

# Objections to the three-in-one god doctrine simplified

By The Rock Fortress Ministries

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## Introduction

Often, believers who hold opposing views on doctrine speak over each other. That is because in such discussions, the emphasis is usually placed in making one's point and getting one's understanding appreciated by the other side. Less emphasis is placed on understanding the opposing side's views and asking questions for clarification. In this article, let us take a different approach. Instead of presenting objections, how about we simply ask questions. Not many questions, but a few questions which have been distilled to the very bottom line of the objections.

First, we will set the context for the questions by highlighting some interpretation approaches which we can all agree with. This is necessary to bring us to a common understanding as Bible believers regardless of which side we fall between the doctrines of the identity of God so that we can avoid speaking over each other. After that, we will draw parallels to how the three-in-one god idea is constructed.

## Context

Let us go to the book of Romans where we read this.

Romans 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

If someone said that this verse is talking about the Sabbath, would it be a good response to give the following objection?

“The verse is saying ‘day’, but not Sabbath day. In other words, the verse is not specific to the Sabbath neither in context nor in its text. Or in other words, we should not insert meaning into a verse where meaning is not clearly intended by the author (in this case Paul), except if another part of scripture demands that we do (for example if this verse was found elsewhere in the Bible in the context of the Sabbath).”

Do you think that is a good response, among other responses of course? Surely, we can all agree as Sabbath keepers that the response is spot on. In fact, that response highlights a general rule that we must all observe in interpreting scripture if we are to avoid wild speculations.

Here is a sample of responses given by other writers regarding whether Romans 14:5 is dealing with the Sabbath question or not. Notice that they all refer to the fact that the word ‘Sabbath’ is not found in the context nor in the text.

“Actually, these verses do not concern any days that must be kept holy. This is proved by the **context** of the entire chapter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Church of the Great God - <https://www.sabbath.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Basics.FAQ/ID/193/Does-Paul-Say-That-We-Decide-Which-Day-Keep-Holy-Romans-145-6.htm>

“There is **no mention** of the Sabbath day in this scripture, so to use it to prove that we do not need to keep the Sabbath day is not sound. Consider the context. There is **no mention** of the Sabbath in the whole of chapter 14. In fact, the Sabbath is **not mentioned even once in the whole book of Romans**, so how anyone can think that Romans 14:5 refers to the Sabbath is *totally unsound interpretation*.”<sup>2</sup>

“Do you read the word “Sabbath” in these verses? Obviously, no. In fact, if you read the whole letter of Paul to the Romans, **you WON’T find any mention of the Sabbath here!** So, Paul was only saying “days” and not Sabbath.”<sup>3</sup>

“Notice also that the word “Sabbath” is not even mentioned—it is **not the subject**. Notice also that “day of worship” is not mentioned—*that isn’t the subject either*.”<sup>4</sup>

“This is not stated or suggested by the text, and the **simple mention of the word “days” does not justify that conclusion**. He is not dealing here with the Old Testament *torah*, or law.”<sup>5</sup>

Even people who do not observe the Sabbath argue or agree that this verse (Romans 14:5) is not talking about the Sabbath. So clearly, when some people say this verse is talking about the Sabbath, that is an example of speculative reading of the Bible. The basic rule they violate is that it is wrong to understand something in a verse if neither the verse nor the context says so. We can all agree that we all need to guard against reading our thoughts into any verse. We can also agree that any teaching based on reading thoughts into verses where such thoughts are not stated either in context or in the verse is wrong. Any thought process that adds meaning to a verse which is not clearly intended by the author of the verse is akin to writing another text for the Bible.

Let us come to the second point which we can all easily agree on, i.e., the necessity and practice of logical reasoning. Before we discuss a point about logical reasoning, let us give some context. Normally, students of the Bible are forced into logical reasoning because some information in the Bible is not very clear on a particular point or even seemingly contradictory. Such a situation requires them to harmonise ideas through a logical reasoning process. In other words, what is simply stated, such as that Christ was born in Bethlehem does not need logical reasoning to accept it. You just accept what you read.

Consider this example of logical reasoning that tries to harmonise a seeming anomaly in biblical text.

Some years ago, the author came across someone who was presenting that the Sabbath has never ended since the first creation Sabbath. We are literally in the Sabbath right now, he said. May be the reader is surprised by this but consider the logic and try to see where it is wrong.

