

Hartford Bible Students

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IS JESUS THE HEAVENLY FATHER?

"To Us There is but One God, the Father..."

1 Corinthians 8:6

Light is being shed on many of the doctrinal "mysteries" conceived in the Dark Ages of Christian history. One of these mysteries is the doctrine of the trinity. Now, in this age of enlightenment, many have secretly questioned this doctrine that claims that Jesus is his own heavenly Father, but they maintain their silence for fear of being labeled a heretic. In fact, most Christian churches claim that belief in the trinity is essential to being a Christian and leave no room for dialog and certainly no opportunity for impartial investigation on this topic.

Instead of being discouraged from considering such questions, Christians should be encouraged to examine their church creeds to be certain that they are honoring God by what they believe. We are instructed that the truths in the Bible are to be thought out so we can come to a reasonable understanding. *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."* (Isa. 1:18) If there is doubt on any subject, there is need for study. Then, after thorough examination, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" without fear of persecution. Romans 14:5

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD Our God is One LORD."

Deuteronomy 6:4

To both the Prophets and the Apostles, God revealed Himself in the Bible as having no equal and always existing. *"Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD."* (Isaiah 43:10,11) His name in Hebrew is YHVH (Jehovah or Yaweh), and He is addressed throughout the Scriptures as LORD, God, or Heavenly Father. For 4,000 years those who were His people had no indication that He was anything other than the single, unitary, supreme God that He declared Himself to be.

In His wisdom, the one true God promised the prophets of old that, in due time, He would send forth a savior to redeem the lost world of mankind. God would anoint this servant as His representative with power and authority. The Jews lived in constant anticipation of this *Messiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek) -- both meaning *anointed*. *"God, who at sundry times and in*

divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son..." (Heb. 1:1-2)

God anointed Jesus as His prophet -- His servant. Moses told Israel, *"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."* (Deuteronomy 18:15) Isaiah prophetically expressed God's thought about Jesus, *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him."* (Isaiah 42:1)

"My Beloved Son, in Whom I am Well Pleased."

Matthew 3:17

This anointed prophet and servant was God's "only begotten Son," Jesus Christ. *"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman..."* (Galatians 4:4) The Scriptures declare that the Father had no beginning. Jesus Christ is repeatedly spoken of as being brought into existence.

Jesus desired that his disciples should understand who he was and why he came. He asked them, "Whom say he that I am?" The Apostle Peter answered Jesus' question, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Jesus then declared that upon this rock -- this foundational truth that he was the promised Messiah and Son of God -- he would build his church. Matthew 16:15-18

Jesus had a mission to accomplish as God's anointed one, and the entire theme of the Bible states that mission: *"For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me... And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life..."* (John 6:38, 40) Here we see that God is the author, and Jesus is the honored executor of the Father's plans.

Origin of the Trinity Concept

Both Catholic and Protestant scholars recognize that the concept termed "trinity" took centuries to evolve. In fact, it was not introduced until the Fourth Century, leading to the Nicene Creed (325 AD) and the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD). In this dark period

of church history, many political pressures were mixed into Christian doctrine and practices. Fearing that religious dissension might disrupt the political unity of his empire, the Emperor Constantine summoned a general council of bishops to deal with the controversy as to whether Jesus the Son was also his own Father. The basic substance of the Nicene Creed came to be adopted by many as the true identity of God and the defining doctrinal test as to whether one was really a Christian. And yet the term "trinity" is not found in the Bible. Even staunch Trinitarians admit that the concept of the trinity is mysterious and incomprehensible.

This creed explicitly defined God as actually composed of three persons: "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit" -- all co-equal and co-eternal. And yet in the Bible, only one of these appears: *"...There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things...and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things."* (1 Corinthians 8:6) The other terms "God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit" never appear in Scripture.

The word "god" has a variety of applications in the Bible. For example, the Old Testament Hebrew word "elohim" (god) can describe any high dignitary (e.g. Abraham, Genesis 23:6). In the King James translation, it is rendered as: *angels, God, gods, great, mighty, judges*. Its Greek counterpart "theos" also has a broad usage. Strong's Concordance defines it as: *"a deity, especially...the supreme Divinity; fig. a magistrate."* If this word can describe a magistrate, then it can certainly describe Jesus, and it is so used six times in the New Testament (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews

1:8; 2 Peter 1:1). It is used in John 10:35 of the worshippers of Jehovah. Once it even refers to Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). But none of these uses should confuse us about who is really the one and only supreme God of the universe, Jehovah.

If Jesus is God the Father, then Jesus' death was not real; it was just an illusion, because God cannot die. And when Jesus prayed with "strong crying and tears" to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, his agony would not have been real. The cry of Jesus, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* would have been just words if he were his own Father and already immortal. No, when Jesus breathed his last upon the cross, he really died.

The night before he was crucified, Jesus prayed to the Father that, when resurrected, he might have *"the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* (John 17:5) What did he mean? Jesus, as the firstborn of every creature, had a heavenly nature before he came into the world as a babe. He gave up his spiritual nature for an earthly one, in order that he might give his human life a ransom price for the sins of the whole world. (Colossians 1:15, 17)

The fact is especially important to comprehend and appreciate the magnitude of the sacrifice that Jesus was willing to offer! He did not merely appear to humble himself, while really retaining his glory and power; it was not that he seemed to become poor for our sakes. No, he actually became a man -- *"the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."* 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.