

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

GODHEAD

Advanced Bible Study



Jerry Bates

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Contents

1. Importance of the Godhead

5 

2. Jesus is God

13 

3. The Holy Spirit is God

21 

4. The Lord Our God is One!

27 

5. What does Three Persons in One Mean?

33 



Introduction



Understanding important subjects of the Bible is easy. I am sure this book will make it much easier.

Since I have known the author of this Bible study book for a long time, who is well known for his simple and strong teaching on any Bible subject, I will be honored by introducing and publishing this book by him. Many times I have been astonished by the way the author of this book brother **Jerry Bates** handles his classroom teaching, to make one understand the Bible topics. The same method is used here by the author in writing also, to make us know the subject on “Godhead” from the Bible. The author is very careful to make us understand this subject, based only on the Bible.

We welcome any such questions that arise, during the course of your study. Each lesson is followed by a question section, for you to answer and send it back to your Teacher. **Kindly send the filled in questionnaire sheet to the Senders Address (Your Teacher)** and keep the book for your future study. Be sure that, you will be rewarded with a beautiful certificate on completing this study. May God bless you, as you study and prove yourself worthy before God !

In the Service of the Lord,

PHILEMON RAJAH

Director - J.C. School of Evangelism
(Madurai) India





IMPORTANCE OF THE GODHEAD



The doctrine of the Godhead is one of the most disputed and debated doctrines of Christianity, yet it is also one of the most basic. It should not be surprising that we find it difficult to understand God, because we are trying to comprehend an infinite God with our finite minds. Nevertheless, it is essential that Christians have an understanding of this important doctrine. The doctrine of the Godhead means that all three, God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are divine, but they are not three Gods, but one. Godhead is a Latin word which means "three in one"; thus, the Godhead refers to God's three-in-oneness. Since this doctrine is hard to understand, many openly deny it, or they change it in some way, which results in a denial of the full divinity of either Jesus or the Holy Spirit or both. In this series of lessons we will first look at the question, "Does the doctrine of the Godhead make any difference?" Next, we will look at the biblical evidence of the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Finally we will study the question, "Does the doctrine of the Godhead make any sense?"

Why Some Seek to Abandon This Doctrine?

Some would say that the doctrine really makes little difference. In their view, there is no significant ethical or moral argument that would be changed, even if the Godhead was not true. Most Christian literature

would have to be changed very little. Practically speaking, many Christians do not really understand the doctrine of the Godhead anyway, so what difference does it make? The standard by which many judge truth is "What does it do for me?" In other words, if it doesn't help me reach my goals and desires, then it should be discarded or ignored. This doctrine also divides, thus according to many Christians, it should be abandoned. To some it is a major obstacle to faith in Jesus. Due to the above reasons, many would say that the Godhead makes little practical difference to a Christian and therefore is relatively unimportant.

To some extent, the erosion of belief in the Godhead represents a redefining of Christianity in general. What is so often emphasized in modern day religion are feelings or a religion's influence on social conditions in which we live. In either case, the Godhead is irrelevant to those conditions, thus, once again, many would insist that the doctrine should be abandoned.

The doctrine of the Godhead is also a major source of contention and ridicule with other religions. Other religions will often accuse the Christian of being polytheists, because we believe in the Godhead, which in their minds means three gods. At best, the doctrine is puzzling; at worst, it is an outright contradiction. Since the Godhead is a major source of contention, then again many would call for an abandoning of such a divisive doctrine.

The Importance of the Godhead

However, this doctrine is not minor or peripheral, because it concerns the very nature of who God is. One aspect of the Godhead is the

Incarnation, or God becoming man. Man often wonders where God is when hardships and tragedies happen. The Incarnation illustrates that God is not indifferent to the sufferings of the world; rather, He became part of the world in order to save it. This doctrine also removes the supposed unethical arrangement of an innocent third party being punished. If Jesus is part of the Godhead, then He was not an unwilling victim.

Furthermore, the Godhead distinguishes Christianity from other religions. In our religiously pluralistic society, all religions are looked upon as basically equal, and the differences between them could and should be reconciled or overlooked. However, the Godhead renders such a belief impossible. The Godhead cannot be merged into other religions. It is unique.

