

## Blind Men and the Elephant

The Blind Men and the Elephant is a famous Indian fable that tells the story of six blind sojourners that come across different parts of an elephant in their life journeys. In turn, each blind man creates his own version of reality from that limited experience and perspective.

### Blind Men and the Elephant – A Poem by John Godfrey Saxe

written in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Here is John Godfrey Saxe's (1816-1887) version of *Blind Men and the Elephant*:

It was **six men** of Indostan,  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(**Though all of them were blind**),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approached the Elephant,  
**And happening to fall**  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
"God bless me! but the Elephant  
Is **very like a wall!**"

The *Second*, feeling of the **tusk**,  
Cried, -"Ho! what have we here  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear,  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is **very like a spear!**"

The *Third* approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The **squirming trunk** within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spoke:  
"I see," -quote he- "the Elephant  
Is very like a **snake!**"

The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand,



And felt about **the knee:**

"What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain," -quote he, -  
"Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very **like a tree!**"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to **touch the ear**,  
Said- "Even the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like **a fan!**"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Then, seizing on the **swinging tail**  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," -quote he, - "the Elephant  
**Is very like a rope!**"  
And so, these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
*Each in his own opinion*  
*Exceeding stiff and strong,*  
*Though each was partly in the right,*  
*And all were in the wrong!*

MORAL,

So, oft in theological wars  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what each other mean;  
*And prate about an Elephant*  
***Not one of them has seen!***

Our sensory perceptions and life experiences can lead to limited access and overreaching misinterpretations. How can a person with a limited touch of truth turn that into the one and only version of all reality?

This does not deny us the opportunity, privilege and joy of searching, seeking or yearning for a better understanding of the God we do not see.



In theology, just because we have limited access to Truth, that doesn't mean all versions of Truth are equally valid.

We know the Whole Elephant is out there, and this should drive us to open our eyes wider and seek every opportunity to experience more of Him?

How is God both three and one? Mystery – we are exposed to parts of God, as defined and/or discussed over the years by people like you and me.

There is scriptural support for the Trinity doctrine.

Three and One

- We are to have no other gods (Exodus 20) and
- God is one (Deuteronomy 6).
- God is also called Father (1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Matthew 23:9).
- Jesus is called God with us (Matthew 1:23) and equal with God (Philippians 2:5-11).
- He made the worlds, angels worship Him, and He too is called God (Hebrews 1; John 20:28).
- When people lie to the Holy Spirit, they lie to God (Acts 5:3-4) and
- our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit thus glorifying God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- If God is one and also three, the most logical conclusion is for God to be three in one.

How can God be both three and one? Most Christians agree that biblical descriptions of God point to this inescapable conclusion. *Do we need to understand how this works.* to agree with the Scriptures?

We cannot understand the how. That is why the Trinity is called a mystery.

Early Church discussions centered around an economic view of the Trinity, that was often vague and simple. We can label the efforts of people to identify Trinity:

1. **modalism** became popular. This theory saw God as one person with three personalities or modes of being. But, this was rejected as heresy, because Christ prayed to the Father and God does not pray to Himself.
2. **Tritheism** was another heresy which explained God as not one but three Gods. This too was rejected for obvious reasons. God is one.



3. **Orthodoxy** is still the understanding of the Trinity that unifies Christianity. It is best described using Greek terms, “one ousia in three hypostases,” one Godhead that is indivisible and yet three persons.

Then, there is Jesus.

How do we discuss Jesus? Christians view the discussion in three ways. 1. Viewing Jesus from “above,” from the perspective of heaven. This involves **faith alone**, nothing from any earthly sources. The Bible refers to faith as evidence, though it is not fashionable, tangible evidence.

God’s angels are Jesus’ angels (Matthew 13:41; Luke 12:8-9, 15:10). He judges the world (Matthew 25:31-46). Know Jesus, know the Father (John 14:7-9), He sits in the place of power (Matthew 26:63-66). He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), made Himself equal with God (John 5:18). John said He was God (John 1:1), an exact representation of God’s nature (Hebrews 1:2-3, 8), image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15-20), fullness of God in a human body (Colossians 2:9), He will judge (2 Timothy 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:10) and is equal with God (Philippians 2:5-11).

The Greek Bible that Jesus quoted called God a word we translate as “**Lord**” (Acts 2:20-21; Romans 10:13; 1 Peter 3:15). The New Testament uses the word “**Lord**” for both Father and Son. In Jesus, we can know the Father. God died, not a mere man. In Jesus, God and man are reunited. Therefore, we can worship Jesus. Jesus’ conception involved temporarily giving up some divine attributes (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus is divinity-humanity, or the God-man. Both divinity and humanity are most fully known in Jesus. *We did not ascend to divinity*, God condescended to take on a human frame. So, we know that God values our humanity.

- Jesus was born and lived normally, faced temptations, ate, experienced human emotions and died. Unlike us, He had remarkable knowledge, knew the past, present and future in ways that we do not, and discerned the thoughts of others. However, while on earth He did not know everything (Mark 13:32).
- He was resurrected with a glorified body, like we will have (Luke 24:39; Philippians 3:21).
- He still is the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). A real man died for us, one who can sympathize with us.
- He exemplifies perfect human nature as God originally intended.
- In Christ, God is not totally transcendent.
- In Christ, humanity ascended to heaven.



## The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit makes decisions (1 Corinthians 12:11), teaches (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:11-13), guides into truth (John 16:13), makes the things of Jesus known (John 16:14), convicts (John 16:8), can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), blasphemed (Matthew 12:31), possesses a mind (Romans 8:26-27), can be lied to (Acts 5:3-4), is distinguished from the Father and Son (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14), we can have fellowship with Him (2 Corinthians 13:14). He inspired scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21), regenerates people (Titus 3:5), raised Christ (Romans 8:11), is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), and omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

So, we believe that God is one Godhead that is indivisible and yet three persons. How that works is a mystery.

Biblically, it is an inescapable conclusion that unites most Christians.

Thoughts about Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America.

– Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. It was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the **20,000** Union and Confederate soldiers buried there. Today, Arlington National Cemetery holds the graves of more than **400,000 soldiers**.

## *Red Poppies*

In 1915, inspired by the poem “In Flanders Fields,” Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

*We cherish too, the Poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led,  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies.*



She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war.

Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922 (three years after the founding of Hill Avenue Grace Lutheran, in Pasadena) the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later their "Buddy" Poppy program was selling artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948 the US Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement by issuing a red 3 cent postage stamp with her likeness on it.

