

Jesus - Second Person of the Godhead

Ancient Israel lived in a world where *many* gods were worshiped, as did the early Church, however, the people of God did not worship many gods, but, rather, they worshiped the *one true God, Jehovah!*

Surrounded by "*polytheism*" [the belief of **many** gods] Israel, since their beginning as a nation, stood alone throughout the Old Testament period as a "*monotheistic*" people [the belief in **only one** God]. Many of them suffered martyrdom rather than to accept the heathen believe in "*gods many and lords many.*"

When the passage from Deuteronomy 64, which states, "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is ONE,**" occurs in the Sabbath readings in the synagogue, the whole congregation repeats the last word, "**One**" for several minutes with the loudest vociferations as an affirmation of their belief in **ONE** God and a bulwark against the belief of *many* gods!

The Bible teaches ONE GOD!

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, ever since its inception, has been a citadel of *monotheism*. It is a belief in the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures that compels the Church to state that there is one God...One supreme object of reverence.

While other nations worshiped groups of gods or families of gods, it was not so with Israel and, perhaps, the greatest contribution of Israel to the ancient world was its constant witness to the one true God!

The following Scriptures are the foundation of faith in one God for which Israel contended for throughout the centuries of its history:

Deuteronomy 4:35, "*You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides Him there is no other.*"

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

Isaiah 44:8, "*Is there any God besides Me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.*"

Deuteronomy 32:39, "*See now that I Myself am He! There is no god besides Me.*"

2 Samuel 7:22, "*How great You are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like You, and there is no God but You.*"

1 Chronicles 17:20, "*There is no one like You, O LORD, and there is no God but You.*"

Psalms 83:18, "*Let them know that You, whose name is the LORD - that You alone are the Most High over all the earth.*"

Psalms 86:10, "*For You are great and do marvelous deeds; You alone are God.*"

Isaiah 43:10, "*Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me.*"

Isaiah 44:6, "*Apart from Me there is no God.*"

Isaiah 45:18, "*For this is what the LORD says...He says: `I am the LORD, and there is no other.'*"

These statements were made in a day when people generally believed in *many* gods. The unique feature of the Biblical teaching about God is its constant emphasis on the one true and living God.

The early Church also contended for the belief of **one** God which the following Scriptures will show:

Mark 12:29, "*Jesus answered, `Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is ONE.'*"

1 Corinthians 8:4-6, "*There is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many `gods' and many `lords'), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*"

Galatians 3:20, "*God is one.*"

Ephesians 4:6, "*One God and Father of all.*"

1 Timothy 2:5, "*For there is one God.*"

James 2:19, "*You believe that there is one God. Good! .*"

THREE IN ONE

Scripture, however, reveals more than the fact of an existence of a true and living God, it also discloses that there are **three Persons in the Godhead**. - Not that there are three separate God, but Three Persons in one essence. Careful study of the entire Bible has led to the doctrine of the **Trinity**, the belief that the one true God exists in three Persons.

Christians believe in the "**Holy Trinity**"...that is, the One worshiped is one God existing in **three Persons** - God, the Father; the Son; and, the Holy Spirit. There are, therefore, three **Persons** in the God-head, however, these three Persons have perfect unity among themselves...always in agreement and share the same *essence*.

The knowledge that God is three Persons, yet one God, obviously does not come from human *reasoning*. While there are some illustrations which may make the existence of God easy to believe, there is no human reason which one can fully comprehend this startling fact that God is a Trinity.

The doctrine of the trinity comes from *revelation*, not from *reason* - from the Bible and not from any illustration of nature.

The only approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is through the Scripture itself. This is especially true since the Trinitarian nature of God, unlike the existence of God, cannot be discerned in nature. One needs to examine significant passages of Scripture both from the Old and New Testaments.

Once the fact of the Trinity is accepted as true, however, reflections of the triune structure of God can be discerned in the created world. However, there is a halo of mystery about the Trinity. One must recognize that he is dealing with the very inner nature of God Himself. Humility and the willingness to accept the teaching of the Bible are essential.

