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Who Is God the Father?

God. No person or thing is superior to Him. He alone has full authority. He is over all.

The word “God” belongs rightfully to one being only, although man has made the mistake of trying to worship man-made ideas and images of stone, wood, and clay. Only one being is God; He alone is the object of all true worship. Any worship given to another so-called being, whether imagined or living, is false worship.

If we wanted to explain in just a few words the honor due God, we could find no greater and no simpler expression than 1 Timothy 1:17: “. . . to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” The truth about God is summed up in a statement recited repeatedly by ancient Israel: “. . . The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). In light of who God is, Jesus declared the resolve that should be

implanted in every heart: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only” (Matthew 4:10b).

The true God is described in the Scriptures as “three” in nature. That is, He is one, yet He is three—God the Father; God the Son; and God the Spirit. The three persons of the Godhead are equal with each other, and each is eternal. Each possesses a distinct personality, reflecting supernatural intelligence, emotion, and will; however, these three are but one in essence, nature, and purpose.

This concept of God as one yet three is called the Godhead, the Divine Family, or the Trinity (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9).¹ This great truth is far beyond our human understanding—but not beyond our believing, for it is plainly taught in the Word of God. We accept it by faith—not because we have imagined it, not because we have reasoned that it could be true, and not because we have learned such a truth by studying the world around us. We accept this truth and believe it because it has been given to us in the inspired writings of the Scriptures.

The idea that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not explained directly in the Scriptures, but it is implied. Writings in the Old Testament which suggest the idea of the Godhead include the divine name itself, which is the Hebrew word “Elohim,” a word that is plural in form. Other writings in the Old Testament employ plural pronouns with reference to

¹The three Greek words which can be translated “Godhead” appear only one time each in the Scriptures (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9; KJV). The terms “Divine Family” and “Trinity” are not found in the Scriptures, and we use them in this lesson only as explanations.

God—such as Genesis 1:26, which says, “Let Us make man in Our image. . . .”²

In the New Testament we read about the three members of the Godhead. At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the shape of a dove, while the voice of the Father declared, “This is My beloved Son . . .” (Matthew 3:17). When our Lord promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, He made a reference to the Spirit, God, and Himself: “When the *Helper* comes, whom I will send to you from the *Father*, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me” (John 15:26; emphasis mine).

The work of man’s redemption involves all three members of the Godhead. Peter wrote, “According to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, by the sanctifying work of *the Spirit*, to obey *Jesus Christ* and be sprinkled with His blood . . .” (1 Peter 1:2; emphasis mine). The Godhead is also seen in our approach to God in prayer, for Paul said that through *Jesus* all have “access in one *Spirit* to the *Father*” (Ephesians 2:18; emphasis mine).

The Great Commission pictures baptism as being administered in the name of the Trinity: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Throughout the Bible, God the Father is always referred to with a personal pronoun in the male gender (“He”). He is the Father, the Creator, Jehovah,

²Three other examples are found in Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8.

the Almighty, and the Lord God. He always stands first among the three members of the Godhead. The Bible shows Him to be above all in wisdom, power, love, mercy, and justice. As the One who planned, designed, and created the universe, He is the supreme authority and sovereign ruler over all powers and authorities. He is the Father of those who worship and obey Him. In Him all creatures, including human beings, live and move and exist (Acts 17:28).

God is to be worshiped by all people, all nations, and all tribes as the only true God. He can be approached only through Jesus Christ. We cannot come to Him through angels, saints, or other people—living or dead, regardless of how good they may be or may have been. The only real mediator between God and man is His Son, Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). The only way available for man to come to the Father is Jesus. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

The second member of the Godhead is the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him God the Father created the earth and man (Colossians 1:16). In His relation to man, Jesus is called the “Son of Man”; in His relation to God, He is called the “Son of God.” He is the only member of the Godhead who has taken on a human body and lived physically here on earth. He is the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. He is to be worshiped and adored by all people. He has provided the means by which the whole earth can come to the Father in worship.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every

name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9–11).

The third member of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit. He has the same nature and make-up as God and Christ. Like them, He is referred to with personal pronouns, and references to Him are always in the male gender (“He”). He is always mentioned third when spoken of in the Bible in connection with the other two members of the Godhead. He is spoken of in the New Testament as the means by which man is guided and instructed. He is our Helper through the Scriptures. He inspired the writing of the Old and New Testaments; therefore, the Scriptures are referred to as the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), the tool that He uses to do His work. He indwells (lives in) those who have become children of God (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit exist together eternally and make up the Godhead. While there is much that we do not know about them, we can be certain that each one exists and that the three of them make up the all-glorious Trinity. They are united and exist as one. They are eternal, distinct and different from all created things, and they are one in will and purpose.

