

# Some Initial Steps Toward Gaining A Biblical Understanding of The Trinity

(Based on the Foundation of Scripture Texts  
Plus the Interpretive Insights of Jonathan Edwards  
And the Additional Explanatory Commentary of Dan Smythe)

We are going to think through a progressive understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God by using the common 5 W's and H questions that we use in our process of Inductive Bible Study.



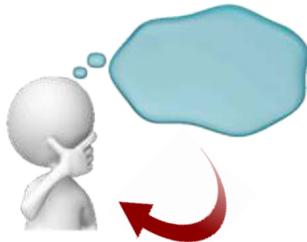
Let's start with a "What?" question.

## WHAT?

**Question:** *What* is one of the most obvious things that every person knows with complete certainty about himself?

→ **Answer:** Every person has a "self-perception" about himself or herself!

In other words, every one of us, in our mind, is aware that we exist. We have thoughts *about ourselves* that we are *thinking* and *processing* in our brain every day ... throughout the day ... all the time.



**[Stop and discuss together some of the "self-perception" thoughts that we've had about ourselves in this past hour]**

## WHO?

**Question:** Who does the Bible say we were all created “in the image of”?

→ **Answer:** God!

### Genesis 1:27

<sup>27</sup> So God created man *in His own image, in the image of God* He created him, male and female He created them.

## WHEN?

**Question:** When we understand that each of us has a “self-perception” and a “self-awareness” of ourselves that we are *thinking* and *processing* continually in our brain – does it therefore make sense that since we have all been created “in the image of” God – *does it therefore make sense* that God the Father *also* has a “Self-Perception” within Himself ... about Himself?

→ **Answer:** Yes!

God the Father clearly has His own “Self-Awareness” and “Self-Perception” of the fact that He exists, and thus He has – just like we as well have (since we are created in *His* image) – *He* has a “Self-Perception” of *Himself*.



## WHEN?

**Question:** When did God the Father's "Self-Perception" of Himself begin?

→ **Answer:** It never "started" and therefore it has always existed eternally?

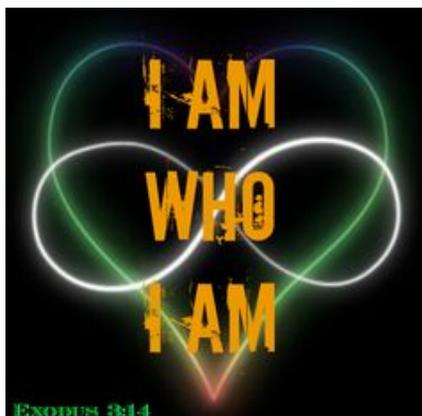
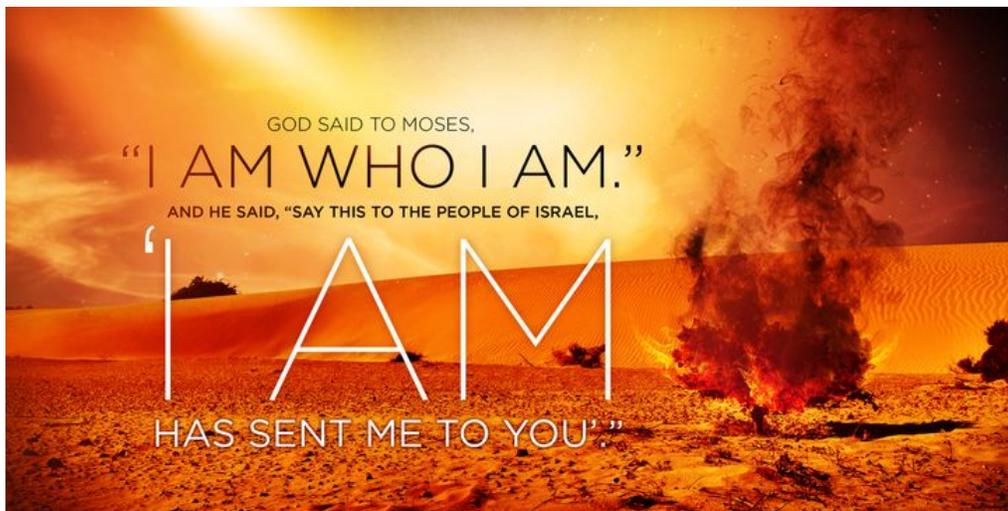
God the Father's "Self-Perception" of Himself never "began" because God the Father is eternal and infinite. As the only uncreated/eternal/infinite Being in the universe God the Father *always* has existed. Amongst all the beings that exist only God never had a starting point.

Only God is infinite and eternal.

It should not surprise us therefore, that in the Bible when God reveals His name to Moses, the name that He reveals as a means of expressing the essential core of His Being is: "**I AM – I AM WHO I AM.**"

### Exodus 3:14

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM.**" And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'"

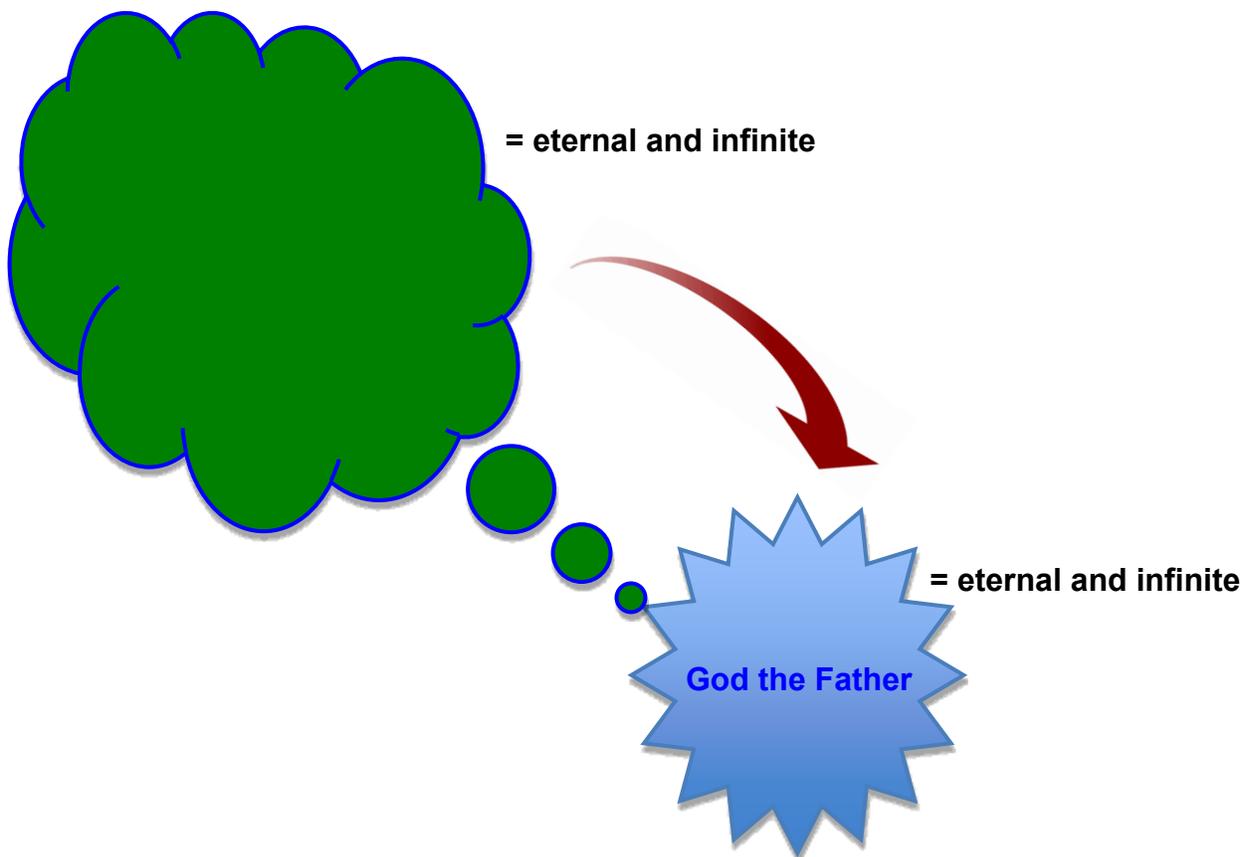


## WHAT?

**Question:** *What* therefore have we now understood about the “Self-Perception” that God the Father has *always eternally* had of Himself?

