

Thinking About God - 2

Unity

The Bible is absolutely clear: there is only one God. It is our only source of information about Him, and it is explicit on this point. Early in the Old Testament we read:

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

This is reinforced in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul.

Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence', and that 'there is no God but one' (1 Corinthians 8:4).

Dangerous Mistakes

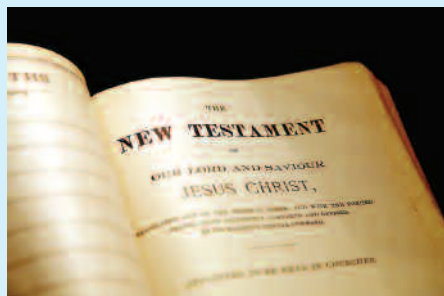
The *Religious Dictionary* (ed. Lyman Abbot) states that belief in a God of three persons came long after the Bible was completed. It was not until the beginning of the fourth century that the trinitarian view began to be elaborated and was formulated into a doctrine. Then efforts were made to reconcile it with the church's belief in one God.

There is a serious issue here. The notion of a 'trinity' is not found in the Bible, and there is no mention of the word or the idea all the way through it. So to introduce such a concept is to try and redefine what the Bible says – an approach which is both wrong and dangerous. It is condemned in the Bible itself:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the

plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Revelation 22:18–19).

This means that we have to accept what is found in the Bible as God's final revelation to us. We cannot add to the words of Scripture, nor can we take away from them. Our understanding of God must conform to what is in His Word.



A Father and Son Relationship

So we must also try to understand the relationship between the Lord Jesus and Almighty God. Again the Bible is quite specific. Jesus is the Son of God, and never, ever described as 'God the Son'.

The gospel of Luke uses these words in recording the message which the angel Gabriel gave to Mary, the mother of Jesus, telling her that she would have this remarkable son:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

The Bible also makes it quite clear that Jesus is of lower rank than his Father.

If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

These are words of the Lord Jesus, and clearly the person in the best position to know about the relationship between Father and Son, and to explain it to us, is Jesus himself.

The Apostle Paul also makes a very clear statement about the different status and roles fulfilled by Jesus and his Father, this time in respect to the relationship they have with men and women:

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

This is the clear understanding of the New Testament writers following the Lord Jesus, though they say nothing which demeans him in any way. Here is a further comment by Paul, looking to the future:

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The whole of the teaching of the New Testament is that the Lord Jesus is very much the son of his Father, but

that he is not the same as or equal to God. We shall return to this later in this series.

Unity of Purpose

The anonymous writer who penned the letter to the Hebrews put it this way:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world (Hebrews 1:1–2).

God communicates with us through the pages of the Bible, but we learn most about Him when we read about the work and words of the Lord Jesus, His Son. It belittles both the Lord God and the Lord Jesus to suggest that they are the same person. There is unity between them in the sense that they are both of the same mind and purpose, not because they are the same person. This is what the Lord God says of himself.

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things (Isaiah 45:5–7).

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Bible Quotations from the English Standard Version.