Beyond the nature of God as three persons, what else do we know about God the Father? Basically, the Bible teaches one great, overall truth about Him: *He is the only true and living God, and He should be worshipped as such by every person.* No one can read any

part of the Bible, the Old Testament or the New Testament, without seeing this truth forcefully taught.

Let us look further into the question "Who is God the Father?"

OUR CREATOR

God created everything. He made all things, and He owns all things. Nothing exists that He has not made or allowed to be made, and everything that exists belongs to Him.

The earth and mankind did not develop accidentally; they were created by the gracious hand of God. This is the reason why we should not worry about scientifically dating the age of the earth. The world has a miraculous beginning, and this causes it to look older than it really is. God created, to some extent, a mature earth. He did not try to fool man, but He had to make a full-grown earth to provide for man's existence.

He made Adam and Eve, the first couple, as adults, not as babies. Had you and I been present on the day that He created them, they might have appeared to us as a couple in their twenties; but they had just been given life. Even so, the earth was formed by God's miracle of creation at the beginning with full-grown vegetation, water, air, and life-sustaining dirt.

Flowing from the truth that God has created all things are other truths about God that we need to understand. What are they?

He is the being behind all realities.

All that exists can be divided into two categories: that which is God and that which is not God. God is the first and most basic reality. Everything else was

created by Him or was allowed to be made by His authority, and therefore is not God.

He is eternal.

Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God (Psalm 90:2).

But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end (Psalm 102:27).

God is without beginning and will be without end. He was before time, having created time at a juncture in eternity. He is the eternally existent One to whom the past, present, and future are like a moment in time. He lives in the eternal now. He sees the past and the future as clearly as He sees the present. He has forever been, and He will forever be.

He is almighty.

“Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jeremiah 32:17).

“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

He can do anything in keeping with His nature. Of course, He cannot look upon wickedness with favor, and He cannot be tempted by evil, because He is righteous (Habakkuk 1:13). He cannot deny His own nature because of His truthfulness (2 Timothy 2:13), for He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). In line with His nature, however, He can do anything. Nothing is too hard for Him.

He is all-knowing.

“Am I a God who is near,” declares the Lord, “and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?” declares the Lord. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the Lord (Jeremiah 23:23, 24).

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good (Proverbs 15:3).

He knows everything immediately, accurately, and completely. He does not have to learn anything. He needs no counselor or teacher.

He is present everywhere.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,” even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day . . . (Psalm 139:7–12).

“ . . . He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist . . . ” (Acts 17:27, 28).

Anywhere we go, God is there. We cannot hide from Him or conceal anything from His all-seeing eyes. Neither distance nor darkness can remove us from His presence.

He is the only true and living God.

He is living (Matthew 16:16), and He is true

(1 Thessalonians 1:9). As a son may look like his father, human beings are in some ways like God, our Creator. Like man, God sees, hears, speaks, feels, wills, and acts. However, God cannot be seen; He is a spirit who can be present everywhere at the same time (John 4:24).

Who, then, is God the Father? He is the eternal Being and Creator of everything, three in nature, all-wise, almighty, and present everywhere.

Since God created all things, everything belongs to Him, and He deserves our worship. All material things are His possessions, all the creatures of the earth are His, and all the peoples of the earth are His. It is right that we worship and serve Him. If we give special honor and worship to another god of any kind, we are worshipping and serving a lie.

OUR PROVIDER

God not only created this universe, but He also takes care of it today. He keeps it from falling apart, breaking down, or failing to function as He intended (Colossians 1:16, 17).

This fact is proven by reason as well as by revelation. Logical thinking tells us that God created this earth and continues to manage it. Nothing about this earth maintains itself. It is obvious that some almighty hand holds it together. Man cannot even care for himself. He cannot make the air he breathes, the water he drinks, or the sunshine he needs. He is totally dependent upon the earth to run as it should.

The testimony of the revelation of God's Word is that God holds the world together. At the creation of the heavens and the earth, He set in motion natural laws to make His world continue.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years" (Genesis 1:14).

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so (Genesis 1:29, 30).

In addition to maintaining natural laws, He upholds the universe and all the forces connected with it with His divine care.

"You alone are the Lord. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You" (Nehemiah 9:6).

Specifically, He preserves man and beast: "... O Lord, You preserve man and beast" (Psalm 36:6). He feeds all the living things of the earth: "He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psalm 147:9). He watches over the birds of the air: "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:26); "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father" (Matthew

10:29). He rules over the nations of the people of the world: "He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away" (Job 12:23). He protects and blesses the righteous: "But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked will be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in time of trouble" (Psalm 37:38, 39); "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30). He provides eternal life for those who come to Him and obey Him: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27, 28).