→ **Answer:** The “Self-Perception” that God the Father has *always eternally* had of Himself is *also, Itself, an infinite and eternal “Self-Perception.”*

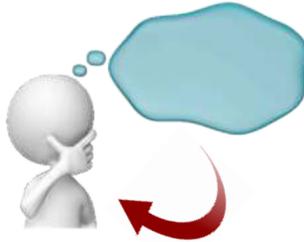
In other words, because God Himself had no beginning point because He *always* has existed – this means that God the Father’s “Self-Perception” had no beginning point as well. It has always existed. God the Father’s “Self-Perception” is just as eternal and infinite as God the Father Himself is! In fact, His “Self-Perception” cannot be separated from Who-God-Is as God.



Let’s turn our attention now from the subject of *our “self-perception”* and *God the Father’s “Self-Perception”* over to an equally important reality: namely, our ability *to love* another person.

## WHAT?

**Question:** What else do we all understand about ourselves – beyond the fact that each of us continually carries within our mind a “self-awareness,” a “self-perception,” about ourselves?



→ **Answer:** We all have the ability to feel and express *joyful-love* toward another person!

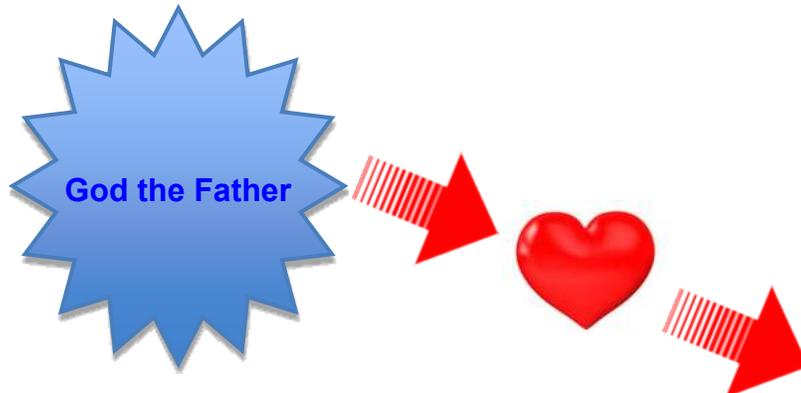


We all have people in our lives that we *deeply love*. Our innate ability to do this is the result of our being created “in the image of” God.

## WHAT?

**Question:** What does the Bible tell us about the reality of love in the universe?

→ **Answer:** The Bible reveals to us the incredible truth that God is love – and this means that He is *the source* of all love!



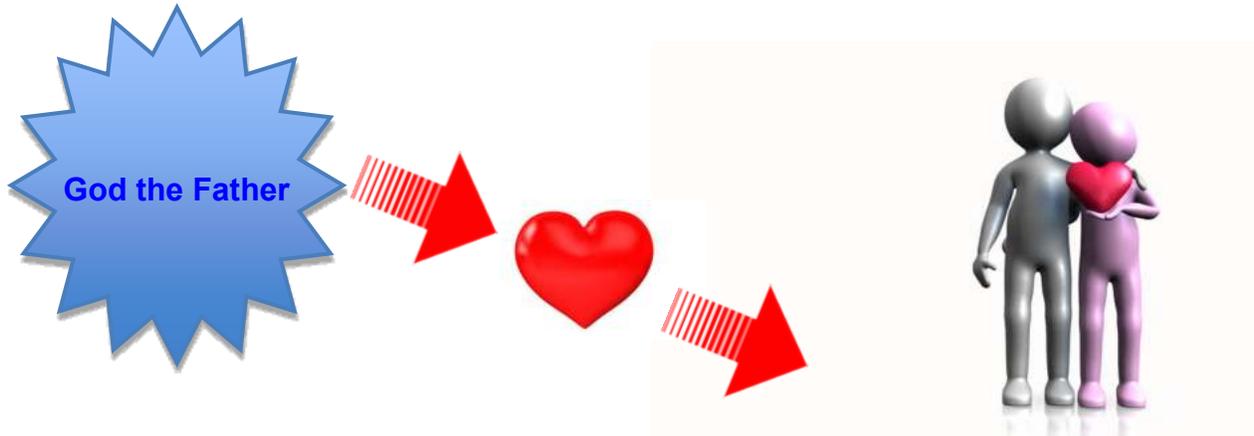
**1 John 4:16b**

<sup>16</sup> **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

## WHAT?

**Question:** *What* further insight does the Bible reveal to us – as beings who have been created “in the image of” God – about this ability that we *have* to love others?

→ **Answer:** The Bible reveals to us that our ability to love others is based upon God’s own Being as the God who *is* love – in whose image we have been created.



**1 John 4:19**

<sup>19</sup> *We love* because *He first loved us*.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND US!

With this understanding that God the Father has always had *His own “Self-Perception”* – and – with this understanding that *God is love* – let’s now consider how *God the Father’s “Self-Perception”* is infinitely different than *our “self-perception.”*

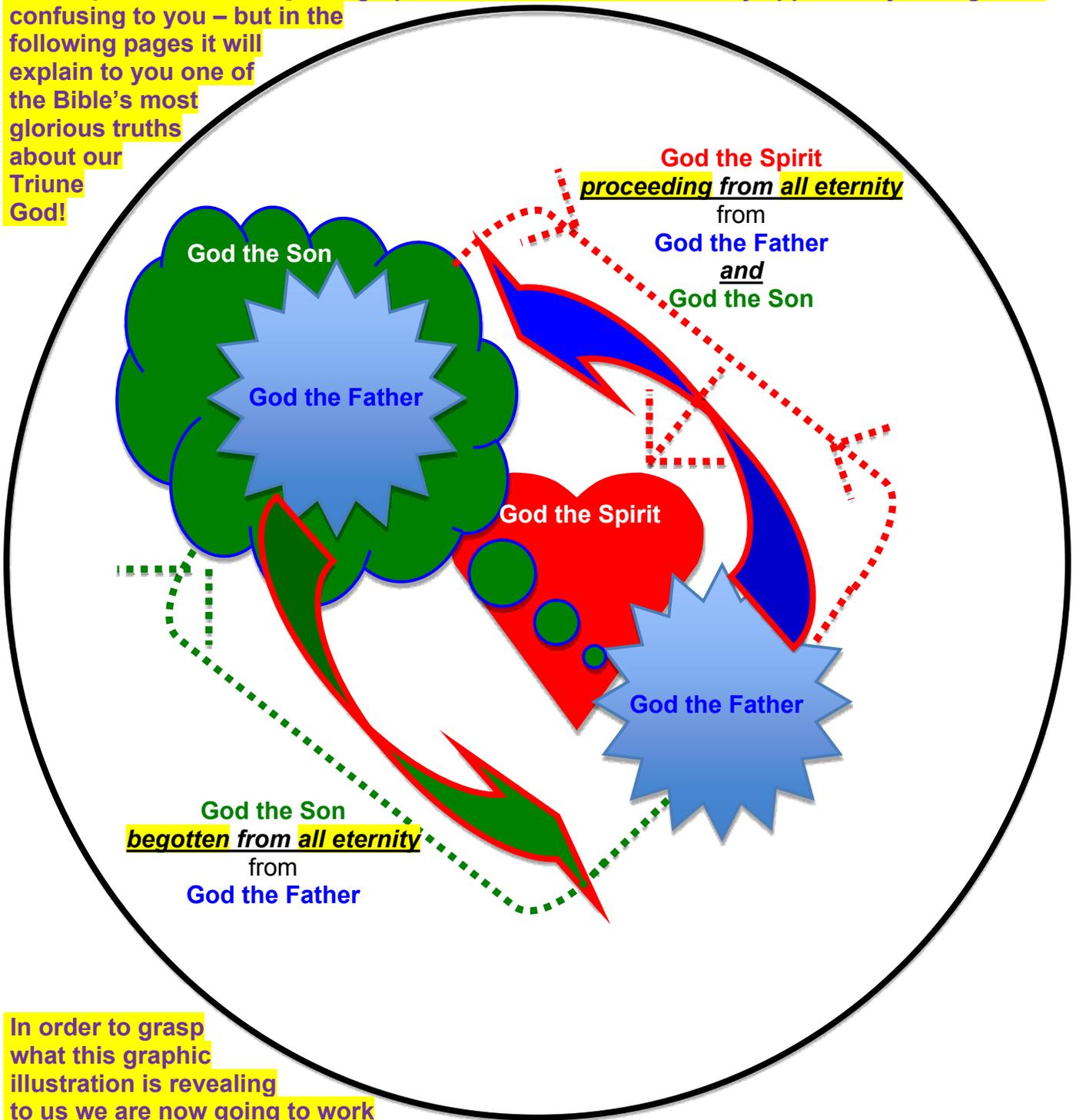
Let’s also consider how *God’s the Father’s expression of love* is infinitely different than *our expression of love*.

