

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD"
(Deuteronomy 6:4).

III. ONE GOD – THE MIGHTY GOD IN CHRIST

There are a multitude of confusing theories and opinions concerning the nature and reality of God. There are those who reject the reality of God. There are others who believe that God is an impersonal force that brought about the creation of the universe but they reject His involvement with mankind today. Concerning Jesus, many would accept Him as a good teacher of moral law, but they reject His divinity.

There is, of course, the teaching known as the trinity doctrine, which states that God is comprised of three separate personalities. These separate and distinct persons-God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are said to be co-equal and co-eternal. This teaching is couched in complex theological terminology that is both contradictory and confusing.

Why is there so much confusion? The warning of Paul to the Colossians provides us a clue: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:8-9)

Through the years, men have based their opinions about God upon the ideas of various philosophers and theologians. Instead of looking to the Bible to learn of God, they have tried to define God by man's wisdom and understanding. Jesus admonished us to "Search the scriptures ... and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Yes, it is in the inspired Scripture that we can glean understanding concerning the one true God and His manifestation in the flesh. If we will look to the Bible and not to man-made doctrines, then we can begin to comprehend the "One God-the mighty God in Christ."

HOW MANY GODS EXIST?

The Bible has much to say about God and His many attributes. It speaks of His power, majesty, and holiness. It testifies of how He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Yet, of all the characteristics ascribed to God in the Bible, there is one emphasized more than any other:

In Deuteronomy 4:34, Moses reminded the Israelites of all that God had done for them in order to deliver them from Egypt: "Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?"

In the following verse Moses explained why God did all that for Israel: "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). Moses went on to tell how God was going to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. In Deuteronomy 4:39, he drove home again the main point of his discourse: "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else."

The nations of the earth tended to neglect the one true God and worshiped sun gods, moon gods, fish gods, stone gods, gold gods, silver gods and wood gods. Babylon worshiped a trinity of gods, as do the Hindus today. Time and time again, God had to forcibly remind Israel that there was only one God, and that there would always be just one God. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour" (Isaiah 43:10-11). There are a total of twelve verses in the Book of Isaiah alone which affirm that, from eternity to eternity, there has been and will be only one God.

This dominant theme continues into the New Testament: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:5, 6). James, in his epistle, noted that even the devils believe in one God and tremble (James 2:9).

A close study of New Testament Scripture reveals that Jesus Christ is the one God revealed throughout the Word. For example, the Lord spoke to Israel through Isaiah and declared, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). John captured the words of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:8: "I am Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." There can be only one Alpha, and one Omega. Only God could be described as Almighty! Even in the New Testament, the Scriptures explicitly teach that there is only one God.

GOD IS A SPIRIT

The Bible teaches us that the one God is a Spirit (John 4:24). Understanding this simple fact will help us to understand deeper truths concerning God.

Nations such as Greece and Rome, that worshiped false gods, pictured their gods as looking very human. However, Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, understood that the one true God is a Spirit: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (1 Kings 8:27).

The Bible refers to the eyes of God, the mouth of God, the right hand of God, even to the wings of God (Malachi 4:2). These terms are used because it helps man to understand God, but they are not to be taken in a literal sense. God does watch over us, but He does not possess literal, physical eyes with lenses, retina, etc.

The right hand of God is a perfect example of how physical terminology is used to illustrate a spiritual concept. The majority of people in the world are righthanded. Because they use the right hand more often than the left hand, it is stronger and more powerful. Even today we will refer to someone as our "righthand man." Whenever God used His power to intervene on Israel's behalf, it was referred to as God showing or extending forth His right hand. Yet, as a Spirit, God has no right hand or left hand. He fills the universe, and has no bodily limitations. You cannot literally stand on His right hand because He has none.

One must not forget the basic fact that God is a Spirit. Any references to hands, eyes, ears, etc., is a figure of speech to help us comprehend the incomprehensible.