The question of to whom we should pray is commonly discussed among Christians. Since the Bible never commands us to pray to anyone except God the Father, then all prayers should be directed only to God the Father. This approach views the work of each of the Godhead as being completely separate. However, the idea of the Godhead shows that while certain works may be primarily the work of one member of the Godhead; nevertheless, all are involved in all aspects. The Holy Spirit aids in our prayers to God, in the name of Christ (Romans 8:26-27; John 15:16; 16:23). Thus, while we may pray to God the Father, all are involved in the answering of the prayer, and this forces us to question such a firm division in the work of the various members of the Godhead. Our prayers and worship are directed to a Triune God rather than simply God the Father.

How We Relate to Each Other is Dependent upon the Godhead?

The Godhead becomes a model for how we are to relate to one another. All three members of the Godhead are eternally equal. We will discuss some passages which indicate the subordination of Jesus in another lesson, but suffice it to say, that any subordination of Jesus should be regarded as part of His incarnation on earth and not of an eternal nature. Jesus said that we are to be one, just as He and the Father were one (John 17 : 11, 21). Thus, an understanding of the unity and oneness of the Godhead is necessary to understand exactly how we as His disciples are to be one.

Firstly, all Christians should be regarded as equal in value. While certainly many have different talents, abilities and functions; nevertheless, we are one in value and worth to God. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus** (Galatians 3:27). Thus, any situation where one member dominates another, or a person is regarded as somehow lesser in value is improper. Many problems have developed within the church where one person or group disregards the needs, situations, or desires of others, and power struggles have developed. One cannot possibly conceive of a power struggle within the Godhead; consequently, such a situation should not develop in the church either.

Secondly, no person should be exalted over another. Obviously, some members such as the preacher or leaders of a congregation, have more conspicuous roles than others. Some have greater talents or abilities, and their public contribution to the church may be seen to be

greater. Due to their greater economic achievements, some are able to give more than others. In such situations, there is a natural human tendency to value certain people more highly than we do others. However, such is not right in the sight of God. Two examples could be considered, such as the poor widow who gave only two small coins, yet Jesus commended her and said that she gave more than anyone else. In James 2, James condemns the showing of partiality or giving greater honor to the rich who might enter our assemblies. God regards all Christians as equal in value or worth, despite any external differences which might exist in our society, and so should we.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul compares the church to a physical body. Just as a physical body has many different parts, each with a different function, so in the church are many members and each has a different function. Yet, the weaker members must not be regarded as unimportant, but each should work for the unity and edification of the body as a whole. In a physical body, even if only one small part does not operate correctly, we do not regard that body as complete and healthy. Likewise, neither should a church in which all members are not united and equal in value be regarded as whole and healthy.

The same principle can be seen in the relations between congregations. Many times, the work of one congregation is done without any thought to the effect it might have on other works or congregations. Churches are often competitive with each other, each trying to be the biggest. While there is nothing wrong with trying to grow, we must always consider other congregations. Christianity is not like competition in business, in which small businesses are put out of business by larger ones, and while some may be saddened by it, we

regard such a situation as natural and normal. Churches should use their resources to aid others rather than keeping them strictly for their own use. Never can we imagine a scenario in which one member of the Godhead does His own thing without consideration of the effect upon the other members. Therefore, when we reflect the Godhead, congregations will be concerned for the welfare of other congregations.

This same principle can be seen even in our families. No member is to be seen as unimportant or of lesser value to the family. Likewise, no person should be lazy and contribute little to the welfare of the home. In the Godhead all are united and work together for one goal; therefore, when we reflect God in our lives, then everyone in the home works together for the good of the family, rather than anyone selfishly seeking his own desires.

Conclusion

We have been discussing the difference that the Godhead makes in our lives. God and Christ live in the lives of their servants. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:21, I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.... If God is to live through us, then we must understand the nature of God. While we frequently discuss how we as Christians should relate to each other, we often forget or do not know exactly why. We usually simply say that love demands us to act in a certain way. That is true, but even that goes back to God, since God is love (1 John 4:8). How we are to act towards one another in every situation ultimately goes back to the unity and love exhibited in the Godhead. If we remove the Godhead, we remove the very foundation upon which we are to pattern our lives. Does it make any difference? Hopefully, you would agree that it makes all the difference!

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. To what does the Godhead refer?
2. To what does the Incarnation of Jesus refer?
3. What is one important result of the incarnation?
4. What does James condemn in James 2?
5. What effect does a consideration of the Godhead have upon our roles in the family?