Here is what we are going to see:

**THE TRINITY:  
ONE ETERNAL BEING  
... THREE ETERNAL PERSONS**

**(shown below is what has been on display in the universe  
*eternally with no beginning*)**

At this point in our study this graphic illustration will most likely appear very strange and confusing to you – but in the following pages it will explain to you one of the Bible's most glorious truths about our Triune God!



In order to grasp what this graphic illustration is revealing to us we are now going to work through it one stage at a time.



Just as you as a human sitting in this room have **an idea ... an awareness ... a thought ... a “self-perception”** of **yourself** regarding your existence here in this room right now – so also has **God the Father** possessed a **Divine “Self-Awareness”** and a **Divine “Self-Perception”** of **HIMSELF** from all eternity.

**Your awareness of yourself** as a mere creature ... a mere human, however, is **not “another flesh-and-blood-person”** sitting here in this room – it is **just a thought** that you possess within your mind as you sit here in this room.

In other words, that “thought” that you have of yourself is **not** a second **“person-of-you”** sitting here next to you in a second chair in this room.

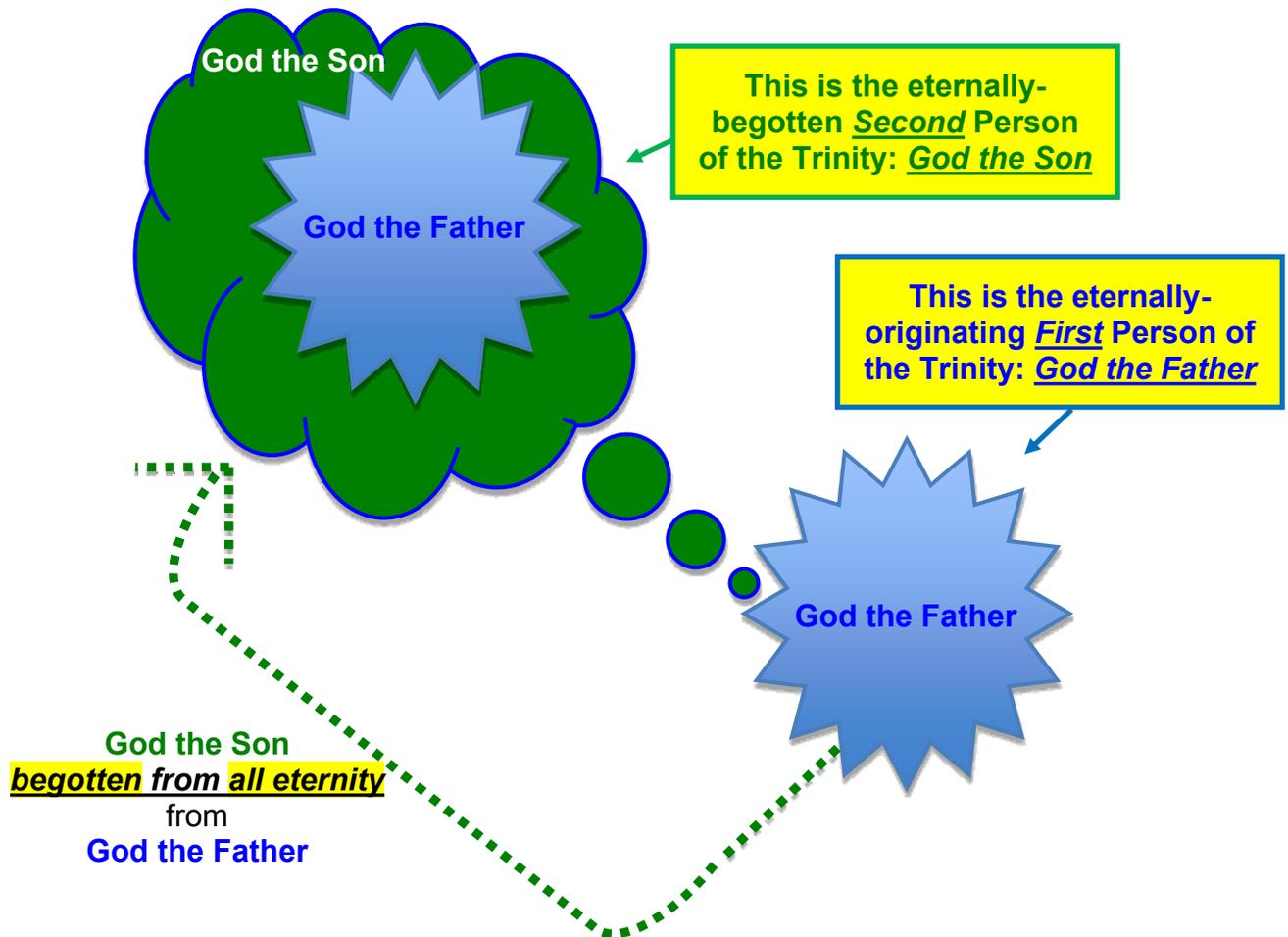


**God the Father, however – being the Infinite and Supreme Being that He is – is infinitely different.** Because **He** is the **Eternal** God ... the **Infinite** and **Uncreated** God – and not a mere human creature – when **He** has **His** eternal and infinite **Divine Self-Awareness** of **Himself** ... a **Divine Self-Awareness** which was **never created** and therefore **never began** but has **always been** – that Awareness that **He** has of **His Own Glorious Perfections** is actually a **Second Person of the Trinity that is just as fully God as God the Father is!**

The **One Being of the TRIUNE GOD** therefore has a **First Person** in **God the Father** ... but then also a **Second Person** in **God the Son** who has eternally been **“begotten”** of **the Father** ... and who **“stands-forth”** as **THE SECOND DIVINE PERSON** in **the Trinity** – never created ... always existing ... as **God the Father’s** infinitely perfect **Perception and Awareness** of **Himself** which is so infinitely glorious that **His Self-Awareness** is eternally **THE SECOND PERSON** in **the Trinity: God the Son!**

