
Reactions to the Trinity

1 Peter 1:1-2



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The Trinity and Monotheism

*“foreknowledge of **God the Father**, sanctifying work of **the Spirit**, to obey **Jesus Christ** and be sprinkled with His blood”*

Judaism is strictly monotheistic

- “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one” (Deut 6:4)
- “The belief in the unity was formulated by Maimonides as the second of the thirteen articles of the Maimonidean Creed:
‘I believe that the Creator, Blessed be His name, is One, and that no unity is like His in any form, and that He alone is our God, who was, is, and ever will be.’” (*Jewish Encyclopedia: Monotheism*)

The Trinity was implied in the Old Testament

- The **Lord** speaks of the **Son** as Immanuel, “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14). Then in Isaiah 9:6 that **Son** is called “Mighty God, Eternal **Father**, Prince of Peace.”
- The **Lord** says His **Son** will rule the earth and people will worship Him as God (Psalm 2:7-12)
- The **Lord** is distinct from His **Spirit** (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30; Is 63:10)
- The **Son** speaks of both the **Lord** God and His **Spirit** as being distinct (Isaiah 48:16-17)
- The Jews view any deviation from the unity of God as a threat to monotheism

Reactions to the Trinity

Jesus' claims of deity offended the Jewish religious leaders

- ***Sabbath healing at the Pool of Bethesda*** (John 5) – He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.
- ***Before Abraham was born, I am*** (John 8) – they recognized His claim to deity and picked up stones to kill Him
- ***The Good Shepherd*** (John 10) – We stone You for blasphemy because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God

Reactions to the Trinity

- ***Jesus promised the Holy Spirit*** (John 14-16) – the third person of the Trinity would come to them with a special ministry for the church age. Promise fulfilled (Acts 2:1-13).
- ***Peter and John heal a lame beggar*** (Acts 4) – jailed and commanded not to speak in Jesus' name
- ***Apostles arrested, flogged, and admonished*** (Acts 5)
- ***Stephen seized, questioned, and stoned*** (Acts 6-7)
- ***Herod killed James and jailed Peter*** (Acts 12)

First missionary journey of Paul

- Opposed by a Jewish false prophet on Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12)
- In Antioch of Pisidia the Jews were filled with jealousy and drove them out of the district (Acts 13:50)
- In Iconium the Jews plotted to stone them (Act 14:4-6)
- In Lystra “Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead” (Acts 14:19-20)

Second missionary journey of Paul

- Paul and Silas were wrongfully jailed in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40)
- In Thessalonica the Jews formed a mob and sought to bring them out to the hostile crowd (Act 17:5)
- “When the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds (Acts 17:13)
- In Corinth the Jews brought Paul before the Roman authorities on false charges (Acts 18:12-17)

Other journeys of Paul

- Tradesmen incited an economically motivated riot against Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)
- After ministering in Greece Paul heard of a Jewish plot against his life but avoided it by changing his travel plans (Acts 20:3)
- In Jerusalem the Jews sought to kill Paul but Roman soldiers took him into custody. The Jews conspired to assassinate Paul, so he appealed his case to Caesar. He was held in custody for years until he reached his trial in Rome (Acts 21 - 28)

End of the first century

- In Jerusalem, James the brother of Jesus was martyred in the year 63 by the Jewish rulers
- About a year later the apostle Paul was executed in Rome during the local persecution instigated by Emperor Nero
- Peter himself would die shortly afterward around the year 67
- Christians in Jerusalem fled prior to the destruction of the city in the year 70 during the Jewish War
- Jesus identified two churches in western Asia Minor which were persecuted for their faith: Smyrna (Rev 2:10) and Pergamum (Rev 2:13)

Conclusions regarding persecution

- The majority of early persecution against Christians was instigated by Jews reacting against the preaching of their Messiah, who was proclaimed as the divine Son, the second Person of the Trinity
- Peter was writing to Jews who had experienced a major change in their thinking about God. Jewish believers accepted the deity of Jesus Christ, which made them a target for rejection and persecution by their own countrymen.
- 1 Peter 1:1-2 shows that each of the persons in the Godhead has been working to accomplish the salvation of believers