

Sunday, February 4, 2007 Notes:

Order of events:

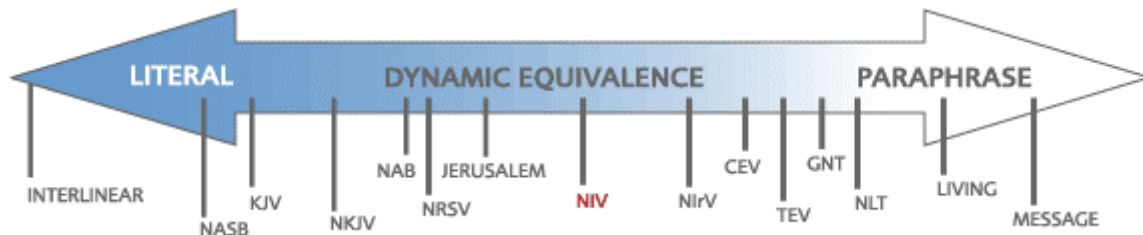
1. Opening prayer.
2. Praise God with song.
3. Praise God with corporate prayer: list some concerns or areas of focus.
4. Praise God with study of His Word.
5. Close with blessing and reminder of the Gospel.

Last week we discussed many of the details surrounding the Gospel of John. If you remember, our best estimates are that John was eighty-five to ninety years old when he wrote this text – John was an old man when he wrote his gospel. Some have even intimated that, because of his advanced years, John had perhaps forgotten some of the details of the things that had happened to him. And maybe that’s the reason he doesn’t retrace many of the events found in the synoptic gospels. Can we really believe that this book, the Bible, which has stood the test of time and men, could be resting on such a weak foundation?

Although forty or fifty years have passed since the events that John records here, nevertheless we must remember that he has probably been retelling this story quite frequently for all those years. And he was, of course, helped by the promise of Jesus: “(John 14:26 NIV) But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” The apostles not only had their vivid memories, but they had the help of the Spirit to recall what Jesus had said and did on specific occasions; and I’m sure they meditated many long hours over those events. Maybe the seasoning of all those years is why John could add insights and interpretations to his accounts that the others did not include. We can be certain that this is an authentic witness from an authentic disciple who recalls clearly and vividly everything that Jesus said and did in those three-and-a-half marvelous years.

John begins his gospel with an eighteen-verse introduction, his “prologue,” the theme of which is the question: “Who is Jesus – really?” Where did he come from? What is represented in the remarkable manifestation that was the life of Jesus of Nazareth?

Let’s read it together. (*A quick word about translations...*)



(John 1:1-18 NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was with God in the beginning. {3} Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. {4} In him was life, and that life was the light of men. {5} The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. {6} There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. {7} He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. {8} He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. {9} The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. {10} He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. {11} He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. {12} Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- {13} children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. {14} The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. {15} John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” {16} From the fullness of his

grace we have all received one blessing after another. {17} For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. {18} No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

John is answering in this prologue to his gospel one of *the* most amazing questions of all times: Who is Jesus? Jesus was easily the most shattering, the most radical and truly revolutionary character that ever has appeared in human history. What a tremendous task John had before him.

Well, I guess we should start at the beginning... (*pun intended*) Tonight we're going to take a look at the first four verses of John's gospel. Allow me, if you will, to take just a moment to tell you how I like to study the Bible. It's pretty straightforward and there's probably nothing here you haven't already seen before.

