

BIBLE 1204

GODHEAD

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GODHEAD

In this **LIGHTUNIT** you will study the **Godhead**, the essential and divine nature of God. As Christians, we believe in three Persons in one God; we marvel at the **Trinity**; we praise God, Who reveals Himself to be Father, Son, and Spirit.

By studying how the Old Testament prepared man for complete information about the Trinity, you will

better understand the development of thought in the New Testament and in Christian history. Reflection on certain historical notes will help you see the importance of this truth to Christians.

Finally, you will be asked to consider the meaning of the three Persons in one God. This consideration will allow you to make applications in your own life.

OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this **LIGHTUNIT**.

When you have finished this **LIGHTUNIT**, you should be able:

1. To describe the Godhead.
2. To state the importance of God's own revelation about Himself.
3. To indicate the extent of the revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament.
4. To give several names of God in the Old Testament that are used to imply the Trinity.
5. To relate the meaning of the names of God to the study of the Godhead.
6. To tell how the Trinity is revealed in the New Testament.
7. To outline the development of the Christian belief in the nature of the Godhead.
8. To discuss the significance of Christian faith in the Trinity.
9. To write a personal reflection on your understanding of the Godhead.
10. To apply the teachings on the Godhead to life in society.

Survey the LIGHTUNIT. Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

I. OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF THE GODHEAD

Christians believe in the **trinitarian** nature of the Godhead. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and we must look first to the Old Testament to learn what God tells us about Himself. In this section of the **LIGHTUNIT**, we shall study the importance, nature, and

extent of God's revelation of Himself in the Old Testament as three Persons in one God. We shall also study the names of God that were used in identifying God.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

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

1. To describe the Godhead.
2. To state the importance of God's own revelation about Himself.
3. To indicate the extent of the revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament.
4. To give several names of God in the Old Testament that are used to imply the Trinity.
5. To relate the meaning of the names of God to the study of the Godhead.

VOCABULARY

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

	Adonai	genitive	trinitarian
	El, Elohim	Godhead	trinity
	etymology	kyrios	Yahweh
	foreshadow	Messianic	

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIGHTUNIT appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the Glossary.



Read Psalm 2 and Psalm 22.

REVELATION OF THE LIVING GOD

God revealed Himself to man in the Old Testament as a living God, a Being who wished to have an ongoing relationship with His people. The Godhead in Christian belief is Father, Son, and Spirit—the Trinity. The concept of God as three Persons in one nature is basic to our faith, and a point of unity among Christians.

Importance of revelation. The idea of the Godhead as three Persons in one God never could have occurred to man on his own. This doctrine had to be revealed by God Himself. In the Old Testament the foundation for this belief was established. By firmly establishing the Jewish belief in one God, God prepared His people to receive the message of Christ regarding the nature and identity of God Himself.

The God of the Old Testament was in constant touch with His people, guiding them in their daily lives to love and to serve Him and each other. The Hebrews were encouraged to rely on God in all the circumstances of their lives and to listen to what He told them. Since their belief in one God, a living God, set them apart from the pagans, the Israelites had to depend on God's revelation. They had no other way to learn about Him.

Nature and extent of revelation in the Old Testament. Complete revelation of the Trinity to the Jewish nation would have been confusing. The identification of the one God was being progressively revealed. The Old Testament brings out the difference between the God of Israel and other supposed gods as well as the difference between God and man. The Persons of God and the Trinity, however, were only **foreshadowed** in the Hebrew text.

The understanding of God as a personal God, a living God, who has a relationship with man, was an important reality of the Old Testament. This information prepares us to understand the life of God and the relationships within the Godhead. Although the Old Testament does not explain the Trinity, it does give us the words which are used to distinguish and foreshadow the three Persons in the one God. By studying the way God speaks of Himself in the Old Testament, we can eventually lay the foundation for a complete understanding of His person.



**“I will be your God;
you will be my people”**



Complete these statements.

- 1.1 The word which refers to the nature of God as divine is _____.
- 1.2 The Old Testament brings out the difference between God and a. _____ and between God and b. _____.
- 1.3 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 concept of God as three Persons in one God is _____ to Christianity.
- 1.8 The Trinity is a point of _____ among Christians.
- 1.9 The Jewish nation believed in God as a _____ God.
- 1.10 The Old Testament gives us the _____ for the Trinity.



Write a paragraph in the space in response to this question.

△1.11

Why is revelation important in the study of the Godhead?



Do this activity when possible during the course of studying this LIGHTUNIT.