True / False

1. All religions have a similar doctrine of the Godhead. True / False
2. In the minds of many people, the Godhead is of little practical significance. True / False
3. All Christians are of equal value to each other. True / False
4. Congregations should be focused on themselves and show little concern to the welfare of other congregations. True / False
5. The Godhead is the foundation upon which we pattern our lives. True / False





JESUS IS GOD



Most would agree that God the Father is divine. Anyone that believes in Deity at all would agree that God the Father is divine, so we will assume that to be true. The question we address in this lesson is whether Jesus is divine.

His Pre-existence

One verse that clearly proves Jesus' pre-existence before His earthly life is John 1:1. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** We see a distinction between the Word and God because the Word was with God. It would be foolish to say God was with Himself. Yet, we see that the Word was God; that is, His nature was God. We see the same distinction in 1:14 when we read that the Word was made flesh, which is clearly a reference to Jesus. John the Baptist declares in verse 15 that Jesus ranked before him, because He was before him. Jesus lived before John, yet He was born physically about six months after John.

In John 8:58, Jesus said, **Before Abraham was, I am.** The phrase "I am" was used in Exodus 3:14-15 to denote the self-existence of Jehovah God. Jesus was not merely saying that He was alive before Abraham or was a reincarnation of Abraham; rather He applied the same designation of God the Father to Himself, thus making Himself equal to God and self-existent as God.

Jesus came from heaven. In John 3:13 Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus and says, **No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.** The Son of Man is clearly a reference to Jesus Himself, thus, Jesus declares that He was alive in heaven before He came to earth. Jesus makes another similar declaration in John 6:51. **I am the living bread which came down from heaven.** Further more, Jesus pronounces in John 6:62, **What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?** After His death, Jesus went back to heaven where He was before He came to earth.

All Jews accepted Psalm 110 as a Messianic psalm. In verse one we read, **The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."** The first "Lord" is God the Father, and the second "Lord" is a reference to the Messiah. Thus, David, by inspiration, calls his unborn descendant "Lord". How could the Messiah be both David's Lord and his descendant? Jesus applies this psalm to Himself. **How then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies Your footstool?'" If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his Son? (Matthew 22:43-45).** Thus, if Jesus was the Messiah, He would have to be pre-existent, or in other words, Divine. The Jews had problems understanding this because of their faulty understanding of the Messiah.

God's Names Are Applied To Jesus

In Isaiah 42:8 God states **I am the Lord {Jehovah}, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another,....** Matthew writing by inspiration quotes Isaiah 40:3, and in doing so, applies the name Jehovah to Jesus. In Titus 2:13, Titus announces that we should be looking for the

blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Notice that Jesus is called God.

Perhaps the clearest declaration of the Deity of Jesus is found in John 20. Jesus appeared to all His disciples, with the exception of Thomas, and when the disciples told Thomas that they had seen Jesus, he declared that he would never believe unless he could see and feel the print of the nails in Jesus' hands. The following Sunday, Jesus again appeared to His disciples, this time including Thomas. After receiving the personal confirmation of Jesus being alive, Thomas declared, **My Lord and my God.** The word for God in this case is Theos, which is used many times in the gospel of John and always referring to Deity. Thus, we have the firm declaration that Jesus is Deity just as God the Father is Deity.

Jesus is called the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Jehovah declares in Isaiah 44:6, **I am the first and the last; and besides me there is no God.** In Revelation 1:8 we read that God Almighty is the Alpha and the Omega. Only a few verses later (1:17), Jesus says to the apostle John that He is the First and the Last. The same titles are applied to Jesus in Revelation 22:12-13. Thus, the same titles are applied to both Jesus and God Almighty, proving that the two are equal.

In Hebrews 5:9 we read that Jesus is the author, or source, of salvation to all who obey Him. There is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12). No one but God can save men from their sins. Mary was told in Matthew 1:21 to name her baby Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins. Since Christ is doing what only God can do, it follows that

Jesus is equal with God. Jesus was also called Immanuel, which means "God with us."

Paul declares in Colossians 2:9 that the fullness of God (deity) dwelt in Jesus, but He is not God Himself. When Paul says that the fullness of deity dwells in Jesus, he is saying that everything that makes God God also dwells in Jesus. In other words, Jesus is God as much as the Father is God.