1. Pray. Don't neglect, overlook, or minimize this very important step. (Psalm 127:1)
2. Use consistent literal interpretation: grammatical, historical, contextual. Base your interpretation on the actual words in their ordinary meaning. Don't go beyond the facts. Don't overlook any facts either! Sometimes the clear meaning is right in front of our face.
3. Don't try to read too much into an analogy, parable, metaphor, or allegory. When Jesus is talking about the four groups of seeds that the sower spread and the various ground it fell upon, don't get carried away by how the soil was conditioned or that birds are evil, etc. Take the story at plane face value.
4. As Tim Rucht always reminds me, let's let scripture interpret scripture. What he means is that scripture does not contradict itself (read that God does not contradict Himself).
5. Look at other related texts if the understanding is not obvious. I like to look up lots of cross-references. Never let your interpretation rest on a single point. If your interpretation is based on the exact translation, meaning, tense, or position of a single word, be careful.
6. Understand what is orthodox, what has been revealed over hundreds of years to the community of believers – the church. Research the great catechisms: Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism, Heidelberg Catechism, and yes, even the Catechism of the Catholic Church (be careful).
7. Get yourself a good study Bible from a reputable source and use those notes and commentaries as your good starting point. I have found both the NIV Study Bible and MacArthur's Study Bible are both good references. Remember what Martin Luther said though, "When the angels want a good laugh they read the commentaries."
8. If you have original language references, use them to help clarify words that differ in various translations. I usually always defer to the expert "team" of translators over my own individual skills, but why not look and learn? Just be careful.

Okay, enough of that, let's get to the good stuff.

John 1 {1} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. {4} In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (ESV)

Remember, this was not written by some mystic, divine being, but by a real man who walked this earth as you and I do. Imagine John, inspired by God to tell his story of Jesus' earthly life. "Okay, so how do I describe God-Man without sounding like a nut?" Here is the remarkable conclusion to which he came. John pulls no punches; he plainly states that Jesus is God! And so in four supremely divine, precise statements, John nails it.

This sublime passage reminds us of the opening words of Genesis. Jesus is here expressly called "God" and "Creator." John is very positive that Jesus was a Personality existing from eternity. Jesus spoke of "the glory he had with the Father before the world was," (John 17:5), as if longing to return to his homeland from what was to him a sojourn in a dreary world. One of the implications of Jesus' name as "the Word" is that he was God's expression of Himself to mankind.

"In the beginning was the Word" is the first phrase we see. Okay, so we know who the Word is because we just read it in the context of verses 1-18; the Word is Jesus the Christ (v. 17). We will spend some time in a bit discussing this remarkable name. "In the beginning was," the beginning of what? Well, the beginning of

everything; and also, the beginning of anything. What John is saying is that this Word of God was eternal; He has always existed. There has never been a time when He didn't exist. Some have said "In the beginning" can be rephrased as just "In beginning," or "In the first place," or "To start off with." There's a really neat twist on the phrase here, "In the beginning *was*." That *was* was no accident! It means that no matter where you decide what the "beginning" is, the Word *was* there, past tense, already existed. So, if you say everything began 6,000 years ago, the Word was there. If you say 6×10^{30} years ago, the Word was there. He comes to use from eternity in the past. "Eternity in the past" is a concept beyond me; it's especially difficult for us mathematical types. Frankly, and I really hate to use this phrase, but "that's just the way it is."

By starting out his gospel stating, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," John is introducing Jesus with a word or a term with which both his Jewish and Gentile readers would have been familiar. The reason his readers would have been familiar with this terminology is that the Greek word translated "Word" in this passage is "logos," and it was common in both Greek philosophy and Jewish thought of that day. For his Jewish readers, by introducing Jesus as the "Word," John is in a sense pointing them back to the Old Testament where the "Logos" or "Word" of God is associated with the personification of God's revelation. And in Greek philosophy, the term "Logos" was used to describe the intermediate agency by which God created material things and communicated with them: a mediating principle between God and the world.