If we go back to Genesis, we read that each day was stated as “and the evening and the morning was the \*\* day” (e.g., Genesis 1:5). Well, the Sabbath was never stated in terms of evening and morning. It was never said in Genesis that “evening and morning was the Sabbath day”. So, there you have it. Based on that ‘anomaly’ the logic goes like this. Since the Sabbath was not demarcated by evening

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<sup>2</sup> Logos Apostolic Church of God and Bible College [https://www.logosapostolic.org/bible\\_study/RP208-4Romans14-5.htm](https://www.logosapostolic.org/bible_study/RP208-4Romans14-5.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Unknown (n.d.) - <https://becomingchristians.com/sabbath-day/does-romans-145-6-prove-that-all-days-of-worship-are-the-same/>

<sup>4</sup> Cecil Maranville (n.d.). <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/bible/10-commandments/sabbath/romans-14-sabbath/>

<sup>5</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (2022) - <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/romans-14/>

and morning as other days, it is not bound by that time period that demarcates other days. In other words, the Sabbath has no evening and morning, but is a continuous day since then.

Some may be tempted to throw some obvious verses to counter this argument, but believe it or not, verses will often not work in such a situation. The man will be able to “harmonise” any countering verse with his conclusion that the Sabbath is a continuous day. We need to realise that when a person reaches a conclusion by logic, which logic is not stated in the Bible, that person is now operating in a framework or a paradigm which modifies how he looks at other verses in the Bible. Thus, if such an one comes across verses that disagree with him, he falls back to logic (not the Bible alone) to “harmonise” with his understanding. In any case, if one can reach a conclusion which has no “Thus saith the Lord”, what stops the logic from being justified without a “Thus saith the Lord”?

How about we don’t throw some verses to counter this person’s error. Instead, we counter logic with logic. We have many such examples of logic versus logic from the numerous debates between Christ and the Pharisees. In his arguments, Christ did not always quote verses to counter error. Sometimes he pointed out the logical problems in other people’s understanding. We will take a cue from Christ, and this is the question we will ask.

Has it ever been known, explained or revealed that a literal single day can last for time without end?

It is a fair question, isn’t it? Because, for one to suggest an idea as a solution to a problem (whether biblical problem or any problem in life), one has to KNOW about that idea and that the idea is feasible. Further, for one to know an idea and the feasibility of it, one may have experienced it, or heard of it somewhere. If the idea is not already known, then one has to acknowledge that the idea is new knowledge, a sudden realisation, not heard of anywhere before, and in this case, not stated in the Bible either. It is probably a direct revelation from God, just as Moses or other prophets received direct communication from God.

Now, let us be clear here. There is no problem with receiving direct revelation from God, one which is not stated in the Bible. However, if the revelation is from God directly, then one should equally be honest enough not to justify the new ideas as what the Bible says. Many have claimed direct revelation from God and found many followers for themselves.

However, having acknowledged that a certain idea is not found in the Bible or natural reality, and it being not direct revelation from God, we can all agree that the idea is an experiment which we may try if we are willing to try new ideas about our God, which ideas He has not told us before.

One thing we cannot say is that the new idea is taught by the Bible. At no time does the Bible teach that the literal Sabbath day is a literal endless time not bound by a morning and evening. The idea that a literal Sabbath day is not bound by evening and morning, is a concept about a day that is different from the concepts about days observed in reality and in the Bible. When anyone uses a concept to explain scripture, we have to ask, where did the concept come from? Is the concept found in the Bible or elsewhere? To put it in other words, what we may reason out is ours, what is stated in the Bible is belongs to Our Father in heaven.

Just a quick summary of our points, which we may be in agreement at this point.

1. We should not add meaning to a verse when neither the context nor the verse gives that meaning. This is what we agreed in Roman 14:5 which says “day” not “Sabbath day”. We have no right to add the idea of a Sabbath to the verse. If we did, our conclusions would be error. Besides that, we would direct anyone who wants to know about the Sabbath to those

- verses which talk about the Sabbath. And for a particular aspect of the Sabbath, we would direct anyone to those verses where that aspect of the Sabbath is the subject of the context.
2. From the case of the Sabbath day that is not bound by evening and morning, we agreed that it is improper to propose ideas that try to harmonise biblical information by suggesting ideas/concepts that are not found anywhere in the Bible itself or in reality. Concepts that are brought in to explain the Bible by logical reasoning have a source, whether it be an experiment of the human mind, or direct revelation from God. In many cases, the sources may be the devil.

