

Is the Gospel Graspable?

The Integrity of the Trinity

April 24, 2011



Here's a picture of the Supreme Court. Decent people demand justice. The greater the goodness, the deeper the desire. The crueler the crime, the stiffer the sentence. So, the cruelest crime *feasible* (mankind's rebellion against its loving Creator), rightly required the stiffest penalty *possible*. Perfect justice would demand perfect recompense.

This presents a paradox: Mankind, now *convicted*, is required to offer it; but mankind, now *corrupted*, is no longer capable.



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – *Romans 5:8 NIV*

Jesus is the Perfect Sacrifice in *two* ways: as *fully human* He presents what only mankind can pay; as *fully divine* He becomes what only God can provide

Paradox solved! God's rebellious kids can receive redemption! The cross opens the door to relationship with our Creator.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ ... – *Romans 5:1 NIV*

But this all creates a few paradoxes of its own: how was Jesus fully man *and* fully God? (Not 50/50 but 100/100!) And how could God both die on a cross *and* observe from Heaven? The quick answer is: "The Trinity! He's a *triune* God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's three in one." And, in fact, Without the Trinity you can't have Christianity. God-the-Father raises God-the-Son to verify the acceptability of the offering *and* the authority to offer it on *our* behalf.

But how do you begin to comprehend a God who is three and one?! And how do you really connect with and relate to a God who remains invisible, inaudible, and inconceivable?! And how do you put confidence in the intimate, personal presence of a God who has to deal with 7,000,000,000 other earthlings?!

Let's begin with a metaphor the Apostle John tells us that Jesus used to describe God.

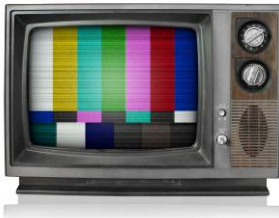
This is the message we have heard from [Jesus] and declare to you: **God is light;** in him there is no darkness at all. – *1 John 1:5 NIV*

Something truly amazing has taken place in our modern world. The more we understand the properties of light, the more it helps us comprehend, as an analogy, the complexities of God's nature.

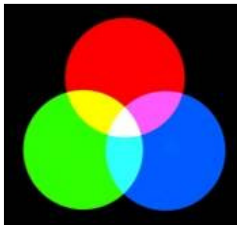
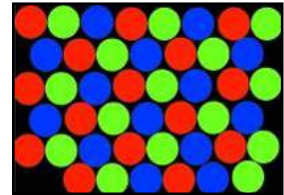


... entities thought of as particles, like electrons, can also act as waves. ... The orthodox interpretation of this strange situation is that light is, simultaneously, **wave** and **particle**. - *Newsweek* July 20, 1998, page 51

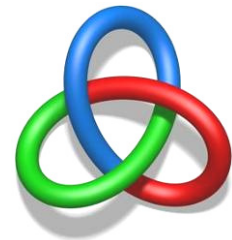
So, light is matter *and* energy just as Jesus was man *and* God.



Now, if you look really *close* at an old TV screen, you'll see the *three* primary colors of light, red, green, and blue changing in intensities to create all the other colors. (Sony even named theirs the *Trinitron*.)



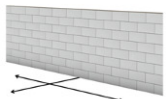
And when these three distinct primaries of light¹ combine, at 100% intensity, they create pure white light. Three primaries, one radiance! So, in terms of *who* God is, He's three distinct persons; in terms of *what* He is, He's one unified God. This is how I visualize His transcendent triune nature.



He's three primary Whos and one pure What. Three unique expressions, without beginning or end, each having no more or less authority or identity as God, the Creator and Sustainer, than the other two. Trouble is, it's just not possible to visualize anything beyond the limits of our own three dimensional experience of space.



If we lived on a one-dimensional line, we wouldn't be able to visualize left or right (just forward and back). A block on our line is an inscrutable impasse. And if a two-dimensional person walked *around* the block, we would be absolutely mystified as to how they did it.



In Euclidean geometry, every time you mathematically add a 90° angle you arrive at the next higher dimension. In a two-dimensional world, we couldn't visualize up and down. A wall creates an impasse. If a three-dimensional person goes *over* the wall, we'd be equally mystified.

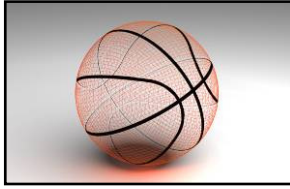


Now being three-dimensional people, we can only visualize height, width, and length. A locked room creates the impasse. After the resurrection ...