Jesus was the "Word of God." As stated the "Word" here is the Greek word "logos," which means the same as our word, W-O-R-D. What is a word, anyway? A word is an audible or a visual expression of a thought. Thoughts are incommunicable until they are put into words. Several times the Scripture asks. "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" The answer is, "No one." Nobody knows what God thinks until he tells us. In fact, we might just as well ask, "Who has known your mind?" until you express it in words. When Jesus was among us as a man he expressed what was going on in the mind of God. He told us the thoughts of God. He was God's utterance on earth, unveiling to us what Paul calls "that secret and hidden wisdom of God," (1 Cor 2:7). What God thinks is reality; that is what ultimately comes into being. God thought about an earth and it came into being. God thought about a universe and it sprang into being. God thought about everything we see around us – even we ourselves – and we came into being. So what exists are the thoughts of God. That is ultimate; that is behind everything. Jesus came to unfold that to us and convey it in words that we cannot mistake.

Then comes the one-two knockout punch: "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "the Word *was with* God," means that the Word, Jesus, is distinct from God, and yet "the Word *was* God" clearly states that Jesus is God. I've read twenty-plus English translations, three other language translations, and examined the Greek original language. Basically, there is no other translation of this statement possible without violating the laws of Greek grammar and the theological statements of other Scriptures. There's just no other reasonable or rational way to put it together. So we see here that there is only one God but that He is made up of separate persons, a piece of the puzzle known as the doctrine of the Trinity: within the being and activity of God there are three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Trinity, or tri-unity, is the coexistence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead – the divine nature or essence. If you think I'm going to explain the trinity to you here tonight, sorry to disappoint you. Many, many great minds have vigorously wrestled with this doctrine. The fact of the matter is this, if you carefully examine the Scriptures, the Trinity is the clearest and most accurate way for us to describe God's personage. The most difficult thing about the Christian concept of the Trinity is that there is no way to adequately explain it. The Trinity is a concept that is impossible for any human being to fully understand, let alone explain. God is infinitely greater than we are, therefore we should not expect to be able to fully understand Him. The Bible teaches that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible also teaches that there is only one God. Though we can understand some facts about the relationship of the different persons of the Trinity to one another, ultimately, it is incomprehensible to the human mind. However, this does not mean it is not true or not based on the teachings of the Bible. Let me make this bold statement, the scriptures are so full and complete and obvious of their depiction that Jesus was and is God, that to say otherwise is not just foolish or dense, it is satanic.

The next thing John declares is that Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things: another act of God Himself.

{2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Jesus is the originator of all things. Eight times in the opening chapter of Genesis it says. “And God said.” God said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” (Gen 1:3); God said, “Let there be a firmament between the heavens and the earth and there was,” (Gen 1:6); God said, “Let the earth bring forth trees and vegetation” (Gen 1:11), and these sprang into being. The Word, the Son of God, was speaking into being what the Father had designed in that amazing mind of His. And what God thinks *is* reality! Let me paraphrase a bit and tack on some other scriptures; there is just so much meat here. Back in the beginning (of our existence), Jesus was with God (who says he was acting alone – Isa 44:24) and all things were made through Him (Jesus) and for Him (Jesus – Col 1:16, 17, Heb 1:3). And without Jesus not anything that has ever been made or ever will be made is made. Nothing that has been created was created without Jesus doing it. By simple application of logic, Jesus Himself could not have been made; everything that was made was made through Him. Amazing passage!

And that leaves us with the third remarkable thing that John wanted to pass along to all of us:

{4} In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

This is an interesting and powerful verse, a tough verse. First of all, and I should probably pay attention here, most translations I looked at wanted to connect verse 5 with this verse; they divided their paragraphs between verses 5 and 6. My thoughts on this were that it seems verse 4 ties in better with Christ’s creation activities and verse 5 is a transition for the explanation of the purpose and introduction of John the Baptist. We will discuss verse 5 in detail next week, but just briefly, as you may remember Vince discussing this back before Christmas (gotta love him for giving me a whole set of lessons to plagiarize), there is an interesting word in verse 5: *katalambano* (καταλαμβάνω) – is that a cool Greek word or what? It means to take, grasp, apprehend, lay hold of, comprehend, come upon, attain, find, overtake, or obtain. Some translate it as “overcome, conquer, or extinguish.” Others translate it as “comprehend or understand.” Larry’s translation would probably read, “and the darkness just didn’t get it.” Which immediately leads into verse 6 and John the Baptist coming as a witness sent to “prepare the way of the LORD:” to explain the Light. (Isa 40:3) Consequently, we’ll study verse 5 next week.