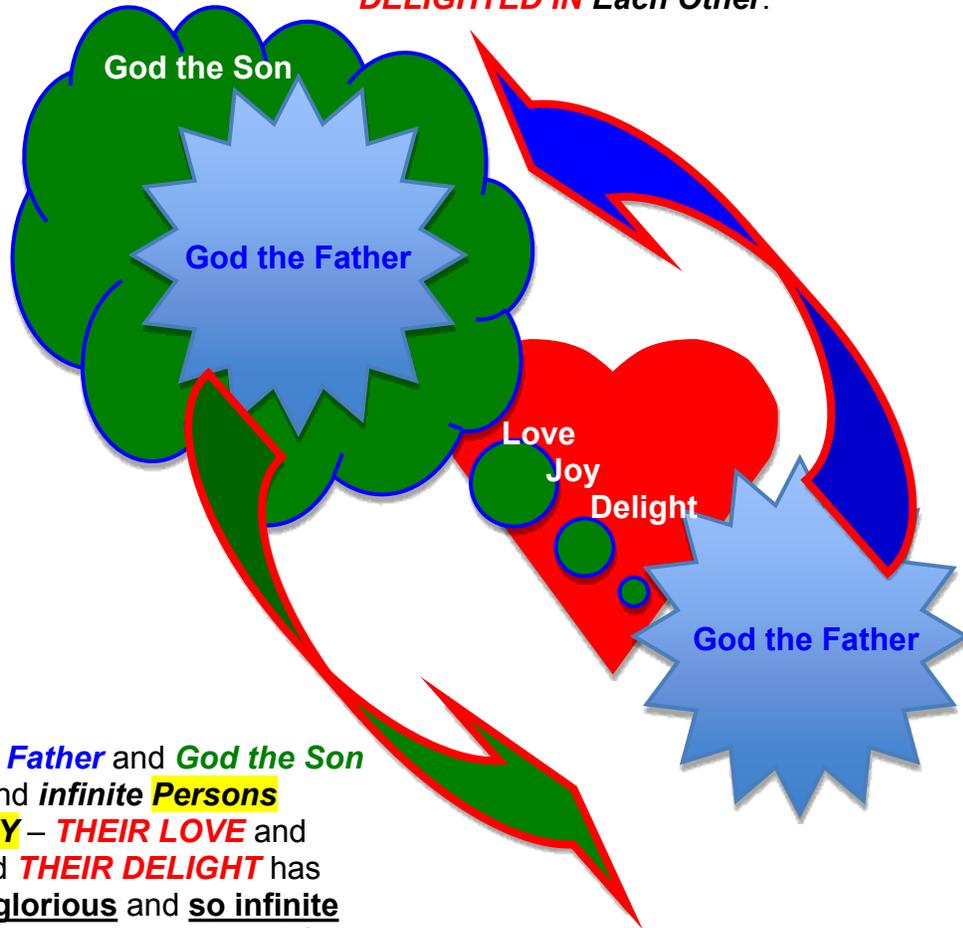
**John 1:14**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only [Greek word: monogenes – **only** ... or **begotten**] Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.



*God the Son* is **co-equal** and **co-eternal** with *God the Father* – **fully God** with *God the Father* – but *God the Son* has **out of His great love** always **willingly submitted** to the priority and will of *God the Father* as an expression of **His love** to *God the Father* from **Whom He as God the Son** is **eternally begotten**.

As **God the Father** and **God the Son** have **beheld Each Other** and **related to Each Other** – from all eternity – **They TOGETHER** have **constantly** and **continually LOVED ...** and **REJOICED IN ...** and **DELIGHTED IN Each Other.**

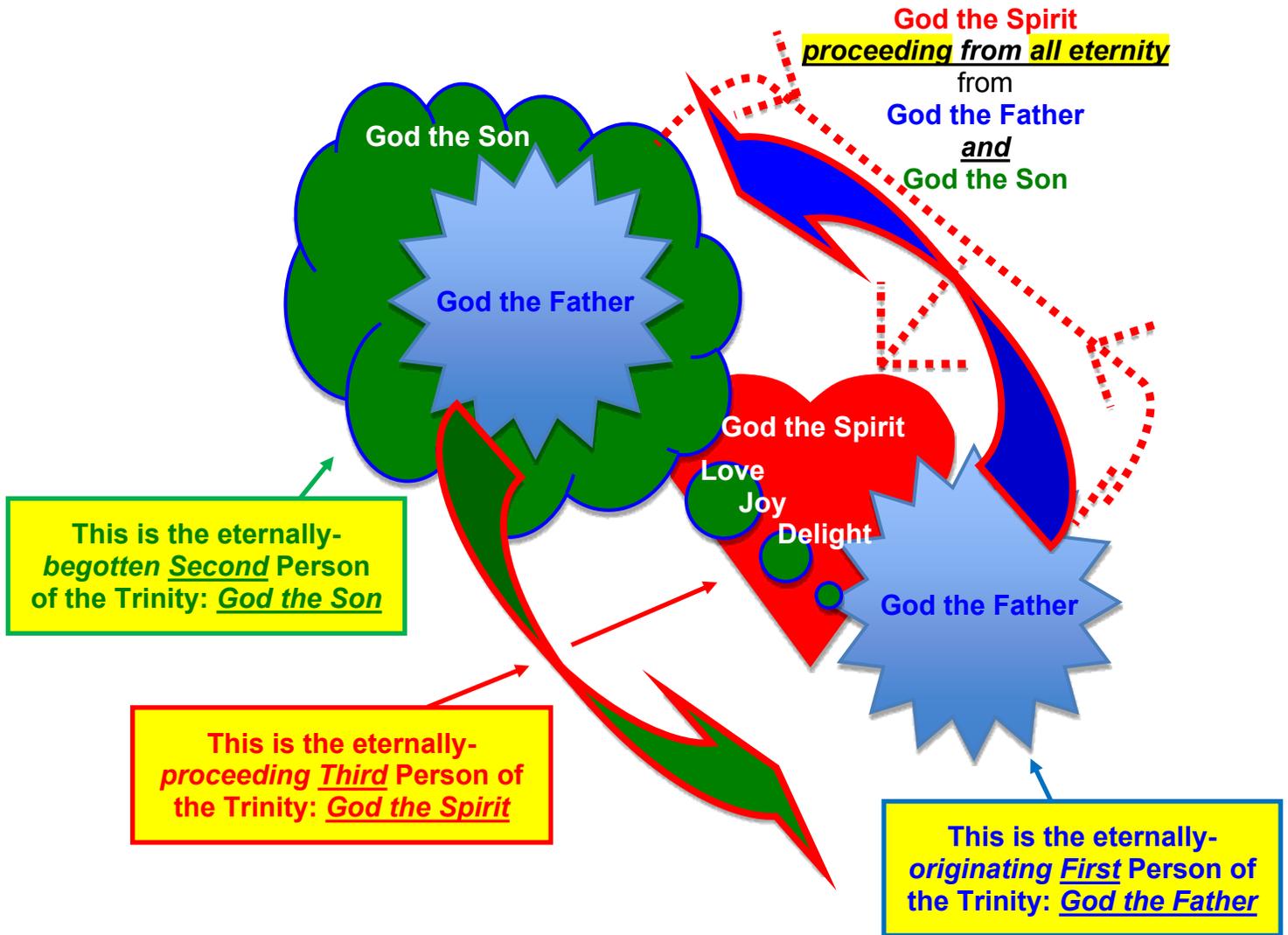


But since **God the Father** and **God the Son** are both **eternal** and **infinite Persons** **within the TRINITY** – **THEIR LOVE** and **THEIR JOY ...** and **THEIR DELIGHT** has eternally been **so glorious** and **so infinite** in how it has been expressed back-and-forth between **Themselves** to **One Another** that **Their Love-Joy-Delight** in **Each Other** has actually eternally “**proceeded-forth**” from **God the Father** and **God the Son** as **ANOTHER THIRD PERSON** within **the Trinity!**

**The Father** and **the Son’s Divine Love-Joy-Delight** in and for **Each Other** has actually “**stood-forth**” as **THE THIRD PERSON** of **the Trinity**: **God the Spirit** (the Bible’s language to describe this infinite reality is that this **Third Person** has eternally “**proceeded-forth**” from **God the Father** and **God the Son**).