In attempting to define the Biblical truth of the Trinitarian faith, one must not lose conviction of true *monotheism*, as revealed by the entire Word of God, and in emphasizing the *plurality* of persons in the Godhead, one must combat the extreme, unscriptural belief of *tritheism* - the belief of three gods

When we speak of the unity of God, we refer to two facts:

1. There is but one true God, not three Gods.
2. The "*Persons*" within this one God-head are in perfect harmony.

On the surface there seems to be apparent contradiction between the *Oneness* and the *Threeness* of God, however, when all the facts of Scripture are in, this doctrine, like many other great truths of God's Word, is shown to be complex but not contradictory!

One must, indeed, be ignorant who would scoff at a teaching as being unreasonable, simply because it transcends his ability of reasoning. To be unable to understand a proposition is one thing, however, to comprehend the *facts* asserted in the proposition is quite another thing! Scientists, the most exacting of men, accept facts which they cannot penetrate. Men are incapable of understanding God's nature as the animals are of understanding ours!

DOES "*ONE*" ALWAYS MEAN "*ONE*"?

The manner in which the Bible uses the word "*one*" does not always mean "**one**" in an absolute mathematical sense as we think of the word, but, rather, the word "**ONE**" frequently expresses a *unit* which involves a plurality - a compound unit!

The following passages of Scriptures will show where the word "*one*" is not reference to a single unit in an exact mathematical sense, but one in the sense of a compound unit - or a unit of more than one...a unit which involves a plurality.

Genesis 2:24, "*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become **ONE** flesh.*"

Genesis 11:6, "*The LORD said, 'If as ONE people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.'*"

Genesis 41:1, "*Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile.*" [verse 5] "*He fell asleep again and had a second dream.*" [verse 25] "*Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are ONE.'*"

1 Kings 22:13, "*Look, as ONE man the other prophets are predicting success for the king.*"

John 17:22, "*I [Jesus Christ] have given them [believers] the glory that You [God, the Father] gave Me, that they may be ONE as We are ONE.'*"

Acts 4:32, "*All the believers were ONE in heart and mind.*"

1 Corinthians 3:8, "*The man who plants and the man who waters have ONE purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.*"

Ephesians 2:14, "*For He Himself [Christ Jesus]...has made the two [Jew and Gentile] ONE and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*"

1 John 5:7, "*For there are three that testify, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are ONE.'*"

Note in the above passages of Scripture: Two people [husband and wife] "*shall be ONE flesh*"...two dreams are said to be ONE...Paul, the planter and Apollos, the waterer, are ONE...God hath made both Jew and Gentile ONE...and...the multitude of believers are described as of ONE heart and ONE soul. The Biblical word "**ONE**" can be more than a mathematical one!

GOD'S NAME IS PLURAL

Elohim is a plural form of the Hebrew word for God...the first being in Genesis 1:1, which states, "*In the beginning God [**Elohim**] created the heavens and the earth.*" There can be no controversy as to whether or not **Elohim** is plural because no one can dispute the fact that **Elohim** is, indeed, in the plural form.

The plural name of God in the opening verse of Scripture was no doubt intended to foreshadow the plurality of persons in the divine nature. The sacred writer could have been led as easily to use the single *El*, and then there would have been no implication of a divine plurality, but in this initial reference to God, he was led by the Holy Spirit to pen the word **Elohim**. When we consider also that holy men were moved to employ **Elohim** about ten times more often than *El*, we must conclude that this preference for the plural over the singular indicates a definite sign of a plurality in the Godhead.

Added to the plural name of **Elohim** is the use of the plural pronouns by God when speaking of Himself, such as is found in:

Genesis 1:26, "And God said, Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness."

Genesis 3:22, "And the Lord God said, `Behold, man is become as one of US."

Genesis 11:7, "Go to, let US go down and there confound their language."

Isaiah 6:8, "Whom shall I send, and who will for US?"

Why should God refer to Himself in a manner that definitely denotes plurality? Why would God state in His Word, "Let US," rather than "I will"?

A plurality is unmistakably indicated throughout the Old Testament and, yet, it is a plurality which is combined with a *unit*, which is wonderfully consistent with the New Testament revelation of the Trinity of the God-head.