In so much as God is a Spirit, He is not composed of flesh and blood, but exists as an invisible being: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1:17). This invisible, omnipresent God, with all His power and glory, could never be seen or even comprehended by man. This is why God took on a form, called a

theophany, when He appeared to man. God was in a form, for example, when He spoke to Abraham concerning the imminent destruction of Sodom, wrestled with Jacob, and spoke with Manoah and her husband concerning the birth of Samson. Although a form enabled God to speak face to face with man, He could not bring, redemption to man in these temporary manifestations. Therefore, the mighty God, that eternal invisible Spirit who spoke the world into existence, chose to manifest Himself in the flesh.

THE MIGHTY GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. JESUS IS BOTH GOD AND MAN.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The Lord allowed Isaiah to prophetically see the manifestation of God in the flesh some 700 years before it would actually take place. The concept of the incarnation was something that had been in the mind of God from the very beginning. It did not take place, however, until the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary, and she conceived and brought forth Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:35). That which had been a plan in the mind of God became flesh: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the (Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).

It was once said that in Jesus Christ God became something He had never been before, yet at the same time He never ceased being what He had always been. Jesus was the Son of God in that He was born of the Holy Ghost that overshadowed Mary. But, He was the Son of man in that He was born of flesh and blood. Thus, Jesus was at the same time fully God and also fully human.

As a man, Jesus hungered; as God, He fed five thousand with but a few loaves and fishes. As a man, He could experience pain; as God, He healed people and caused their pain to cease. To bridge the gap between God, the eternal Creator, and man, whose life is like a vapor, full of pain and woe—Jesus Christ came into the world. Since it was impossible for man to attain to the level of God, God descended to the level of man.

The Scripture declares, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). God, in His experience as a man, bridged the vast gap between God and man.

The Early Church did not need to explain this mystery in complex philosophical terms. Their statement was simply, "Jesus Christ is Lord." They accepted the fact that Jesus was fully man and fully God. Of course, they still possessed the deep conviction that there was only one God, and that Jesus was His name: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). It is an interesting note that in the *New International Version*, a comma is placed after "Savior," thus reading: "the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." This leaves no doubt that the words God and *Savior* are not referring to two different persons, but that both describe Jesus Christ.

JESUS IS THE ONE PERSON OF THE GOD-HEAD. ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD DWELLS IN JESUS CHRIST.

Many people have a very distorted view of God due to the acceptance of man's tradition over the clear teaching of the Bible. For example, many people feel that if they could take a glimpse into heaven, they would see the following: On a great throne would sit what would appear to be a man in his sixties, with a long white beard and a stern countenance. This would be God the Father. Standing next to him on the right would be Jesus, or God the Son. Finally, fluttering around the Father and the Son would be a dove, or God the Holy Ghost.

This distorted triune picture of God can in no way be reconciled to the Scriptures, which clearly show that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16).

The Scriptures do not teach that one-third of God, or one person of God called God the Son, was manifest in the flesh. It says that God was manifest in the flesh. Colossians 2:9-10 teaches us that "in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily."

Matthew 28:18 declares that Jesus has all power. When we get to heaven, all of God that we will see will be Jesus Christ. Everything that makes God what He is dwells in Jesus Christ bodily. We will worship one God in heaven, and His name is Jesus.

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet has thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? ...Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:89, 11).

From the context of Philip's question, it is obvious that he wondered if the Father was a separate personality from Jesus. Let us examine Jesus' answer in the light of what we have already examined about God. "I am in the Father" simply means that God still was omnipresent; Jesus, as the Son of Man, was surrounded by God's presence as all men are. (See Acts 17:28.)

Jesus also said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" and "the Father in me." In Jesus Christ, God became something He had never been before (a man); but He never ceased being what He had always been (the Mighty God). "Philip," He was saying in essence, "if you are looking for God-the creator, the One who led Israel out of Egypt, the One who declared that the Lord thy God is one Lord-you need look no further, for I am He. Look at Me."