“In him was life...” Jesus is the absolute, very source of all life. He has life in Himself (John 5:26). Things are alive, life happens, because the source of life gives and radiates life into them. Life emanates, originates, springs from Christ. He is why we are alive!

What is life? A biologist will tell you that in order to qualify as living, an organism must in one way or another meet the following criteria: motion, reproduction, consumption, growth, stimulus response. Yes, that describes things that are alive, but what does it mean to be alive? Even non-living things such as viruses came emulate those “life” characteristics. A scientist can analyze the elements that make up a living substance, but when he puts it all together he does not have life. The elements are there, the chemistry is there, but something is missing. Are angels alive? What is life? No one knows really. Again, “life” is one of the great mysteries. But what the Word declares to us and what all science is busy trying to demonstrate is that God is alone the source of life; Jesus is life! Life – the state of one who is possessed of vitality or is animate; the absolute fullness of life. Or could we be looking at a figure of speech, like “he was the life of the party,” or “she was so full of life,” or “they have a great life together”? This is not a likely interpretation based on the context.

“... and that life was the light of men.” “Life” we wrestled with already, no change here. But what does it mean that Jesus’ “life was the light of men”? “And on top of that, when life is given there comes with it light!” “Light” here is generally considered to be a metaphor for understanding, knowledge, truth, or “mental illumination,” if you will. The “life” that Jesus gives brought forth the possibility that men *could* understand God and His reality. This was not “light” that they already possessed, but that they *could* possess. (John 12:46) “Light” is also used in Scriptures meaning truly physical electromagnetic radiation and also purity, holiness, or glory. These uses don’t seem to apply here, but do apply elsewhere in John’s gospel.

God makes you alive and able to understand and comprehend things and desirous of knowledge and wisdom. An even greater understanding of reality is possible when we have “eternal life.” Everywhere in Scripture we are invited to pursue knowledge and discover what is around us in all the exciting mysteries God has hidden in life.

Prov 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

We can pursue science, medicine, art, literature, and politics, and all that is right and good. But there is something more. If that is all we have, life at that level is narrow, cramped, and limited, and we can never understand what is really happening. It is only as we come to the “divine light” does understanding, as it is in the Scriptures, coming from the lips of Jesus, that we begin to put all the pieces together. Only then can we see who we are, why we are, and get the answers to all the puzzles and conundrums of life.

“The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light (*hope, understanding, and revelation*) to everyone.” (NLT – italics added)

“So when John introduces his gospel he wants us to understand this: that the One he is going to talk about, this amazing man from Nazareth, is God himself somehow become a Man. He is the Creator become part of his creation, the Originator of life and of wisdom who somehow limited himself to learning as a little child, growing and partaking with us in the search for truth, and, at last, manifesting the fullness of it in his resurrected power. This is the One who is at the center of our faith. That is why we cannot forget Jesus. Every human being sooner or later must deal with Jesus of Nazareth.” [1]

Alternate version... Larry’s paraphrase of John 1:1-4 (Let me describe the indescribable for you...):