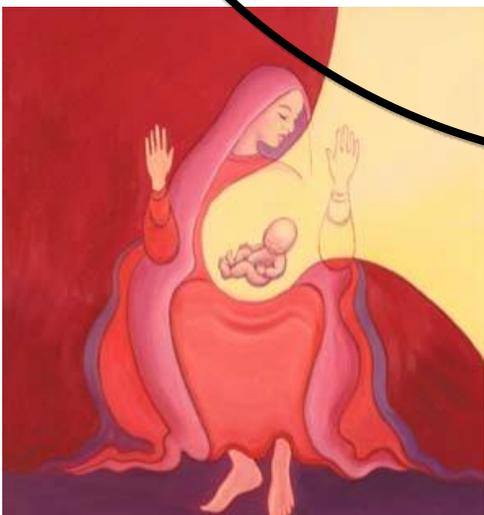
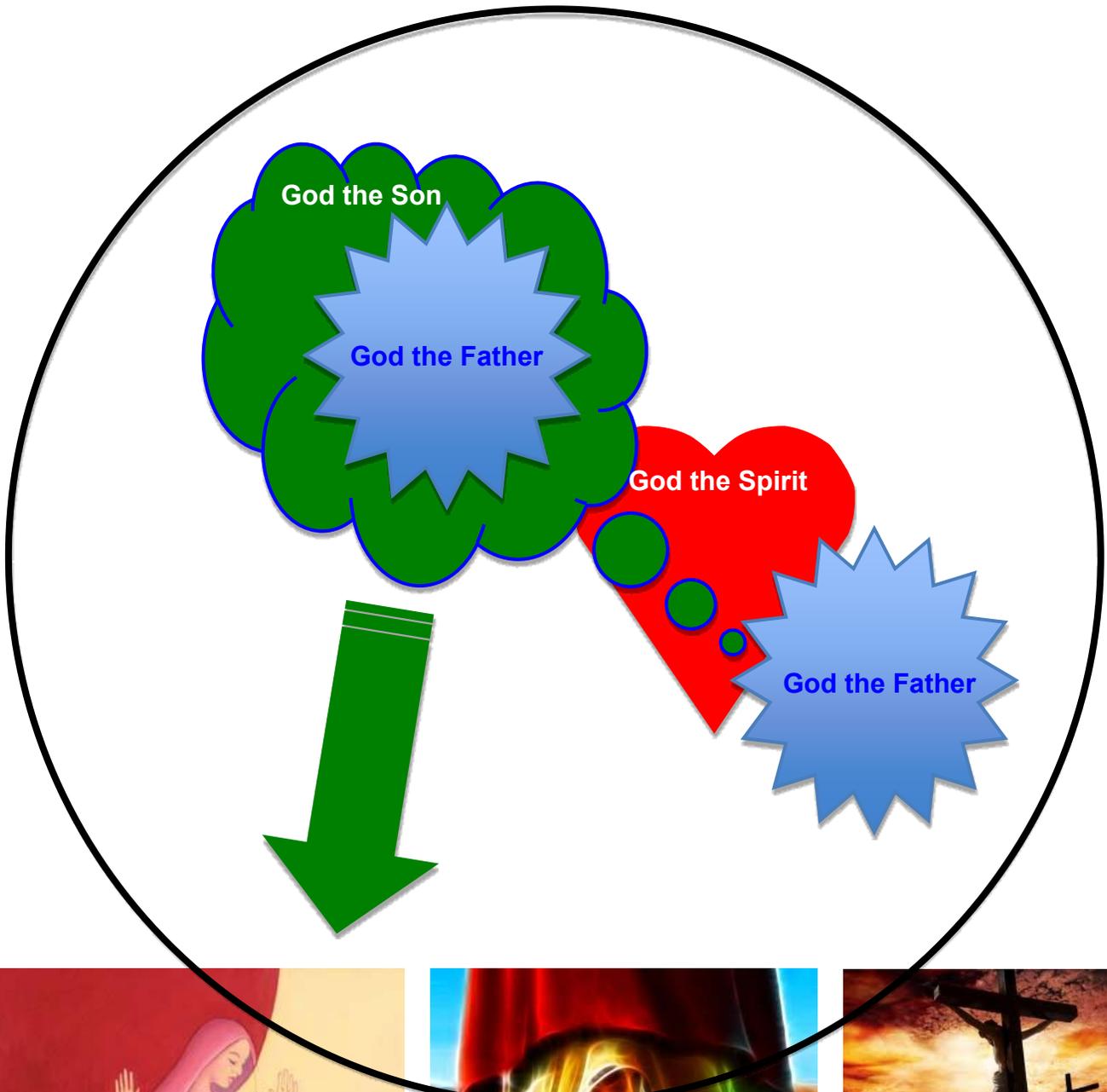
**John 15:26**  
<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who **proceeds from** the Father, He will bear witness about Me.”