Attributes of Deity Are Applied To Jesus

Jesus is eternal just as God. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 9:6, **For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** All of these names are applied to Deity at other places in Scripture. Hebrews 1:8 is a quotation from Psalm 45:6: **Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.** Psalm 45 is clearly a reference to Deity, and the Son is greater than angels; thus, we have another proof for the Deity of Jesus, because He created all things (Colossians 1:16-17).

Jesus is declared to be omnipotent (all-powerful). John 1:3 declares that the Word created all things. The one who built all things was God (Hebrews 3:4); thus, since Jesus created all things, he must be God or Deity. Furthermore, Paul declares in Colossians 1:16, **For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth.... All things were created through him and for Him.** Jesus created all things, thus Jesus must be God.

Jesus knew all things. John writes in John 2:24,25, **But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.** Obviously only God can know the hearts of man; therefore, Jesus is declared to be God.

Divine Works are Applied to Jesus

In John 6, after feeding the 5,000, He said He was the bread of life (John 6:48,51, 53-58). This means that Jesus as the spiritual bread sustains spiritual life. No mere man could make this claim. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said He was the resurrection and life, then raised Lazarus from the dead to prove that claim. This would also mean He has the power to give life. **For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will** (John 5:21). Since only God can give life, Jesus must also be God. Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). Since God made the Sabbath, only God could be Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus claimed to be equal with God in several places. He said, **I and the Father are one** (John 10:30). By this He meant that He was deserving of equal honor with God. The Jews clearly understood this claim, because they took up stones to kill him. When Jesus was undergoing His trial, the High Priest plainly asked Him if He was "the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63-64). Under oath, Jesus said, "I am." He claimed to have the power to forgive sins, and everyone knew that only God could forgive sins. In Mark 2:1-12 He healed a paralyzed man after telling him that his sins were forgiven. Only God could have healed the man; thus, the miracle proved the claim of Jesus. Jesus also claimed to be the Judge of all men. **For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son** (John 5:22).

Divine Worship was Attributed to Jesus

In John 9 Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. A little later, Jesus again talked to the man and asked him if he believed in the Son of

Man. The man asked who the Son of Man was. Jesus then declared that He was the Son of Man, and notice the reply of the man. **Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him** (John 9:38). A similar episode occurred in Matthew 14:33. **And those in the boat {the disciples} worshiped him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God.** Jesus accepted worship, which a zealous Jew would never have done. All Jews understood that only God deserved worship. Jesus would not have accepted worship, and his disciples would not have worshipped Jesus unless Jesus was God.

We even read about God commanding the angels to worship His son. Notice Hebrews 1:6. **And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, Let all God's angels worship him.** This verse is a quote from Deuteronomy 32:43. The firstborn is naturally a reference to the Son of God or Jesus. God would never command the angels to worship anyone who is not God.

Conclusion

There are many other references that could be mentioned that either imply or clearly declare Jesus to be equal with God, but these should be sufficient. Any open-minded individual who believes the Bible should understand that Jesus is God, just as God the Father is God.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. What does the phrase "I Am" indicate?
2. How could the Messiah of Psalm 110 be both David's lord and his descendant?
3. Who declared, "My Lord and My God" in regards to Jesus?
4. When Jesus declared that the Son of God gives life, how does that prove His Deity?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, I and the Father are One?

True / False

1. When Jesus claimed to live before Abraham, He was saying that He had the same self-existence as God the Father. True / False
2. Since Jesus was the Creator, He must also be Divine. True / False
3. Since the same titles are applied to both God and Jesus, we know Jesus is also God. True / False
4. No one worshipped Jesus while He was on the earth. True / False
5. Jesus claimed to be the Judge of all men. True / False





THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD



In the previous lesson I discussed the evidence showing that Jesus is God, and now I will do the same in regards to the Holy Spirit. This study is more difficult than the study in regards to Jesus. It is more difficult to determine His work, and there have been many abuses regarding His work. Many people look upon this age as the age of the Holy Spirit; thus, the Spirit is often seemingly exalted even above Jesus and God the Father. Of course, that would be an abuse of Biblical teaching concerning the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a Person

The Holy Spirit has the attributes of personality (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14). Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as a person nine times in these passages.

He speaks and empowers others to speak. **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith...** (1 Timothy 4:1).

He teaches. **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you** (John 14:26).

He guides. **However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth....** (John 16:13).

He has a mind. **Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the**

Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:27).