Further evidence of the Trinity of the God-head:

1. THE DIVINE CONVERSATIONS OF THE GOD-HEAD

There are conversations in the Scripture which are undeniably between distinct persons, such as:

Hebrews 10:9, " *Then He [Christ Jesus] said, `Here I am, I have come to do Your [God, the Father] will.'*"

Hebrews 10:5 " *He [Christ] said: `Sacrifice and offering You [the Father] did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me.'*"

John 12:28, " *'Father, glorify Your name!' Then a voice came from heaven, `I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.'*"

Psalms 16:10, " *Because You [Father] will not abandon Me [Jesus] to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay.'*"

Psalms 2:7, " *He [the Father] said to Me, `You are My Son; today I have become Your Father.'*"

Psalms 110:1, " *The LORD [God, the Father] says to My Lord [Jesus Christ]: `Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'*"

2. GOD IN THREE PERSONS AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Matthew 3:16-17 states, " *As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."* In this record of Jesus' baptism, note that all three Persons of the God-head are represented in a way in which neither could be confused with the other - Jesus is in the water; the Father's, voice is heard from heaven; and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove.

The witnesses of this sacred scene, and the readers of the four Gospel accounts, were conscious of three distinct being - One Who stood before them, One Who descended from heaven, and One Who spoke from heaven.

3. ONE SEATED BESIDE THE OTHER

Mark 16:19 states, "After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and He sat at the right hand of God." This verse and eight other passages state that the Lord Jesus Christ is "seated at the right hand of God, the Father."

[Acts 2:33; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21.]

4. ONE TAKING FROM THE OTHER

Revelation 5:7 states, "He [Christ Jesus] came and took the scroll from the right hand of Him [the Father] Who sat on the throne." The language compels us to understand that there are two distinct Persons...One seated, and One standing...One stationary, and One moving...One taking, and One yielding. There can be no doubt that the Lamb Who took the book is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He Who sat upon the throne is God, the Father.

5. THE PRAYERS OF CHRIST

John 17:1 states, "After Jesus said this, He looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You." There are clearly two Persons here - One on earth praying to One in heaven. If Jesus, as man, was not praying to His Father in heaven on this occasion, would not this have been a pretense that appeared deceptive?

6. DIRECT REFERENCES BY JESUS TO A PLURALITY

In John 15:24 Jesus said, "...they have hated **BOTH** Me and My Father." 2 John 1:9 states, "Whoever continues in the teaching has **BOTH** the Father and the Son." The word "both" in these verses, certainly signify more than one.

In John 8:17-18 Jesus said, "In your own Law it is written that the testimony of **TWO** men is valid. I am One Who testifies for Myself; My Other witness is the Father, Who sent Me." [Also see Deuteronomy 17:6 and Matthew 18:16] What other inference can be drawn from this application by Jesus of this legal requirement of **TWO**...Himself and the Father? His meaning is plain - "I and the Father make **TWO**!" Not two Gods, but, rather, two distinct persons within the God-head.

In John 14:23 Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and **WE** will come to him and make **OUR** home with him."

In John 14:16 Jesus said, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you **ANOTHER** Counselor to be with you forever." "Another" can only mean *one more*, and not the same person. If Jesus could pray to His Father, the two must be different Persons and the subject of His prayer was the coming of the Third Person. Jesus was praying to His Father, in heaven, to send the Holy Spirit to believers here below, making three Persons in the God-head:

- 1. Jesus, praying to

2. His heavenly Father, to send

3. the Holy Spirit, as a Comforter to believers on earth.

In John 8:16 Jesus said, "*I am not ALONE. I stand with the Father, Who sent Me.*" In John 8:29 He said, "*He [the Father] has not left Me ALONE, for I always do what pleases Him.*" And, in John 16:32 He said, "*I am not ALONE, for My Father is with Me.*"

There are numerous places in Scripture where the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are linked together. A few examples are:

Matthew 28:19, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*"

2 Corinthians 13:14, *"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

1 John 5:7, *"For there are three that testify."*

1 Peter 1:2, *"Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood."*

Galatians 4:6, *"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*

1 Corinthians 12:4-6, *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."*

1 Peter 3:18, *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."*

The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be totally understood even by redeemed reason. We must let God be God! He will help us to grow and advance in understanding, however, we must be willing to believe, even when we cannot see. Though the doctrine of the Trinity is superior to reason and cannot be fathomed by human intellect, it is not contrary to reason and does not violate what can legitimately be *"imagined"* by the mind.