Most of the cities in the world have some kind of transportation system for the people. The vehicles that make up these systems obviously must be cared for. If they are not kept in running order by changing the oil, fixing the broken parts, and replacing any worn-out parts, they will soon be left on the side of the street. All machines need care. We do not know of a machine on earth that does not need maintenance. The earth is like a giant machine. It must be cared for and provided for, and the Bible says that it is held in place by the God of heaven (Hebrews 1:3).

How grateful we should be to God for watching over us and providing for us! No one should doubt that God's providence is for the good of man (Acts 14:17), for He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good (Matthew 5:45). It is the proven story of all who have served Him that He will not withhold any good thing from those who walk faithfully (Psalm 84:11; Romans 8:28).

OUR REDEEMER

God is our Redeemer, our Savior. He loves us and wants to save us from sin. The only hope we have for eternity is in Him.

His love for us is difficult to explain. It is greater than any human love we can ever know. Even though all people have sinned and separated themselves from Him by choice, He seeks to save them. He has offered salvation to us through Christ by sending Him into the world to make the ultimate sacrifice for our salvation.

God, being completely righteous, cannot excuse sin. We could not pay the penalty for our sin without experiencing eternal death. God sent Jesus to the cross to bear the punishment for our sin. Anyone who comes to Him by receiving and obeying His message of salvation will receive the benefits of Jesus' death. For this reason, the Bible describes God as our Savior (Titus 1:3), just as it describes Jesus as our Savior (Titus 2:13). God planned our redemption before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Now He lovingly waits for all people to hear His message, repent (change their minds and their lives), and receive His salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

Picture a boy who has an abusive father. His father speaks to him only to rebuke him. Whenever the boy makes a mistake, his dad gives him a beating. After living for years in this type of relationship with his dad, he has come to regard his dad as a stern judge, not as a loving father. He fears his dad, but he does not love him. He does not even enjoy being with him. Whenever he hears the word "father," he thinks of being slapped or beaten. This unfortunate boy will find it hard to see in the word "father" the beautiful

meaning which the word was meant to convey.

Some people have a similar feeling about the word “God.” They have been taught all of their lives to see God as only a judge who waits for them to make a mistake so He can punish them by casting them into hell. Jesus taught us to see God as our Father. He said that we are to address Him as “Father” when we pray (Matthew 6:9). He said that God loves us with a sacrificial love (John 3:16). No greater love can be imagined than the love He has for us. He desires our fellowship and will abide in us when we obey Him (John 14:23). If we go astray from Him, He will receive us back in loving forgiveness when we return to Him by repenting (Luke 15:19–32).

God has done more for each of us than any human being is able to do for us. How should we respond to His great love? We should love Him back, expressing our love by obeying His Word and by worshiping Him as the one and only God. We must walk in reverence and respect before Him.

OUR JUDGE

While He is a loving, gracious Father, God will also judge us. He is the One to whom we must give an account at the end of time.

It is only reasonable to believe that each of us must give an account to the One who made us—and what reason dictates, the Bible declares to be true (Revelation 20:12). How will God judge us? His judgment will be personal, with each person giving an account to Him (Romans 14:12). His judgment will be specific, with each one held responsible for what he or she has said (Matthew 12:36, 37) and done (2 Corinthians 5:10). His judgment will be universal,

with all nations gathered before Him (Matthew 25:32).

God will judge us through Jesus Christ. With righteousness as His standard (Acts 17:30, 31), His judgment will be final and eternal (Matthew 25:46). No appeals will be made after His verdict is given.

The story is told of a young man who was knocked unconscious when two vehicles crashed. An eyewitness of the accident pulled the boy to safety just before the vehicles exploded into flames. The boy could have been burned to death.

After being rescued, the young man opened his eyes and looked up into the face of the man who had saved his life. He would never forget that face. The boy recovered from the accident, and years passed. When he was older, he got into serious trouble. He broke the law and was arrested for his crime. When he was brought before the judge for trial, he was amazed; for he recognized this judge as the very man who had saved him years before. Without hesitating, he blurted out, "Your Honor, do you remember me? You pulled me from a crashed vehicle years ago and saved my life." The judge thoughtfully said, "Yes, I remember. I wanted the best for the person I saved. I was happy that I was able to rescue you so that you could continue your life. However, you must see this fact: Years ago, when I pulled you from the vehicle, I was your 'savior'; but today I am your 'judge.'"

God is pictured in the Bible as both our Savior and our Judge. He sent His Son to deliver us from sin. He has given the highest sacrifice to save us. What will happen if we do not listen, if we reject His salvation? Then, He will have to condemn us, for He is our eternal Judge.