Let me tell you about this Dude I know. I call Him the “Word of God,” because He was the visible and audible representation of God’s thoughts and being - like our words are for us. I don’t know how to explain it, but before anything ever existed, this Dude was - He existed in forever past. The clearest way to put it is, basically, the Dude was God! I know it’s bizarre, but He was apart from God, because He was a Dude just like us, but the Dude wasn’t just a regular Dude; He was God! He was right there creating the world with God. It’s like when we read in the old books, “God said, ‘Let there be light.’” and “God said, ‘Let there be land.’” This Dude was the “Said” part. That’s another reason I like to call Him the “Word.” Without the “Said” nothing would have been created. It was all made through the “Said.” But “Said,” He wasn’t made at all. So this Word Dude, He’s the source of all life, everything. He has life in Himself - just gushing out. His life is what makes us alive and aware and conscious, able to live, move, love, animate these bags of dirt we call bodies. He gave life to everything that’s alive. And from that “life” he gave us “light” or understanding, knowledge, and truth, and the ability to see reality, and wisdom, and the desire to learn about Him and His creation. Then the Dude became a regular dude just like one of us; He took on a “life” like ours. And what the Dude said and did and lived and taught during His “life” with us opened up our eyes to God and His reality and His love, and gave us a wonderful hope. That’s this Dude I’m telling you about.

References:

1. Halley, Henry H., *Pocket Bible Handbook*, 1951
2. Stedman, Ray C., *Sermon, Who is Jesus*, 1983
3. Guideposts, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986
4. Zondervan, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985
5. <http://www.gotquestions.org/Trinity-Bible.html>

Biblical References:

1. *Psalm 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.*
2. *Isaiah 44:24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.*
3. *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
4. *John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*
5. *John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
6. *John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God,[a] who is at the Father’s side,[b] he has made him known.*
7. *John 5:18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*
8. *John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*
9. *John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[a] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*
10. *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
11. *John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*
12. *John 20:28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”*
13. *Luke 5:20-21 And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” 21And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*

14. *Romans 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*
15. *1 Corinthians 8:6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*
16. *2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
17. *Philippians 2:6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,*
18. *Colossians 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*
19. *Titus 2:13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*
20. *Hebrews 1:2-8 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. 5For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? 6And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." 8But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*
21. *2 Peter 1:1 Simeon[a] Peter, a servant[b] and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*
22. *Revelation 1:13-18 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. 17When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*
23. *Revelation 19:13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in[a] blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.*
24. *Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

Questions:

Why did Jesus have to be God and why is it that many do not *want* Him to be? (1 John 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 1:18)

Is the deity of Christ Biblical (list of scriptures provided)?

What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God? (John 1:1,14; Luke 1:35; Matthew 26:63-66; John 19:7; Hebrews 1:3; John 17:12)

Trinity (http://www.afcministry.com/Trinity_Doctrine.htm):

- *The Bible teaches that there is only one God. (Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 44:6-8, Isaiah 45:22)*
- *The Bible teaches that there is one who is called the Father and is identified as being God. (1 Peter 1:2)*
- *The Bible teaches that there is one who is called Jesus and is identified as being God. (John 1:1-3&14-18, John 20:28-29, 1 John 1:1-4&5:20, Philippians 2:5-8, Revelation 1:17-18, Revelation 22:12-20)*
- *The Bible teaches that there is one who is called the Holy Spirit and is identified as being God. (John 14:16-17, John 15:26, John 16:7-15, Acts 5:3-4, Acts 13:2, 1 Corinthians 12:4-18, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:15-18)*

There are things in life that are triune in nature but one. For example: An egg is one but with three distinctions. You have the yoke, the white, and the shell, but all three composite the one egg. Another example: A piece of fruit such as the peach has three components. A peach has the outer layer (the skin), the inner layer (the juicy stuff known as the meat), and the core. All three components composite the one peach. Another thing that we have in our everyday lives that are triune is water. Water is one substance that can be liquid, gas, and solid distinctly or all at the same. The following quote is from the late Dr. Walter Martin: "It is a well-known fact of chemistry that plain water, when placed in a vacuum under 230 millimeters of gas pressure and at a temperature of 0 degrees Centigrade, solidifies into ice at the bottom of the container, remains liquid in the center and vaporizes at the top! At a given instant the same water is solid, liquid and gas, yet all three are manifestations of the same basic substance or nature: H2O - hydrogen: two parts; oxygen: one. If one of the simplest of all created substances can be three in manifested form and yet remain one in nature, then the Creator of that substance can surely be Father, Son and Holy Spirit - three Persons and one Nature - without any violation of logic or reason whatever if He so wills."

