

Why Doesn't the Trinity Have Three Thrones in Heaven?

by Servetus the Evangelical

The three great monotheistic religions of the world are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three claim to worship the one and only God, the God of the Bible. While all three base their beliefs on the Bible, they do not agree as to who this God is.

Most Christians are Trinitarians since they believe in their “doctrine of the Trinity.” Their theologians usually explain that it means that God, which they also designate a “the Godhead,” is one essence subsisting in three co-equal and co-eternal Persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.

Both Jews and Muslims disagree with this doctrine of the Trinity. They allege that it seems like tritheism—the worship of three gods. Christians vehemently deny this; yet they contend that the Father is God, Jesus Christ is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and they distinguish them as three separate Persons. To most unbiased souls, this Trinity tallies up to be three Gods, thus agreeing with Jews and Muslims. Trinitarians reply that their doctrine is so mysterious that it is inscrutable and incomprehensible.

Most Trinitarians also presume that these “three members of the Trinity,” as they call them, are in heaven and that they are worshipped there by an innumerable company of angels. But this cannot be verified in the New Testament (NT) about the Holy Spirit.

The NT declares that Jesus was crucified, died, raised from the dead, and that he ascended into heaven and sat down with God the Father on his throne at his right hand. So, a prominent image Christians have always had is of Jesus sitting alongside God the Father on the Father's throne in heaven, with angels surrounding them.

No Bible book or letter contains as much information about heaven as does the book of Revelation. Its most prominent theme is the sovereignty of God the Father. And his throne serves as a symbol of his sovereign authority in heaven, the universe, and thus the earth. God is depicted six times in this apocalyptic book as “He/Him who sits on the throne.” A multitude of God's people cry out with a loud voice, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7.10). The Lamb, who is Jesus Christ, is portrayed as sitting there alongside of God the Father on the Father's throne. And the angels in heaven “worshipped God who sits on the throne” (Rev 19.4).

Notice that God is distinguished from the Lamb, Jesus Christ. This distinction always indicates that only the Father is God, so that Jesus Christ is not God. Revelation quotes the heavenly Jesus calling the Father “My God” five times (Revelation 3.2, 12), and it tells of “His God and Father” (1.6), thus restricting the word “God” to the Father.

Furthermore, ten times the book of Revelation quotes heaven's citizens as calling the Father “our God” (Revelation 4.11; 5.10; 7.3, 10, 12; 12.10; 19.1, 5-6). Sometimes, it does so when both God the Father and Jesus Christ are mentioned together. For example, a loud voice in heaven spoke about “the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ” (12.10). Thus, only the Father is the God of heaven's citizens.

So, the book of Revelation reveals that Jesus Christ does not have his own throne in heaven, that is, one that is separate from the Father's throne. There is only one throne that God the Father and Jesus Christ sit on in heaven, and they share it together.

But if God is three co-equal Persons, as Trinitarians assert, shouldn't we expect there to be three thrones in heaven, one for each of these three members of the Trinity? Yet the

Bible never states this. Some Trinitarians have expressed disappointment if not dismay due to this silence—that the Bible does not say the Holy Spirit is enthroned in heaven.

Trinitarians insist that the Holy Spirit, which most call “the third Person/member of the Trinity,” is a full-fledged Person just as God the Father and Jesus Christ are Persons. Yet, of all of the heavenly scenes in the book of Revelation that portray a multitude of angels, twenty-four elders, and four living creatures all praising God the Father and Jesus Christ, there is no mention of the Holy Spirit even existing in heaven let alone sitting on a throne or being worshipped. (In all of the heavenly scenes of this book, which are in Revelation 4-19, the Holy Spirit is only mentioned once, in Revelation 14.13.)

That blessed act of exaltation—in which God the Father invited Jesus Christ to sit with him on his throne—does not suggest that Jesus is essentially equal with the Father and thus possesses deity. Rather, this exaltation magnifies Jesus’ dependence upon God and manifests his subordination to God. Otherwise, if Jesus is God, co-equal with the Father in essence, we would expect Jesus to have his own separate throne in heaven, perhaps alongside of the Father’s throne and at the same height. The Father’s throne is the highest of all other thrones in heaven. That is why he is often described in the Bible as “the Most High” (e.g., Daniel 7.9, 25; Luke 1.32, 35). The Father’s throne belonging to him, and it being high and lifted up (Isaiah 6.1; cf. 52.13), symbolizes his exalted rank, thus his superior dignity, over all, including Jesus Christ.

The existence of one throne in heaven for God, with Christ at his side, also affirms a strict monotheism, thus nullifying Binitarianism and Trinitarianism. Trinitarian Richard Bauckham at least acknowledges, “In Second Temple Judaism, then, the throne of God in the highest heaven became a key symbol of monotheism.” And Marinus de Jong insists that “God on his heavenly throne remains the center of all worship (Rev 7:11-17), and adoration of the Lamb in no way endangers or diminishes the worship due him.”

To conclude, the most formidable image which refutes the notion of the Trinity is God the Father literally sitting on his heavenly throne with Jesus sitting alongside him. If the Trinity was true, and it is not, one would expect all three of its members to either sit together on one throne or have their own thrones in heaven. Either way, no manner of mental gymnastics could escape the allegation that such an image presents three Gods. Yet the Bible repeatedly states the concept that there is only one true and living God.