



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **12th Grade | Unit 4**

BIBLE 1204

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The Trinity

Introduction

In this LIFEPAAC®, you will study the **Trinity**. As Christians, we believe in one God revealed to us in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is known as the Trinity or the Holy Trinity, and is perhaps the supreme doctrine of the Christian faith.

By studying how the Old Testament laid the groundwork for the revelation of the Trinity, you will better understand the concept's development in the New Testament and church history. Reflections on the development of Trinitarian belief will help you to understand the importance of this truth to modern Christians.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Describe the Trinity.
2. State the importance of God's revelation about himself.
3. Describe the extent of Trinitarian revelation in the Old Testament.
4. Give several names of God in the Old Testament that are used to imply the Trinity.
5. Relate the meaning of the names of God to the study of the Trinity.
6. Give information about the Trinity from the synoptic Gospels.
7. Show what is added to the revelation of the Trinity in John's Gospel.
8. Identify the divine persons as found in Paul's Epistles.
9. Explain the meaning of the revelations in Paul's letters.
10. Relate the struggles of the second century concerning the Trinity.
11. Describe the nature of third century debates about the Trinity.
12. Give evidence of early Christian belief in the Trinity.
13. Explain the arguments that were used against the Trinity.
14. Analyze the implications of divine unity.
15. Distinguish the missions of the divine persons.
16. Apply Trinitarian teachings to life in human society.

Survey the LIFE PAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study and write your questions here.

1. OLD TESTAMENT

Christians believe in one God revealed in three persons. In this section, we shall study the importance, nature, and extent of God's **Trinitarian** revelation of himself and his names as found in the Old Testament.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Describe the Trinity.
2. State the importance of God's revelation about himself.
3. Describe the extent of Trinitarian revelation in the Old Testament.
4. Give several names of God in the Old Testament that are used to imply the Trinity.
5. Relate the meaning of the names of God to the study of the Trinity.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

Adonai	Elohim (El)	foreshadow	kyrios	monotheism	Trinity
codify	etymology	genitive	Messianic	Trinitarian	Yahweh

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.



| Detail from liturgy book

REVELATION

As Christians, we look to the Bible as the source of God’s revelation about himself. God revealed himself in the Old Testament as the one, only, living, and personal God who loves and has an ongoing relationship with his people. Since Christians believe the Bible is the source of God’s revelation, we look to the Old Testament to see how God slowly but surely began to prepare man for the knowledge of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the **Trinity**. The Trinity is basic to our faith and is a point of unity among Christians.

Necessity. The Trinity had to be revealed by God himself in order to be true. In the Old Testament, the foundation and preparation for this belief was established. By firmly establishing **monotheism**, God prepared his people to receive the message of Jesus Christ regarding his nature and identity.

In the Old Testament, God was in constant touch with his people, guiding them by his law to love and to serve him and each other. They were encouraged to rely on God in all circumstances. Their belief in *one* God set them apart from the pagans, for their neighbors believed in *many* gods. The Israelites

believed in one God who revealed himself to them through the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; through Moses and the Prophets. The Hebrews knew the one, true God, exclusively by his revelation, for they had no other way to learn about him.

Old Testament. The complete, sudden revelation of the Trinity to the Jewish nation would have been confusing, for the identification with the one God was just being **codified**. The Old Testament clearly distinguishes between the God of Israel, other “gods”, and man. However, the individual persons of the Trinity are only foreshadowed in the Hebrew text.

The understanding of a personal, living God, who has a relationship with man, is a vital theme of the Old Testament, for it prepares us to understand the relationships within the Trinity. Although the Old Testament does not fully explain the Trinity, it gives us the words used to distinguish and foreshadow the three persons. By studying the way God speaks of himself in the Old Testament, we lay the foundation for the Trinitarian understanding of his identity.

Complete these statements.

- 1.1 The revelation of one God in three persons is called _____ .
- 1.2 The Old Testament brings out the difference between God and other a. _____ and between God and b. _____ .
- 1.3 A sudden, complete explanation of the Trinity would have _____ the Jewish nation.
- 1.4 God had to prepare his people to receive the explanation of the Trinity which would come through _____ .
- 1.5 To learn God’s true nature, man needs _____ .
- 1.6 The Trinity refers to God as a. _____ , b. _____ , and c. _____ .
- 1.7 The Trinity is _____ to our faith.
- 1.8 The Trinity is a point of _____ among Christians.
- 1.9 The Jewish nation believed in God as the _____ , personal, and living God.
- 1.10 The Old Testament gives us the _____ for the Trinity.

Answer this question in a paragraph.

1.11 Why is revelation important in the study of the Trinity?

Do this activity.

1.12 Attend a regular service of your local church. Note all references to the Father, Son, and/or Spirit in the sermon, prayers, songs etc. Summarize your findings on a separate sheet. Include the frequency, nature, and importance of each reference. Report to your teacher when complete.

NAMES OF GOD

The names of God in the Old Testament allows us to identify him personally, preparing us for the notion of more than one person within the Godhead.