If an egg, a peach, and water can have three distinct states and all be one at the same time, then the Almighty should have no problem. The word Trinity is way of explaining the belief in one God revealed through three distinct persons. Some people get all hung up on the issue of the Bible teaching there is only one God. Nowhere does the Bible state God is only one person, but it does say God is "one" in Deuteronomy 6:4. The word for one there is the Hebrew word Echad, which means a composite unity. For examples of this consider Genesis 1:5, Genesis 2:24, Ezra 2:64, Ezekiel 37:17 where the same Hebrew word Echad is used and means one in unity, not in number! The Bible teaches there is one Church but many members and there are no problems with understanding this, yet when it comes to God some seem to have problems.

Some Answers to the questions:

1. Why did Jesus have to be God and why is it that many do not want Him to be? (1 John 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 1:18)

The most important reason that Jesus has to be God is that if He is not God, His death would not have been sufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Only God could pay such an infinite penalty. Only God could take on the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21), die, and be resurrected - proving His victory over sin and death. Also, after watching the Passion of the Christ and thinking that what came later was worse, only God could have withstood the wrath of God!

The most obvious reason of peoples' denial of Christ's deity they are deluded and are in some way counting on their own efforts for redemption (2 Thes 2:11). This key fact is usually an indication of a completely distorted system of doctrine. Often this belief, rejection of Christ's deity, is brought forth out of enmity towards established faith. Charles Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses' founder) stated, "This theory [the Trinity] suited well 'the dark ages' it helped to produce."

2. Question: "Is the deity of Christ Biblical?" (from: <http://www.gotquestions.org>)

Answer: In addition to Jesus' specific claims about Himself (see Is Jesus God?), His disciples also acknowledged the deity of Christ. They claimed that Jesus had the right to forgive sins - something only God can do, as it is God who is offended by sin (Acts 5:31; Colossians 3:13; cf. Psalm 130:4; Jeremiah 31:34). In close connection with this last claim, Jesus is also said to be the one who will "judge the living and the dead" (2 Timothy 4:1). Thomas cried out to Jesus, "my Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Paul calls Jesus "great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13), and points out that prior to His incarnation Jesus existed in the "form of God" (Philippians 2:5-8). The writer to the Hebrews says regarding Jesus that "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). John states that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God" (John 1:1). Examples of Scriptures that teach the deity of Christ could be multiplied (see Revelation 1:17; 2:8; 22:13; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6-8; cf. Psalm 18:2; 95:1; 1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:20), but even one of these is enough to show that Christ was considered to be deity by His followers.

Jesus is also given titles that are unique to Yahweh (the formal name of God) in the Old Testament. The Old Testament title "redeemer" (Psalm 130:7; Hosea 13:14) is used of Jesus in the New Testament (Titus 2:13; Revelation 5:9). Jesus is called Immanuel ("God with us" in Matthew 1). In Zechariah 12:10, it is Yahweh who says, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced." But the New Testament applies this to Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). If it is Yahweh who is pierced and looked upon, and Jesus was the one pierced and looked upon, then Jesus is Yahweh. Paul interprets Isaiah 45:22-23 as applying to Jesus in Philippians 2:10-11. Further, Jesus' name is used alongside Yahweh's in prayer "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2). This would be blasphemy if Christ were not deity. The name of Jesus appears with Yahweh's in Jesus' command to baptize "in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; see also 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Actions that can be accomplished only by God are credited to Jesus. Jesus not only raised the dead (John 5:21; 11:38-44), and forgave sins (Acts 5:31; 13:38), He created and sustains the universe (John 1:2; Colossians 1:16-17)! This point is made even more forceful when one considers that Yahweh said He was alone during creation (Isaiah 44:24). Further, Christ possesses attributes that only deity can have: eternity (John 8:58), omnipresence (Matthew 18:20, 28:20), omniscience (Matthew 16:21), omnipotence (John 11:38-44).