## Application to the three-in-one god doctrine

### The Godhead concept

We want to use the conclusion we made pertaining to Romans 14:5 to check on the word godhead as used in the three-in-one god belief system. Remember that we concluded that:

1. A word must not be inserted where it has not been intended by the words and context of a verse.
2. One should direct attention to where a word is used in the Bible to find the intended meaning of it.

Consider the following quotes about the godhead.

“The Church’s first article of faith states, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.” These three beings make up the Godhead...”<sup>6</sup>

You will find this not only among the Mormons, but also among the Seventh Day Adventists and others.

“The Plurality Within the Godhead. Although the Old Testament does not explicitly teach that God is triune, it alludes to a plurality within the Godhead.”<sup>7</sup>

“The Godhead or Trinity – Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 2 - There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.”

This idea that the godhead “is comprised of” or “composed of” or “made up of” or a “union of” three beings or persons/beings is standard teaching in Christianity. Another explicit example is found in the SDARM beliefs statement<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, we found various websites that lists many verses which, they claim, are about the godhead. One website claims 16 verses<sup>9</sup> and another claims a 100 verses about the godhead<sup>10</sup>. Among them many so-called godhead verses are the following three key verses.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.

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<sup>6</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of the Later-day Saints -

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/godhead?lang=eng>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-02.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <https://sdarm.org/about-us/beliefs/the-godhead>

<sup>9</sup> <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Godhead>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.openbible.info/topics/god\\_head](https://www.openbible.info/topics/god_head)

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Let us now apply the two questions as we saw in our refutation of the Sabbath claims in Romans 14:5. Remember, we said a verse can be said to be speaking of something if it is stated in the verse or in the context. So, firstly, does anyone of these verses mention the word godhead in them? The answer is no.

Secondly, does any one of the contexts of these verses speak about the godhead? The answer again is no. As we saw in the case of the word Sabbath, which is missing from the entire book of Romans, so it is here. The entire books of Matthew, 2 Corinthians and 1 John never mention the word godhead. In fact, there is no scripture which tries to explain how God is composed, comprised, made up, or united. Thus, we conclude that in these verses there was no intention by either Matthew, Paul or John to tell us about the godhead. Just as much as there was no intention by Paul in Romans to tell us about Sabbath observance.

Claiming that Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14 and 1 John 5:7 are referring to the godhead uses the same thinking and approach as claiming that Romans 14:5 is referring to the Sabbath. We saw that the mere mention of the word day did not mean the Sabbath, even though the Sabbath is itself a day. Similarly, the mere mention of the Father, the Son and the Spirit does not mean that they compose the godhead, even though the three are associated with the godhead. To learn how the godhead is to be understood (whether composed of persons or not), we have to go to the verses and the context which talk about the godhead.

Our next question is of course as we did with respect to Romans 14:5. We ask, where in the Bible is the biblical meaning of the word godhead given? Just as much as we said that a reader of Romans 14:5, if he wants to know about what the Bible says about the Sabbath, he must go where the Sabbath is mentioned either in the verse's text or in the context, so do we say the same to those who presumably find the meaning of godhead in Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14 and 1 John 5:7.

What is interesting is that it is well known that the word godhead has a very specific meaning in the Bible and that the meaning has nothing to do with what many churches teach. There is no composing of, comprising of, or making up of or uniting of the godhead in any verse or context in the Bible. We will let the SDA Bible Commentary lead us to the correct meaning of the word godhead according to the verses and contexts in which the word is found in the Bible.

Acts 17:29

"Godhead. Gr. theion, "*divinity*," "*deity*." Theion is used by Josephus (Antiquities viii. 4. 2 [107]) and Philo (The Unchangeableness of God xxiii [105]) for the one true God, and is here employed by Paul as a term acceptable to his Greek audience."<sup>11</sup>

Romans 1:20

"Godhead. Gr. theiotes, "*divine nature*," "*divinity*," "*Godhood*." This is the only occurrence of theiotes in the NT. The apostle here speaks of the divine essence and the manifestation of

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<sup>11</sup> SDABC 6 page 270 - <https://archive.org/details/SdaBibleCommentary1980/SdaBc-6%20%2844%29%20Acts/page/n269/mode/2up>

the divine attributes, not of the Trinity as such. Compare the word *theotes* in Col. 2:9, which properly means “Godhead.””<sup>12</sup>

2 Peter 1:3

“His *divine* power. That is, *Christ’s divine power*, since He is the last person referred to in v. 2 and since He seems to be called “God” in v. 1. The word for “divine” (*theios*) is used in the NT only here, in v. 4, and in Acts 17:29, where it is rendered “Godhead.””<sup>13</sup>

2 Peter 1:4

“*Divine nature*. For the word “divine” (*theios*) see on v. 3.”<sup>14</sup>

Colossians 2:9

“In him dwelleth. See on chapter 1:19. Within Christ dwells the sum total of **the nature and attributes of God**. All the offices and powers of Deity reside continually in Him. All the fullness of God is revealed in Christ.