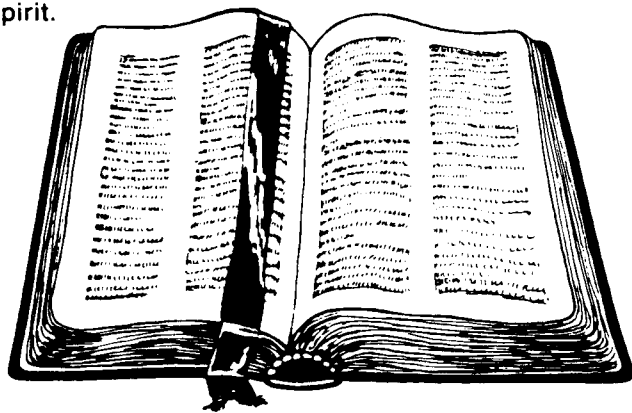
1.12

Attend a regular service of your congregation. Note all references to the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit, in the sermon, in prayer, in song, and in any other way. Summarize your findings on a separate sheet. Include the frequency, nature of reference, and importance. Report to your teacher when you have completed this activity.



NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the unfolding of the revelation of the Godhead as a Trinity of Persons, the names of God in the Old Testament identify Him as a personal God. You will examine the names of **El**, **Elohim**; **Yahweh**; and **Adonai** to see what their meaning contributes to our present belief in the Trinity as Father, Son, and Spirit.



Use of El, Elohim. 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 the progress of doctrine that we have consummated in the New Testament, we can recognize this name as an early reference of God in three Persons. *Elohim* refers to God and indicates His majesty and power not only to man, but also to other supposed gods as well.

Israel used the names *El*, *Elohim*, in combination with **genitives** to designate their God. Examples can be found in Genesis: *El Bethel* (Genesis 35:7); *El of thy father* (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. The meaning is generally understood as power, perhaps because of the reference to the divine beings.

Use of Yahweh. The *El* of Israel was further distinguished from other supposed deities by the use of a personal name, which, to the Hebrews, revealed

both identity and character. The Hebrew word *Yahweh* is translated, *The LORD*. Etymology is disputed. Most scholars think that the name may be derived from the Hebrew verb *hawah*, meaning *to be*. Some renderings of this name are "He who is," "I am who I am," and "He brings into being whatever comes into being." The name characterizes God as Creator and was used uniquely for the God of Israel, the God of Moses, who personally revealed Himself through the covenant and as One who can keep His covenants. This title for God occurs over six thousand times in the Scriptures.

Evidence of the concept of *Yahweh* as *Father* is strong in the Old Testament. *Father* does not refer to a separate person of the Trinity here, but rather to God 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 response and obedience from them. God takes care of His people, offering them forgiveness and compassion even when they are rebellious. Some personal names of the Hebrews illustrate that God was considered a Father: *Joab*, for example, means *Yahweh 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 words showed the characteristics of God as Father.

Use of Adonai. The title *lord* was used to indicate the kingly power of *Yahweh*. *Adonai* is the form of the Hebrew *adon* which was used to address *Yahweh* and to distinguish His kingship from that of an earthly lord as expressed in the Hebrew form *adoni*.

Because the Israelites feared to pronounce the name of *Yahweh*, *Adonai* was read in its place. The English word *Jehovah* comes from the combining of the consonants *YHWH* and the vowels of *Adonai* *a-o-a*. In the Septuagint (c. 270 B.C.), the Greek term *kyrios* appears as a translation of the name *Yahweh*. The use of *kyrios* in reference to Jesus in the early Christian community thus identifies Him as *Yahweh* of the Old Testament (Acts 11:20, 21).

The title *Adonai* established God as the Lord of His

people. As Lord, He had a right to expect obedience from His servants. As servants, His people had a right to expect provision from their Lord. This same concept is seen in the New Testament with the title *Kyrios*; our Lord.

Significance of Old Testament names. In the Old Testament the Godhead was revealed as a single divine Being, unique to Israel. Yahweh stood out as the one true *Elohim*, *Adonai*, and the divine Lord. Wisdom belonged to Yahweh alone. The word of Yahweh was powerful and creative, giving life to Israel. The use of these terms were significant in preparing the people of God for the full revelation of

the Trinity, since these names were also used for the Messiah. In the New Testament Jesus would be called the *Son of God*, and the *Word of God*.

Though son of God is used in the Old Testament, it is not a **Messianic** title. The title was first used of heavenly Beings. The title also referred to the special relationship between Israel's king (II Samuel 7:14-16) and God, as well as to the acceptance by Yahweh of the individual Israelite.

Spirit, the title now used for God the Holy Spirit, has wide use in the Old Testament as *breath*, *wind*, *principle of life*, the *breath of God*, and the *Creator* of all life. These meanings of spirit influence, to an extent, our understanding of the Holy Spirit.



Answer the following questions with complete sentences in the space provided.

1.13 What are the names of God in the Old Testament selected for study in this LIGHTUNIT?

1.14 What is the importance of the names of God in relation to the study of the Trinity?

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

1.16 How did Israel use the term *EI*? _____

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 of the fact that the Israelites called Yahweh *Father*? _____