**John 14:11**  
<sup>11</sup> “I am **in** the Father and the Father **is** in Me ....”

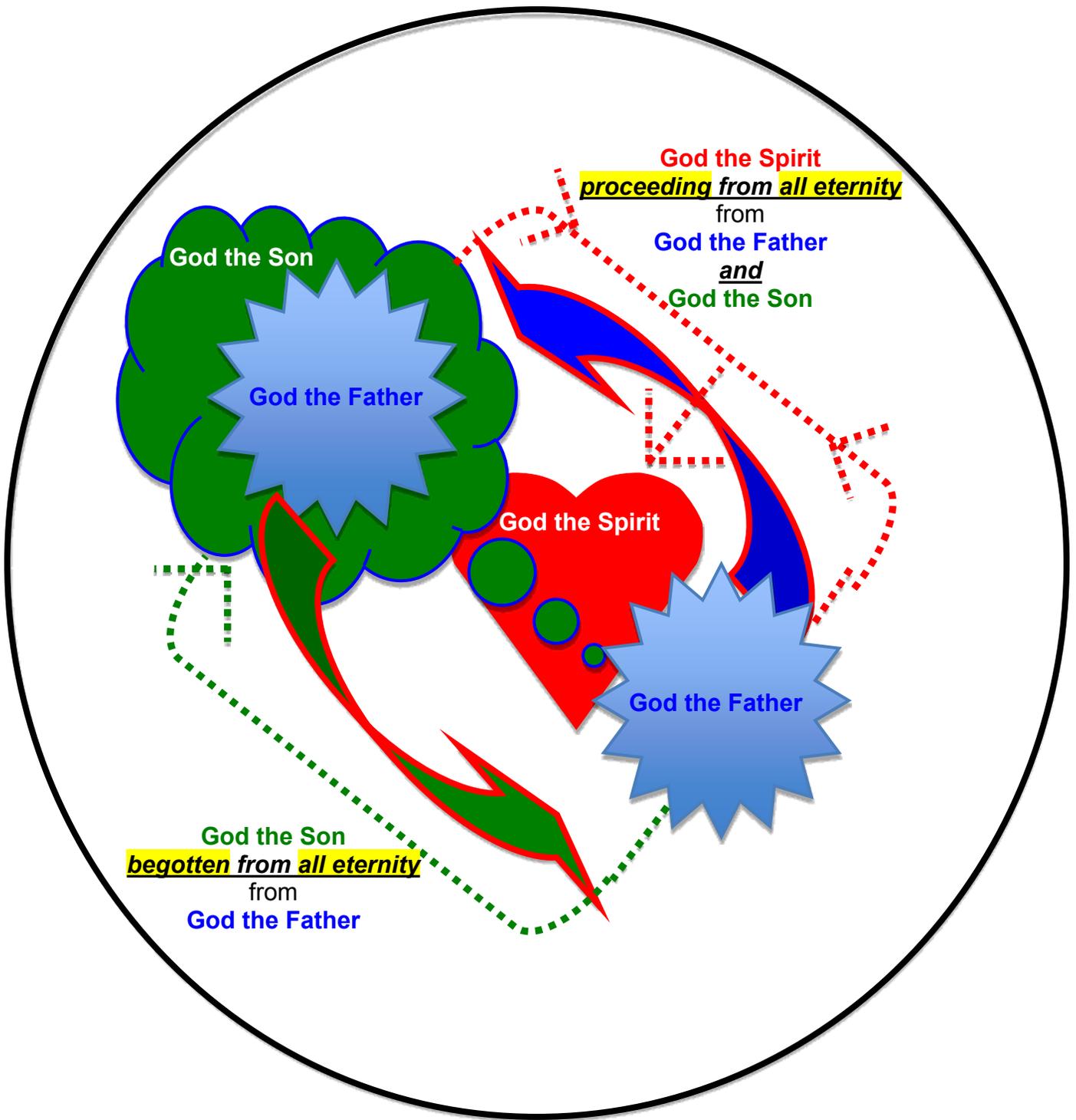


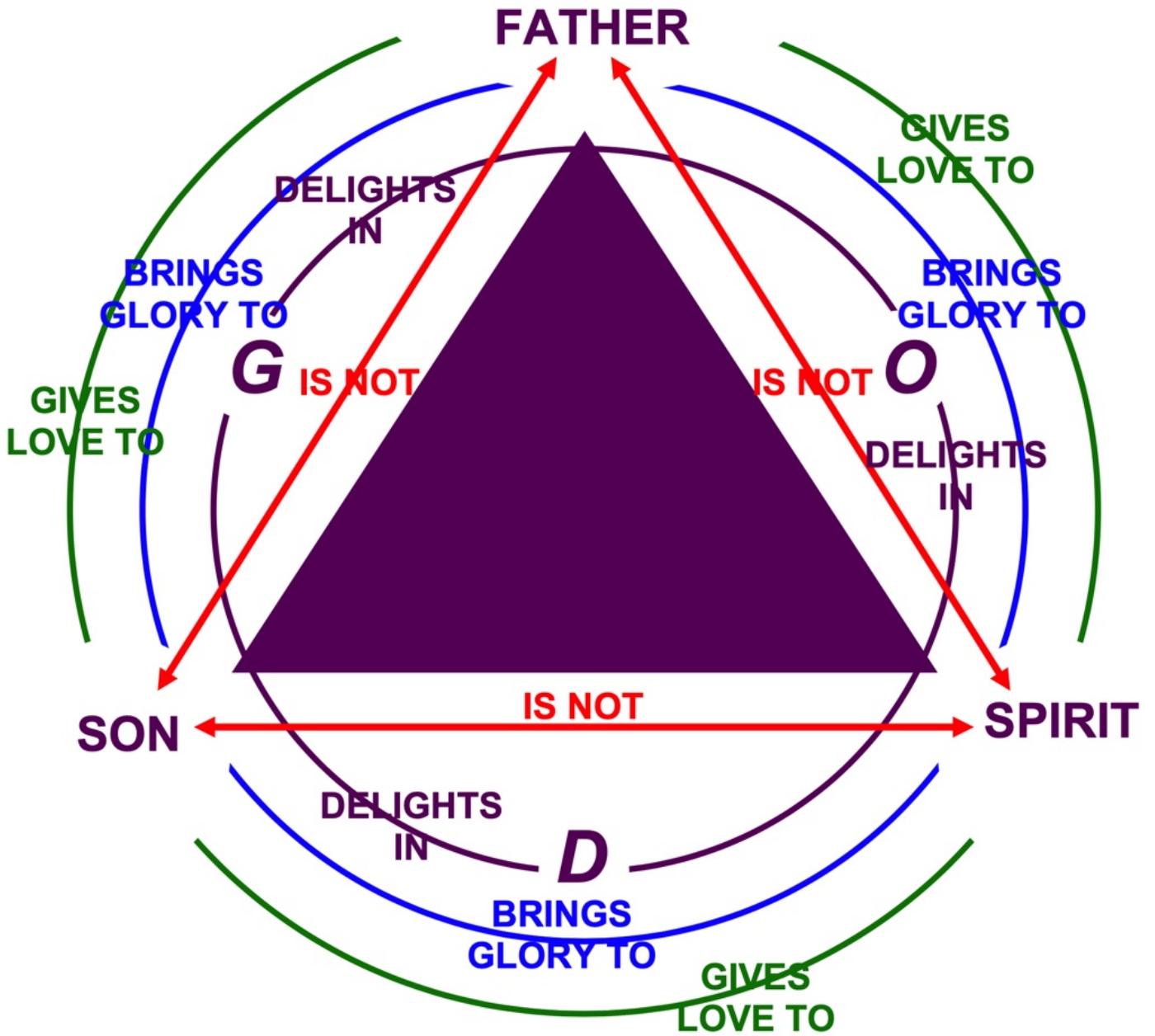
**God the Spirit** is *co-equal* and *co-eternal* with **God the Father** and **God the Son** – **FULLY GOD** with **God the Father** and **God the Son** – but **God the Spirit** has *out of His great love* always *willingly submitted* to **God the Father** and **God the Son** as an expression of *His love* to **God the Father** and **God the Son** from **Whom Together** **God the Spirit** has eternally proceeded.

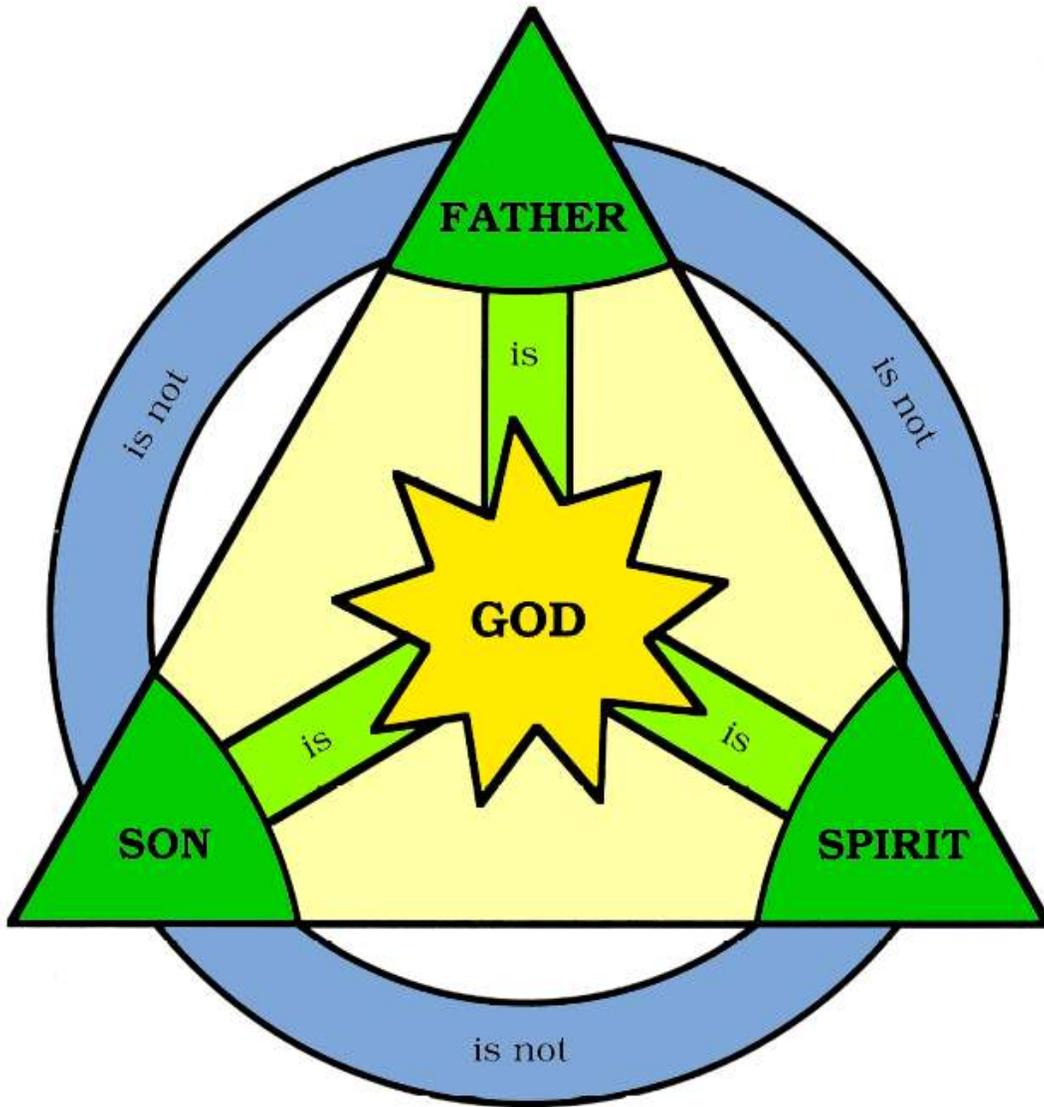
**THE TRINITY:  
ONE ETERNAL BEING – THREE ETERNAL PERSONS  
... TOGETHER BRING ABOUT THE INCARNATION OF JESUS  
(WHO ENTERS THE WORLD AS TRULY GOD AND TRULY MAN)**