Fulness. Gr. *pleroma* (see on Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:19). The encompassing stretch of this term is without limit in time and space and power. **Everything that God is**, every quality of Deity—dignity, authority, excellency, power in creating and fitting the world, energy in upholding and guiding the universe, love in redeeming mankind, forethought in supplying everything needful for each of His creatures—rests in Christ.

Godhead. Gr. *theotes*, “Deity,” “the nature of God.” Compare *theiotes*, “the nature of God” (see on Rom. 1:20). The concept of persons within a person.”

These are all the occurrences of the word godhead in all the Bible, only five of them (Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20, 1 Peter 1:3, 2 Peter 1:4 and Colossians 2:9). That leaves us wondering as to how it is that some websites claim up to a 100 verses about the godhead. Notice that in all the five times that the word godhead appears in three verses in the NT, not once has it anything to do with persons that make up the godhead. In fact, the SDABC makes it clear that the Greek words ‘*theios*’, ‘*theotes*’ and ‘*theiotes*’ mean the same thing, and that is divine or divine nature. Not just that, SDABC itself goes further to say godhead does not mean the trinity. Yet the words trinity and godhead are used interchangeably in SDA and other Christian understanding.

It is fair to ask some pertinent questions to those who claim that the godhead is made up of three persons. The same questions go also to those who use the words ‘God’, “Triune God” and ‘Godhead’ interchangeably.

1. Would you agree that the very approach of reading the word godhead into verses which do not mention it is the same as reading the word Sabbath into Romans 14:5?
2. Do you notice that the very approach of reading the word Sabbath into a passage that has no Sabbath context is the same as reading the word godhead where the context does not mention the word godhead?

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<sup>13</sup> SDABC 7 page 2 - <https://archive.org/details/SdaBibleCommentary1980/SdaBc-7%20%2861%29%20%20Peter/page/n1/mode/2up>

<sup>14</sup> SDABC 7 page 3 - <https://archive.org/details/SdaBibleCommentary1980/SdaBc-7%20%2861%29%20%20Peter/page/n3/mode/2up>

3. Do you agree that your understanding of the term godhead has not been arrived at through consistent and methodical study of the relevant Bible texts?
4. If you agree that it is incorrect to use Romans 14:5 to create meaning about the Sabbath, which meaning is not intended by the author, why then do you do the same to those texts to which you assign a meaning of godhead not intended by the Bible?
5. And why is the correct biblical meaning of the word godhead, which has no composing of three persons, not adhered to in your understanding and literature?

## The triune concept

Let us draw our attention again to the case of the brother who came up with the concept that the Sabbath day is literally endless time. We observed that it is true that the Bible does not specifically state the Sabbath as “evening and morning” as it does with other days. However, the concept that the brother built on this silence of the Bible about evening and morning is not found in the Bible nor in reality of human experience and nature as we know it.

We want to emphasise these two sources of information outside of direct prophetic revelation. The same two sources are clearly described by the SDA literature as follows:

“The Existence of God - There are two major sources of evidence for the existence of God. The book of nature and the Scriptures.”<sup>15</sup>

With that let us carefully consider this statement, to understand its meaning.

“The Trinity – There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.”

In this statement, there is information we can read directly from the Bible. This information is that there is one God and that there is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, the idea that our one God is a unity of persons is not found anywhere in scripture. This is where it is critical to follow the point so that you don't miss the importance of the questions to come. The idea that our one God is a unity of persons is a concept that is used to explain the nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together.

So, we be clear here, because this is where some may not get the point. We understand that to say “unity of three persons” is to advance a concept just as much as saying a Sabbath day without morning or evening. It is a concept because if accepted, we have to live with the ‘new knowledge’ that it is possible to unite persons into one person. Just as it is also a new knowledge to us if we accept that it is feasible to have a literal day that is without evening and morning.