He has affections. **Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me (Romans 15:30).**

He possesses a Will. **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11).**

He can be grieved. **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).**

Holy Spirit is Divine

One of the clearest declarations of the deity of the Holy Spirit can be found in Acts 5:3-4. In Acts 5 we find Ananias and Sapphira selling some property and bringing part of the proceeds to the apostles to help the poor. However, they lied by saying that they gave the entire proceeds from the sale to the church. In verse 3 we find Peter saying to Ananias, **Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...** Then, at the end of verse 4 we find this statement from Peter. **You have not lied to men but to God.** By inspiration, Peter points out that the same lie was a lie against the Holy Spirit as well as to God. This equates the Spirit and God the Father.

In Deuteronomy 32:12 we find that the Lord God **alone** led Israel in the desert; yet, in Isaiah 63:10 we read that Israel rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit. This is not a contradiction; rather, the Spirit is also Deity. God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit were all involved in leading Israel. A similar situation can be seen between Isaiah 40:13 and Romans 11:34. In Isaiah 40 Isaiah asks who had taught or counseled the Spirit. Paul quoted this verse in Romans 11 and applied it to God the Father, again showing that the two are equal.

The Spirit has Divine Attributes

In Hebrews 9:14 the Spirit is spoken of as the Eternal Spirit. The Spirit is also said to be omnipresent. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul asks, **Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?** The Spirit is said to be dwelling in the hearts of each Christian. Since Christians are scattered all over the world, this cannot be true unless the Spirit has the Divine characteristic of being everywhere at the same time. David realized it was impossible to flee from the Holy Spirit (Psalm 139:7). Furthermore, the Spirit is said to be omniscient (all knowing). Notice 1 Corinthians 2:10. **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.** The Spirit is said to know the deep things of God; thus, He must likewise be Deity. Micah declares that he was "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord" (Micah 3:8).

The Spirit Performs Divine Works

The Spirit is said to have had a part in creation. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 33:6, **By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.** The breath would be a reference to the Spirit. A similar statement is made in Psalm 104:30, **You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.** Not only did the Spirit have a part in creating the earth, but He also preserves or renews the earth.

Jesus declares, **It is the Spirit who gives life** (John 6:63). Only God has the power to give life, and here we have the words of Jesus stating that the Spirit can give life; thus, the Spirit must be God. In 1 Peter 3:18, Peter is discussing the suffering and exaltation of Christ. He states that Jesus suffered so that mankind might come to God. He was put to death

physically but "made alive by the Spirit." In **Romans 8:11** Paul states that the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us up.

Another evidence of the deity of the Holy Spirit is the incarnation of Jesus. In both Matthew and Luke, it is declared that Jesus was begotten or conceived by the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35**). One is the son of whom he is begotten; therefore, we could say that Jesus is the Son of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus is also called in several places the Son of God; therefore, the Spirit must also be God. This is also a confirmation of the doctrine of the oneness of God, which we will discuss in the next lesson. If the three are not One, then Jesus has two fathers.

Holy Spirit as Object of Worship

In **2 Corinthians 13:14** we find the Holy Spirit mentioned as part of a hallowed Godhead. **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** It would be sacrilege to put any other name in that triumvirate except for Deity. A similar statement is found in the Great Commission of Jesus in **Matthew 28:19**. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** To be baptized in the name of someone is an act of worship. Paul would not allow anyone to be baptized in his name (**1 Corinthians 1:13**). Thus, the Spirit as well as Jesus, is receiving the same honor and worship as God the Father.

Conclusion

From the previous discussion, hopefully one can see that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as Deity and possesses the same characteristics of Deity as does God the Father and Jesus. Thus, the Spirit is also God. In the next lesson, we will consider how the Three can be One.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. Who guided the apostles in all truth?
2. To whom did Ananias and Sapphira lie?
3. Our bodies are the temple of the _____.
4. To be baptized in the name of someone is an act of _____.
5. What does the word omniscient mean?

True / False

1. The Holy Spirit is never referred to as a Person. True / False
2. The Holy Spirit and God are equated in several verses. True / False
3. Jesus said that the Spirit gives life. True / False
4. It could be said that Jesus is the Son of the Holy Spirit. True / False
5. The Holy Spirit had nothing to do with the Creation. True / False





THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE!



The next consideration in our study is a discussion of the relation of God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. At first glance, one might say these are three gods, thus Christianity is actually polytheistic. The other extreme is to believe that the three are merely different manifestations of the One God. In other words, there is only one God, but at times He is spoken of as God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Jesus is only a manifestation of this one God, and at other times, God is displayed as the Spirit. This avoids the dilemma of having three gods, but we run into the problem of rationalizing this doctrine with the teaching of the Bible.