... the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" - *John 20:19 NIV*

¹ Light primaries are different from the light-absorbing pigment primaries: cyan, magenta, and yellow

They were mystified ... and terrified! (*Luke 24:37*) But, according to Euclidean geometry, all Jesus did was turn 90° to the right!



When a mathematician adds a *fourth* dimension, he can prove, by calculation, that a basketball can be turned inside out without breaking its surface. But, he still can't picture it in his head!

- God's eternal realm is beyond our dimensions.

Our inability to comprehend this complexity actually *strengthens* the claims of Christianity. *No other* book, previous to our modern era, describes phenomena in dimensions independent of our own!

... [God] has blessed us in the **heavenly realms** ... For he chose us in [Jesus] **before the creation of the world** ... - *Ephesians 1:3b-4a NIV*

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time** ... - 2 *Timothy 1:9b NIV*



According to Einstein's theory of Relativity, as speed increases, time compresses; until, at the speed of *light*, time becomes one immortal moment.

[God] alone is immortal and lives in unapproachable light ... - 1 *Timothy 6:15b-16a NIV*

Earth clocks and calendars have no bearing on God.

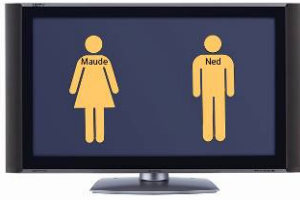
With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.
- 2 *Peter 3:8b NIV*



Picture a basketball with only an equator line (that's the timeline of our universe). And since God operates apart from that, we'll give Him a phone booth up top. Without the restriction of "before and after", He can be intimately connected with every created child (from first to last) without ever putting anyone on hold. That's why His lines don't get jammed when everyone prays at once! From the moment you're conceived to the moment you're retrieved, God has a personal, private, line *eternally* connected to what's perceived, on *our* timeline, as each split-second.

This is why the Bible, without contradiction, teaches both ... "The Lord is near to all who call on him ..." (*Psalms 145:18a*) and "The Almighty is beyond our reach ..." (*Job 37:23*)

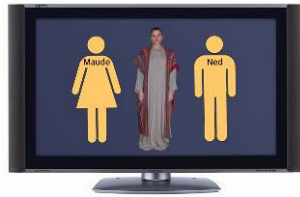
I know this is for our own free will; but it's just so impossible to picture God being "beyond reach" and intimately "near".



So, in order to better understand what we *can't* comprehend, let's picture ourselves as the creator of a two-dimensional computer world, called ... Flatland. The flatlanders know width and length, but have no comprehension of depth. So, when they look at themselves they can only perceive a flat profile.



As creator, we actually know each flatlander *better* than they know themselves. And regardless of what they choose to believe, their existence depends on us ... we control the power cord. They could deduce that we exist. Since no capacity exists *within* flatland to have created it, it stands to reason that a power must exist *outside* of it.



We could draw very near; but because they can't visualize our "beyond-reach" third dimension, they'd have to trust. We could go to them! Tell them who we are, why we created them, and how much we love them. All we'd have to do is adjust a webcam and upload our image. I wasn't sure what to wear ... so I copied Jesus.

But, it doesn't matter; they'd only see me as a line. So, I'd explain how this is just a small aspect of who and what I really am. And I'd say mystifying things like: "I am before all things." (*Col. 1:17*) "What is seen was not made out of what is visible." (*Heb. 11:3*) "I chose you before the creation of your world." (*Eph. 1:4*) "Before Abraham was, I am." (*John 8:58*) Did I mention one of 'em was named Abraham?

I'd explain that I'm just an image of their father-creator ... who lives *beyond* Flatland in an inconceivable, three-dimensional kingdom, where depth goes on *forever!* "Is it out to the left or out to the right?" "It's just ... out." He's watching us *right now* ... and he is me, and I am him. We're more than identical; we're a "twinity" - a "bi-une" god. And we have a plan to free you from Flatland to live with me in 3D! And when I leave, I'm not really going away. I came to tell you how close the Father really is and how near we've always been. But here in Flatland, you'll have to live by faith.

A fully comprehensible God, trapped in His own creation and restricted to three dimensions of space, and one dimension of time, couldn't really be God (he'd pretty much just be a man-made thing).

The night before His crucifixion, four days before His resurrection, Jesus prayed ...



Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. - *John 17:24 NIV*

The fact that He's *beyond* our dimensions is what *assures* you that He's able to watch, listen, delight, and intimately involve Himself in each detail of your life.

So where *exactly* does God live? Just turn to the right and follow the light.