We have one major duty in life. Seeing who God is, we must bow before Him in obedience to His will. We must worship Him as the true and living God. Such a response involves opening His Word and studying it carefully. He wants to be our loving Savior, not just our eternal Judge.

CONCLUSION

In light of these facts about God, we cannot be without an opinion about Him. A decision about Him must be made. The only reasonable response is to acknowledge Him as the true and living God and serve Him in faith and obedience.

A school teacher once told her class, "Two chemists, Karl Scheele of Sweden and Joseph Priestley of England, discovered oxygen around 1775." Immediately a little girl raised her hand and asked, "What did we breathe before they discovered oxygen?" Of course, the teacher had to explain that oxygen has always been in our atmosphere, but we just did not know about it or have a name for it until these chemists discovered it.

Our world is made of two types of realities: the realities that we can see with the eye and touch with our physical hands, and the truths that we cannot see or touch. The realities in the first group are quite evident to us, for we are continually working with and holding real objects. Realities of the second type are not as clear to us. We are less aware of them. We know they are there, but they are sometimes in the background of our thoughts. In our minds, we may know that one-fifth of our air is made of oxygen and that we cannot live without breathing it, but we do not think about it—we just breathe it. We are more

aware of a pencil—a seen reality which we can pick up and write with—than we are of air, one of the unseen realities.

The point is this: The fact that we cannot see some realities does not mean that they are not real. They are just as real as the objects we see, even though we cannot see them or touch them.

The greatest reality that we cannot see is God. We cannot touch Him with our physical hands, put Him in a test tube and analyze Him, or see Him with our physical eyes; yet He is the supreme reality. He is the basis of every reality, whether the reality is seen or unseen.

A missionary was telling some people about the true God. He described God's mighty power, His love, and His wisdom. An elderly man listened to him with eager interest. After a few minutes, the aged gentleman stood up and exclaimed, "I knew that this God existed, but I just did not know His name until now!"

God is our Creator, Provider, Redeemer, and Judge. Anyone who denies that God exists, or fails to obey Him and serve Him, has made the greatest mistake that can be made. That person has rejected his or her Maker, denying the great truth behind the existence of man and the existence of the universe. Do not make this mistake! Worship God as the true and living God; bow before Him in humble obedience.

God loves you and invites you to come into His family. He wants you to walk with Him in daily fellowship in this life. He wants you to live with Him in eternity, in that eternal city called heaven.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(answers on page 260)

1. The word "God" belongs rightfully to one Being only. Why?
2. List the Old Testament passages that suggest the idea of the Godhead.
3. How do the baptism of Jesus, the work of man's redemption, prayer, and Great Commission baptism all support the idea of God's being one yet three (the Godhead)?
4. What is the only way available for man to come to God?
5. What Scriptures teach that God cannot be approached through angels, saints, or other people, living or dead?
6. How can the Lord Jesus be both the "Son of Man" and the "Son of God"?
7. While there is much we do not know about the members of the Godhead, there is much we can know. What are some of the facts taught in the Bible?
8. What truths flow from the truth that God created all things?
9. What evidence do we have that God continues to work in His world?
10. How will God judge us?

WORD HELPS

apostles—the twelve men chosen by Jesus to be His special messengers (Matthew 10:2–4). After the death of Judas, Matthias was named an apostle (Acts 1:23, 26). Later, Paul was added to their number (Acts 9:15, 16; 1 Timothy 2:7). Jesus taught that the inspired teaching and preaching of His apostles was to be obeyed (Matthew 16:19).

baptism—from a Greek word meaning "to immerse in water." God authorized baptism for the forgiveness of sins. (See Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 6:1–4; Acts 2:38; 8:36.)

Christian—one who has obeyed the gospel of Christ.

confession—a statement of one's belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and one's acceptance of Him as Lord and Savior. (See Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10; 1 Timothy 6:12.)

disciple—learner or follower. In Acts 11:26 the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians.

Gospel Accounts—the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), which tell of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Great Commission—Jesus' command to His disciples to go and preach the gospel to every person (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 16).

mediator—one who “goes between” to solve a problem. Jesus, the Son of God, is the mediator between God and man. He solves the problem of sin.

providence—God's care of and providing for man. (While the word “providence” is not used this way in the New Testament, this is a biblical teaching, as in Romans 8:28.)

redeemer—one who “buys back.” By His death, Jesus bought back, or paid a ransom for, people's lost souls.

redemption—being “bought back” after living away from God. Christians are often referred to as “the redeemed.”

repentance—the act of changing one's way of thinking and therefore one's way of living.

saint—New Testament Christian.

salvation—deliverance from sin; salvation can be provided only through Jesus.

savior—one who saves another from danger or death. Jesus, our Savior, saves us from sin and eternal death.