Now, it is one thing to claim to be God or to fool someone into believing it is true, and something else entirely to prove it to be so. Christ offered as proof of His claim to deity many miracles and even rose from the dead. Just a few of Jesus' miracles include turning water to wine (John 2:7), walking on water (Matthew 14:25), multiplying physical objects (John 6:11), healing the blind (John 9:7), the lame (Mark 2:3), and the sick (Matthew 9:35; Mark 1:40-42), and even raising people from the dead (John 11:43-44; Luke 7:11-15; Mark 5:35). Moreover, Christ Himself rose from the dead. Far from the so-called dying and rising gods of pagan mythology, nothing like the resurrection is seriously claimed by other religions - and no other claim has as much extra-scriptural confirmation. According to Dr. Gary Habermas, there are at least twelve historical facts that even non-Christian critical scholars will admit:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. He was buried.
3. His death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope.
4. Jesus' tomb was discovered (or claimed to be discovered) to be empty a few days later.
5. The disciples believed they experienced appearances of the risen Jesus.
6. After this the disciples were transformed from doubters into bold believers.
7. This message was the center of preaching in the early Church.
8. This message was preached in Jerusalem.
9. As a result of this preaching, the Church was born and it grew.
10. Resurrection day, Sunday, replaced the Sabbath (Saturday) as the primary day of worship.
11. James, a skeptic, was converted when he also believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus.
12. Paul, an enemy of Christianity, was converted by an experience which he believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.

Even if someone were to object to this specific list, only a few are needed to prove the resurrection and establish the gospel: Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and appearances (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). While there may be some theories to explain one or two of the above facts, only the resurrection explains and accounts for them all. Critics admit that the disciples claimed they saw the risen Jesus. Neither lies nor hallucinations can transform people the way the resurrection did. First, what would they have had to gain? Christianity wasn't popular and it certainly did not make them any money. Second, liars do not make good martyrs. There is no better explanation than the resurrection for the disciples' willingness to die horrible deaths for their faith. Yes, lots of people die for lies that they think are true, but no one dies for what they know is untrue.

In conclusion: Christ claimed He was Yahweh, He was deity (not just "a god" - but the True God), His followers (Jews who would have been terrified of idolatry) believed Him and referred to Him as such. Christ proved His claims to deity through miracles including the world-altering resurrection. No other hypothesis can explain these facts.

3. Question: "What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God?" (from: <http://www.gotquestions.org>)

Answer: Jesus is not God's Son in the sense of how we think of a father and a son. God did not get married and have a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form (John 1:1,14). Jesus is God's Son in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:35 declares, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" In Bible times, the phrase "son of man" was used to describe a human being. The son of a man is a man.

During His trial before the Jewish leaders, the High Priest demanded of Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). Jesus responded, "Yes, it is as you say, 'but I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (Matthew 26:64). The Jewish leaders responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65-66). Later, before Pontius Pilate, "The Jews insisted, 'We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God'" (John 19:7). Why would claiming to be the "Son of God" be considered blasphemy and be worthy of a death sentence? The Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus meant by the phrase "Son of God." To be the "Son of God" is to be of the same nature as God. The "Son of God" is "of God." The claim to be of the same nature as God, to in fact "be God," was blasphemy to the Jewish leaders; therefore, they demanded Jesus' death. Hebrews 1:3 expresses this very clearly, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being..."

Another example can be found in John 17:12 where Judas is described as the "son of perdition." John 6:71 tells us that Judas was the son of Simon. What does John 17:12 mean by describing Judas as the "son of perdition"? The word "perdition" means "destruction, ruin, waste." Judas was not the literal son of "ruin, destruction, and waste" - but those things were the identity of Judas' life. Judas was a manifestation of perdition. In this same aspect, Jesus is the Son of God. The Son of God is God. Jesus is God made manifest (John 1:1,14).