The point here is not that concepts should not be used to explain information in the Bible. The challenge is as we saw earlier, i.e., where to source concepts. Our two sources are the Bible and nature. In both these sources we can look for an explanation of the concept of making one God by uniting three persons, and so far, no one has found any such evidence.

So, to those who claim that the one God is comprised of three persons united together, we ask:

1. Has it ever been explained or exposed in the Bible that it is possible to unite three persons to make one person? For example, does the use of one name by the Father, the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-02.htm>

Son and the Holy Spirit in Matthew 28:19 require that the three be united into an entity that is to be addressed as the one personal God that we must worship?

2. Has it ever been revealed in natural reality that three separate individual and independent intelligences can somehow be combined to form an intelligent person, one that is identified as him, his, he and claims to be me, myself and I as the one God of the Bible does?
3. Where does the concept of uniting persons to form a person come from?
4. Do you know that, besides the three-in-one god idea, only in pagan mythology and in Hollywood fiction can be found the practice of combining persons into another person or to make an entity with its own separate identity?

Just so we be clear. We are not asking here as to whether there is a single verse that teaches the trinity concept. That is no longer a question because many trinitarians freely admit that such a verse or passage does not exist in the Bible<sup>16, 17</sup>. We question the concept or idea of uniting persons to make one person, or the concept of one person having multiple persons in him. We are asking the three-in-one god thinking to reflect on the idea that forms the framework of its understanding of the identity (and presumably, the nature) of God. That framework is only possible if there is knowledge that persons can be united to form an intelligent individual entity. As we agreed concerning the unending Sabbath day concept, that it is an idea not stated in the Bible and not found in any reality of nature, so we question the idea of somehow combining persons to form an entity called God.

## So-called three-in-one god verses

When reading the three-in-one god literature, one comes across many verses which are claimed to be trinitarian verses. Verses such as John 3:16 where the Greek word ‘monogenes’ is used to argue that Christ is a metaphorical son of God. In Deuteronomy 6:4, it is presumed that the word the Hebrew word ‘elohim’ is in the verse (though the word used is “eloheinu”) and it is argued that the word ‘elohim’ is a hint to the plurality of God. In Acts 4:5, it is argued that the Spirit was referred to as God. Then there are Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14 and 1 John 5:7 which we have discussed above. Our intention is not to enter into discussion about the interpretation of these verses at this point even though we could.

Consider this point. There are multiple possible interpretations of those so-called trinitarian verses and much has been written about them. However, the challenge is not so much what the verses may mean. The challenge is that if the verses are interpreted to support a concept whose origin is neither in the Bible nor in natural reality, then what is the value of such an interpretation?

It is the belief in the three-in-one god concept that makes the verses trinitarian, just as much as the word godhead is given a trinitarian meaning that it never has in scripture or in natural reality.

1. So, the question is, if you cast off the three-in-one god concept and interpret the verses only according to what is stated in their texts, and what is stated in their context, what would we get as the truth that the Bible actually teaches concerning the identity of God?

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<sup>16</sup> “While no single Scripture passage states the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact... only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.” — (Adventist Review, Vol. 158, No. 31, p. 4)

<sup>17</sup> “The concept of the Trinity, namely the idea that the three are one, is not explicitly stated but only assumed.” — Fernando L. Canale, The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia, Volume 12, page 138, ‘Doctrine of God’.



2. To put this point differently, if we look at those verses in which the identity of God is either in context or text, and to which natural reality it refers to, would we see any concept that forms a person by uniting persons?

## Conclusion

In this article, we have raised 11 questions (5 for the meaning of the term godhead, 4 for the source of the triune concept and 2 for the consideration of alternative but consistent interpretation of the Bible based on text, context and reality). These questions have been premised on interpretation methods that all Bible students can agree on. These are that interpretation cannot exceed what is given in text and context of a verse, and that concept used to explain biblical text must come from either the Bible or natural reality.

We end with a heartfelt plea for our brethren who believe the three-in-one god concept to reflect carefully on these questions and consider if they can respond truthful in the Spirit of God to the questions raised. Of course, first and foremost, one has to respond for him or herself. However, we remain open to discuss this subject further, whether in writing or in person.

The Rock Fortress Ministries

[therockfortress@gmail.com](mailto:therockfortress@gmail.com)

[www.therockfortress.info](http://www.therockfortress.info)

YouTube: therock fortress tv

Facebook: The Rock Fortress Ministries