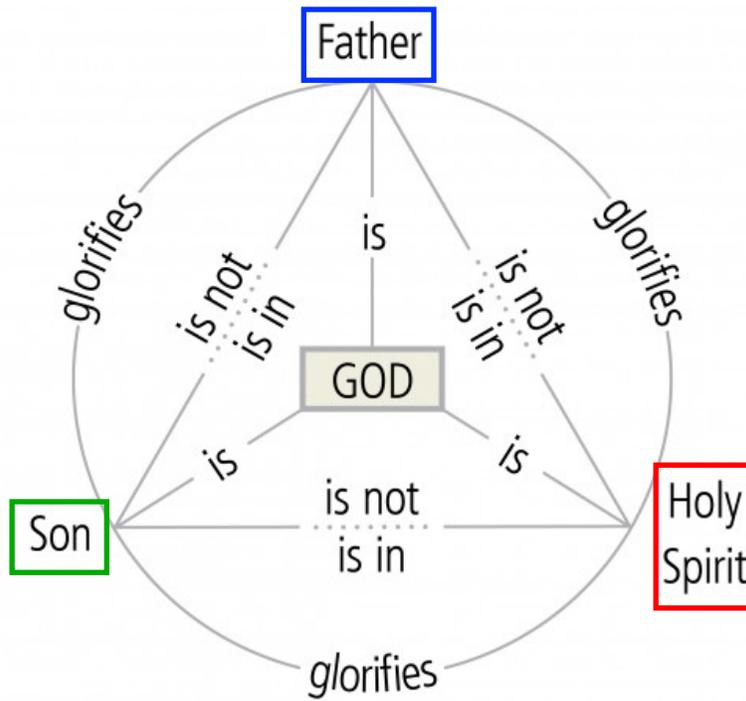


**THE TRINITY:  
ONE ETERNAL BEING  
... THREE ETERNAL PERSONS**









The three internal lines identify the nature, substance, or essence of each Person:

1. **The Father** is **God**. 2. **The Son** is **God**. 3. **The Holy Spirit** is **God**.

The lines of the internal **triangle** represent two sets of propositions. First, they remind us that while each of the three Persons in the Godhead is **God** (fully Divine), the three Persons are each nevertheless distinct from the other Two. In other words:

1. **The Father** is not **the Son**. 2. **The Father** is not **the Holy Spirit**.
3. **The Son** is not **the Father**. 4. **The Son** is not **the Holy Spirit**.
5. **The Holy Spirit** is not **the Father**. 6. **The Holy Spirit** is not **the Son**.

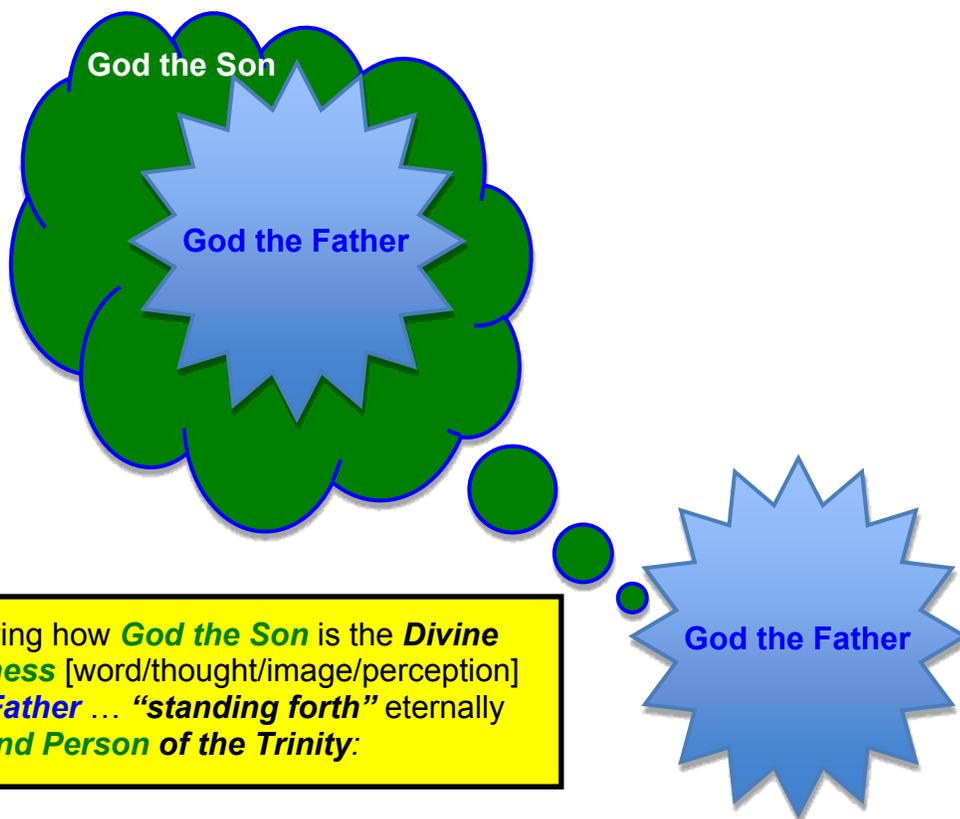
Thus, **the Father** is never “sent” in Scripture. Nor is **the Father** incarnated, or poured out at Pentecost. **The Spirit**, on the other hand, does not die on the cross for our sins. Furthermore, it is **the Father** that **begets His** only **begotten Son**, not vice-versa. (The Eternal Infinite **Son** is **begotten** – **not birthed**. In **the first century**, however, the **eternally begotten Son of God** enters into space and time by being **birthed** as **the incarnate Fully God and Fully Man Jesus** who will remain as **Fully God and Fully Man** forevermore.) **The Spirit**, on the other hand, **proceeds eternally** (as distinct from being **begotten**) and **He proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son** (John 15:26; John 14:11).

**The Holy Spirit** is referred to in Scripture as both **the Spirit of the Father** (Matthew 10:20; Romans 8:10-11; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 3:14-16) and also as **the Spirit of the Son** (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11).

Statements saying that **the Spirit** is “of” the other two Persons of the Trinity indicate that **His Person** is bound up with and originates **from God the Father and God the Son together** (as contrasted to **the Son** who is always referred to as being **the Son** only “of” **the Father** but never **the Son** “of” **the Spirit**).

The final aspect indicated by the lines of the internal **triangle** is that of **mutual indwelling**. The three Persons indwell **each other** in the one Being of God. Therefore:

1. **The Father** is **in the Son**. 2. **The Son** is **in the Father**.
3. **The Father** is **in the Holy Spirit**. 4. **The Holy Spirit** is **in the Father**.
5. **The Son** is **in the Holy Spirit**. 6. **The Holy Spirit** is **in the Son**.



Verses showing how *God the Son* is the *Divine Self-Awareness* [word/thought/image/perception] of *God the Father* ... “*standing forth*” eternally as *the Second Person of the Trinity*:

**John 1:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was *the Word*, and *the Word* was with *God*, and *the Word* was *God*. <sup>2</sup> *He* was in the beginning with *God*.

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

<sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of *Christ*, who is *the image* of *God*.

**Colossians 1:15**

<sup>15</sup> *He* is *the image of the invisible God*, the firstborn of all creation.

**Hebrews 1:3**

<sup>3</sup> *He* 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.

**1 Corinthians 1:24**

<sup>24</sup> ... but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ* the power of *God* and *the wisdom* of God.

