be enlightened. I advise them, to pray to God, to ask Him: Lord, shine Your light upon my path. They should be willing to hear, and to understand, and pray to God to open their spiritual eyes and their hearts, so that He may show them the eternal path.

+ Announcer : We are at the conclusion of our episode. We thank you father. And I'm sure we have many more interviews with you.

My dear viewer, we are confronted here with an emphatic truth. You must grasp it, and make sure you believe it is really true: that God loves you. God desires that all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Dear viewer, God will not avenge Himself on you. God is not a tyrant God loves you .

Dear viewer our address will appear on the screen if you have any questions or inquires write to us and if you would like a Bible we'll be glad to send it to you freely . Thank you , till we meet again