JESUS IS THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY GHOST

The Bible does not contradict itself. All of the books of the Bible harmonize perfectly. This is a cornerstone rule to remember for anyone who wants to rightly divide the word of truth. Occasionally, one may read a certain verse that, if taken by itself, seems to contradict other portions of Scripture. This is why verses of Scripture which are difficult to understand must be interpreted in the light of those verses of Scripture more easily understood.

Consider Matthew 28:19. These words of Jesus were spoken to His disciples prior to His ascension into heaven: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." One of the disciples present that day was Peter, and Jesus had given him the keys to the kingdom.

Peter preached the first message of the church in Acts 2. So powerful was that message that brought conviction to the hearts of many who heard: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38).

Does Acts 2:38 contradict Matthew 28:19? Was Peter disobedient to the command of Jesus? The answer, of course, is a resounding no! Peter, in fact, *did* command the crowd to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. A close examination of the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 reveals that a singular name was called for, which would be the *name* of the Father, and would be the name of the Son and would be the name of the Holy Ghost. Peter knew what that name was the name of Jesus Christ.

Jesus told the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43). We know that Jesus is the name of the Son (Matthew 1 :21). Jesus is also the name of the Holy Ghost: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). The Holy Ghost is Christ in us (Colossians 1:27).

There is only one name of God in this New Testament era. Saul of Tarsus discovered that fundamental fact on the road to Damascus. Reared as a Pharisee, Saul had been taught diligently from childhood that there is only one God.

In his zeal for God, Saul started to Damascus to persecute the Christians. Saul felt that by worshiping Jesus the Christians were being untrue to Jehovah, the God of Israel. On the way, Saul was felled by a light. He heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes" thou me?" (Acts 9:4).

Saul, in amazement, asked the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). Paul used the word *kurios* (Lord), which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *adonai*, which refers to God. The response shook Saul's theological foundation to the core, and this revelation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle. Paul acknowledged his acceptance of Jesus as the "I am" with his next response: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

Paul discovered that Jesus is the name of God. It is in the name of Jesus that we ask for our healing, our strength and our salvation. Peter declared to the council, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

WRAP-UP

After you have examined many of the verses of Scripture concerning God, you will probably be amazed how simple but profound the truth is. Let us review again some of those simple truths concerning God.

The first truth is that there is only One God. No philosophy or theological formula can be accepted that in any way compromises this eternal truth. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9).

The second truth we examined was that God is a Spirit, and a spirit does not have flesh and blood. The Spirit of God fills the universe. He is omnipresent and omniscient. Any reference to hands, eyes, wings, or other physical parts of God was to help man comprehend God. In reality, God has no physical limitations or embodiment. When God spoke to Moses in the wilderness, He contained Himself in a burning bush.

When He spoke to Abraham, to Jacob, and others- God took on a form (theophany).

As a theophany, God was able to speak with man face to face. However, God had a much higher plan for His creation. He wanted to redeem mankind from sin. A theophany could not do this because redemption required the shedding of blood.

In order to redeem mankind, God took on the form of flesh. This is the third great truth we learned in this study: the mighty God was manifest in the flesh. Jesus is both God and man. Jesus was Emmanuel, or God with us (Matthew 1:23). He was fully God, and yet, at the same time, fully man. In Jesus Christ, God became something He had never been (a man), yet never ceased being what He had always been (God).

God was manifest in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one person of the Godhead. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ. When we get to heaven we will see Jesus Christ in all His glory and splendor. All of what God is, and what makes Him God, will be seen in Jesus Christ.

He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. As Paul stated in Colossians 2:10: "And ye are complete in Him...." Jesus is all we need now and will ever need. To look for other forms of deity would be foolish.

Finally, we learned the truth concerning God's name. Jesus is the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Peter understood that simple truth. Jesus had instructed him and the other apostles to baptize converts "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In Acts 2:38, Peter revealed what the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost I was: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name *of Jesus Christ*. . . ." Jesus is the name! The Lord explicitly told Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus."

God has revealed a mighty truth to you that one day the whole world will have to acknowledge: "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one" (Zechariah 1 4 :9).

Jesus is Lord!