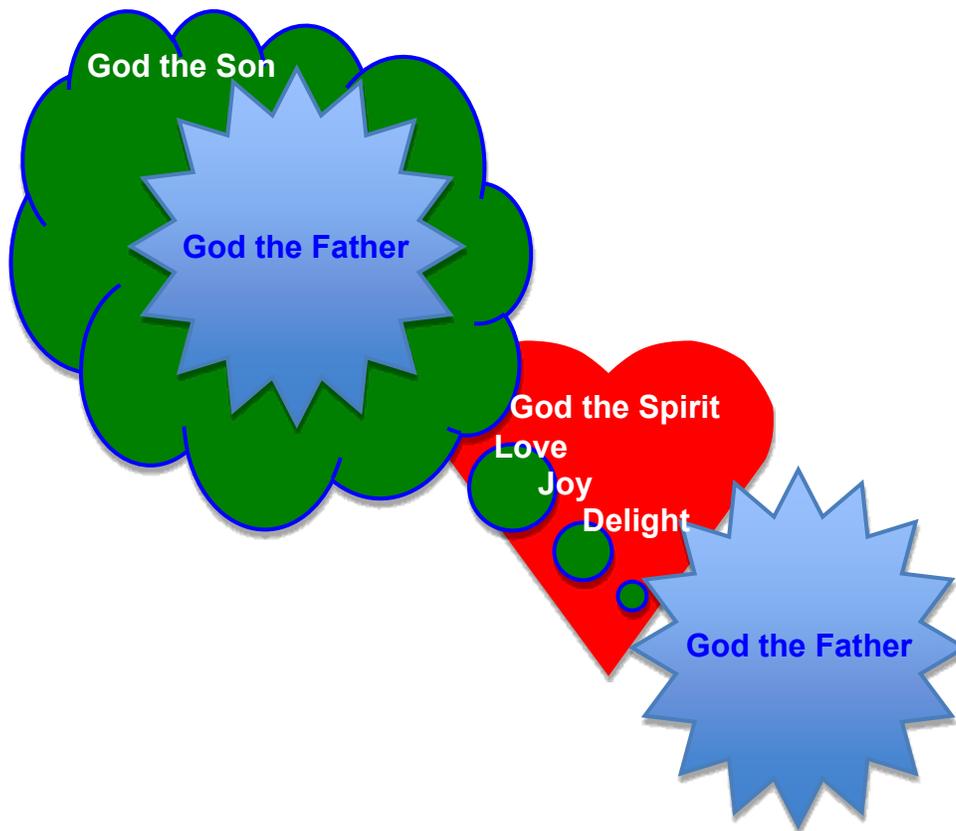
In **Luke 11:49** Jesus makes the statement:

<sup>49</sup> “Therefore also the **Wisdom** of **God** said, **‘I will send them prophets and apostles,**  
some of whom they will kill and persecute’ ....”

**(compare this now with Matthew 23:34)**

In **Matthew 23:34** Jesus makes the statement:

<sup>34</sup> “Therefore **I send you prophets and wise men and scribes,** some of whom you will  
kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to  
town ....”



Verses showing how **God the Spirit** is the **Divine Love/Joy/Delight** of **God the Father toward God the Son** – and the **Divine Love/Joy/Delight** of **God the Son** toward **God the Father** – “standing forth” eternally as **the Third Person of the Trinity**:

### 1 John 4:8, 12-13

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, **God abides in us and His love is perfected in us**. <sup>13</sup> **By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us**, because **He has given us of His Spirit**.

### 1 John 3:18 [our showing love]

<sup>18</sup> Little children, **let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth**.

(compare this with 1 John 3:24)

### 1 John 3:24

<sup>24</sup> Whoever keeps His commandments **abides in God, and God in him**. And by this we know that **He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us**.

### Philippians 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any **comfort from love**, any participation in **the Spirit**, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having **the same love**, being in full accord and of one mind.

### 2 Corinthians 6:4b, 6

<sup>4</sup> ... as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: ... <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, **the Holy Spirit, genuine love** ....

### Romans 15:30

<sup>30</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by **the love of the Spirit**, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf ....

### Colossians 1:7b-8

<sup>7</sup> Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf <sup>8</sup> and has made known to us **your love in the Spirit**.

### Romans 5:5

<sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit** who has been given to us.

### Galatians 5:13-16

<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love** serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

<sup>16</sup> But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:6

<sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with **the joy of the Holy Spirit** ....

## Romans 14:17

<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and **joy in the Holy Spirit**.

## Acts 9:31

<sup>31</sup> So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in **the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it multiplied.

(compare this with Acts 13:52)

## Acts 13:52

<sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with **joy and with the Holy Spirit**.

## 1 John 1:3

<sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, **so that you too may have fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with **the Father** and with **His Son Jesus Christ**.

(compare this with 2 Corinthians 13:14)

## 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and **the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all**.

(and – now compare this with John 17:13)

## John 17:13

<sup>13</sup> “But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, **that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves**.”

## Revelation 22:1-2a

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me **the river of the water of life**, bright as crystal, **flowing from (1) the throne of God AND (2) of the Lamb** <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, **the tree of life** with its twelve kinds of **(3) fruit**, yielding its fruit each month.

(compare this with Psalm 36:8)

[this “river” is the first reference to **the Spirit**]

[this “fruit” is the other reference to **the Spirit**]

## Psalm 36:8

<sup>8</sup> They feast on the abundance of Your house, and You give them drink from **the river of Your delights**.

## Galatians 5:22

<sup>22</sup> But **the fruit** of the **Spirit** is **love, joy** ....

## John 4:14

<sup>14</sup> “... but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him **a spring of water** welling up to eternal life.”

(compare this with John 7:38-39)

## John 7:38-39

<sup>38</sup> “Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow **rivers of living water**.’” <sup>39</sup> Now this He said about **the Spirit**, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet **the Spirit** had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

T  
R  
I  
N  
I  
T  
Y

**The Dove symbolism in the Bible which is repeatedly tied to the experience of *love* and *delight*:**

**Song of Songs 1:15**

<sup>15</sup> Behold, you are beautiful, my *love*;  
behold, you are beautiful;  
your eyes are *doves*.

**Song of Songs 5:2**

<sup>2</sup> I slept, but my heart was awake.  
A sound! My *beloved* is knocking.  
“Open to me, my sister, my *love*,  
my *dove*, my perfect one,  
for my head is wet with dew,  
my locks with the drops of the night.”

**Song of Songs 5:12**

<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like *doves*  
beside streams of water,  
bathed in milk,  
sitting beside a full pool.

**Song of Songs 2:14**

<sup>14</sup> O my *dove*, in the clefts of the rock,  
in the crannies of the cliff,  
let me see your face,  
let me hear your voice,  
for your voice is sweet,  
and your face is *lovely*.



**(compare this with Matthew 3:16-17 and Luke 3:22 and Psalm 36:7-8)**

**Matthew 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw *the Spirit of God descending like a dove* and coming to rest on Him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is My *beloved* Son, with whom I am *well pleased*.”

**Luke 3:22**

<sup>22</sup> and *the Holy Spirit* descended on Him in bodily form, like a *dove*; and a voice came from heaven, “You are My *beloved* Son; with you I am *well pleased*.”

**Psalm 36:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> How precious is *Your steadfast love, O God!*  
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of *Your wings*.  
<sup>8</sup> They feast on the abundance of Your house,  
and *You give them drink from the river of Your delights*.

**THE TRINITY:**  
**ONE ETERNAL BEING – THREE ETERNAL PERSONS**  
**... TOGETHER BRING ABOUT THE INCARNATION OF JESUS**  
**(WHO ENTERS THE WORLD AS *TRULY GOD* AND *TRULY MAN***  
**SO THAT WE – *HE IN US* – *AND WE IN HIM*)**



**John 14:16**  
 16 "I will ask *the Father*, and *He* will give you another *Helper*, to be with you forever, 17 even *the Spirit of truth* ...."

**John 14:20**  
 20 "In that day you will know that *I am in My Father*, and *you in Me*, and *I in you*."



**UNION**  
*with*  
**CHRIST**