Elohim (El). This name is used 2,550 times in the Old Testament. *El* in Hebrew refers to a divine being and is used in the Old Testament to suggest a supreme god. *Elohim* is a plural noun (Genesis 1:1). When Elohim is seen in the light of Christian revelation, we can recognize this name as an early reference to God in multiple persons. Elohim refers to God and indicates his majesty and power not only over man, but other false “gods” as well.

Israel used the names *El* and *Elohim*, in combination with defining **genitives** to designate him as their specific God. Examples can be found in Genesis: *El Bethel* (Genesis 35:7); *El of your fathers* (Genesis 49:25); *El of eternity* (Genesis 21:33); *El the Elohim of Israel* (Genesis 33:20) and in Psalms: *El of Jacob* (Psalm 146:5), and *El of Israel* (Psalm 68:35).

The **etymology** of *El Elohim* is uncertain, but the meaning is generally understood as power.

YHWH (Yahweh). The most important name for God in the Old Testament is *YHWH*, usually written as *Yahweh*, the personal name God revealed to Moses in the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:13–15).

Various meanings of the name YHWH are *I Am Who I Am* or *I Will Be Who I Will Be*. The Hebrew word Yahweh is translated as LORD (notice all capitals) in most Old Testament English translations. The etymology of Yahweh is disputed, most scholars think the name may be derived from the Hebrew verb *hawah*, meaning *to be*. The name characterizes God as a set-apart, eternal Creator who was God of Israel alone; the God of Moses, who personally revealed himself through the covenant and as one who can keep his covenants. This title occurs about 6,800 times in the Scriptures.



Yahweh as a *Father* is seen strongly in the Old Testament as Father of Israel, the Father of his people. The title Father expresses a loving relationship between God and his people and encourages a loving obedience from them. God takes care of his people, offering them forgiveness and compassion when they are rebellious. Hebrew personal names illustrate that God is considered a Father: *Joab*, for example, means *Yahweh is Father*; *Abeil* or *Eliab* means *El is Father*; *Abitub* means my father is goodness; *Abiezer* means, my father my help; and *Absalom* means, my father is peace. Besides naming God as Father, these names also illustrate his fatherly characteristics.

Adonai. The title *Lord* was used to indicate the kingship of Yahweh. *Adonai* is a form of the Hebrew word *adon* which is used to address Yahweh to distinguish his kingship from that of an earthly lord as is expressed in the Hebrew form *adoni*.

Because of the Israelites' increasing desire to hallow or sanctify God's name, Yahweh, and avoid misusing it, the title *Adonai* was pronounced in its place when reading the Scriptures. The Hebrew Adonai means "My Great Lord." (The English word *Jehovah* is a translation of God's name during the late Middle Ages which attempted to combine of the consonants YHWH and the vowels of Adonai, *a-o-a*, to form a hybrid word.) In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint), the Greek term **kyrios** appears as a translation of the name Yahweh. Like Adonai, this Greek word also means "Lord." The use of *kyrios* in reference to Jesus in


early Christian writings clearly identifies him as God, the Yahweh, and Adonai of the Old Testament (Acts 11:20–21).

The title Adonai establishes God as the Lord of his people. As Lord, he has a right to expect obedience from his servants. As servants, his people have a right to expect provision from their Lord. This same concept is seen in the New Testament with the title *Kyrios*.

Significance. In the Old Testament, God is revealed as one divine being, unique to Israel. Yahweh stands out as the one true *Elohim*, *Adonai*, and divine Lord. Wisdom belongs to Yahweh alone. His Word is powerful and creative, giving life to all. The use of these terms were valuable to preparing the people of God for the full revelation of the Trinity, because these names are also used for the Messiah. In the New Testament, Jesus is called the *Son* and the *Word of God*.

Though *Son of God* is used in the Old Testament, it is not used as a **Messianic** title. It was first used of heavenly beings, then to the special relationship between Israel's king (2 Samuel 7:14–16) and God, and to his acceptance of the individual Israelite.

Spirit has wide use in the Old Testament as breath, wind, principle of life, and creator of all life.



Read Psalms 2 and 22

Answer the following questions with complete sentences.

1.13 What are the names of God in the Old Testament listed in this LIFEPAK?

1.14 Why are the names of God important in studying the Trinity?

1.15 What is the meaning of *El*, *Elohim*? _____

1.16 What was unique about Israel's use of the term *Elohim*?

1.17 Why is the use of the name *Yahweh* significant? _____

1.18 What is the derivation of the name *Yahweh*? What does this meaning reveal about God?

1.19 What does the title *Father* tell us about God? _____

1.20 What is one indication that the Israelites saw *Yahweh* as a *Father*?

1.21 What is the meaning of *Adonai*? _____

1.22 What is the parallel between *Adonai* and *kyrios*? _____

1.23 What are two usages of Son of God in the Old Testament? Is it a Messianic title?

1.24 What does Spirit signify in the Old Testament? _____



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