The doctrine of the Godhead is a difficult idea to understand. Actually, I do not believe we can fully understand the Godhead, but this should not surprise us. There are many things about God that humans cannot fully comprehend. For example, humans cannot comprehend the idea of eternity, because everything in this world has a beginning and an end. However, by definition, eternity had no beginning and will have no ending. While we may give some illustrations that may help some, all illustrations fall far short of truly describing eternity. If we could fully understand and comprehend all aspects about God, then He would no longer be God. Once we think we fully understand God, we have simply created God into an image, and He is no longer God. We do not want to worship someone or something that is no more than a man, regardless of how great he may be.

Efforts to Resolve This Difficulty

It should not be surprising that man has devised several doctrines which seem to solve the difficulty of the Godhead. Notice a few of the major ones.

One solution is to redefine the Deity of Jesus. This idea teaches that Jesus was not Divine in any sense at his conception or birth, but later he was adopted by God and elevated to the position of Deity. One could speak of Jesus as Divine because God was so strongly working in and through Jesus during his life on earth. This resolves the tension between the Deity of Jesus and God; however, it rejects and overlooks many passages that teach the equality between Jesus and God and the Deity of Jesus from His conception and even before His conception.

Another view is one that has already been mentioned, and it presents God like an actor who plays several parts in a play. At one time God is playing the part of God the Father; at another time He plays the part of Jesus; and at other times, He plays the part of the Spirit. Thus, God is not actually three Persons but merely One person presented in three different forms. This approach preserves the unity of God; however, it ignores several passages in which all three are present simultaneously. When Jesus was baptized, God spoke from heaven and the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove (Luke 3:21-22). To whom did Jesus pray when He was on the earth? It would be silly to say that Jesus prayed to Himself. When God was a fetus in the womb of Mary, how could He control and preserve the universe? How could God truly be limited in knowledge as was Jesus while on earth (e.g. Mark 13:32), if He was one and the same person?

Another common solution in the religious world is to redefine the relationship between the Father and the Son. Rather than holding that Jesus is eternal, this view presents the Son as merely a created being, the first and certainly highest creature, but nevertheless, Jesus is a created being and thus less than God. Some passages in the New Testament seem to support this idea. For instance, Jesus said, **The Father is greater than I** (John 14:28). In Mark 10:18 as well as Luke 18:19, Jesus distinguished Himself from God when He said, **Why do you call Me good? No one is good, but One, that is, God.** However, as with the other approaches, this view ignores the many passages which teach the power and the eternal nature of Jesus that was presented in Lesson 2. The New Testament passages which present the superiority of the Father over His Son can easily be understood as indicating Jesus' willful emptying of the characteristics of Deity as indicated in Philippians 2:5-11 when He became flesh.

God is One

This doctrine is taught all through the Bible. The Jews regularly quoted Deuteronomy 6:4, called the Shema, **Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!** Jesus also quoted this verse in Mark 12:29. The very first one of the Ten Commandments states, **you shall have no other gods before Me.** Isaiah spoke against idolatry on many occasions. Notice just two examples. ... **I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).** A similar statement is made in the next chapter. **I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me.... (Isaiah 45:5).** Paul made a comparable statement in 1 Corinthians 8:4, ... **there is no other God but one.**

We learn from **James 2:19** that even the demons believe there is only one God.

How can Three be One? That is the problem that we humans have. We cannot conceive of three different material substances being combined into One and yet still remaining three distinct substances. In the next lesson we will look further at this idea of God being One, as well as considering some analogies that might help us better understand this difficult concept.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. Name two things in this lesson that were mentioned that we cannot fully understand.
2. How do we know that God is not merely an actor presenting Himself in three different forms?
3. Why could the incarnated Jesus seem to be less than God?
4. What did the Jews call Deuteronomy 6:4?
5. How many Gods did James say there was?

True / False

1. The Worship is not a very difficult idea to understand. True / False
2. We can fully understand the concept of God. True / False
3. One common way of resolving the tension of the Godhead is to believe that Jesus was the first created being. True / False
4. The demons believe in many gods. True / False
5. The first of the Ten Commandments states that we should have no other gods before the true God. True / False





WHAT DOES THREE PERSONS IN ONE MEAN?



We have seen that God is composed of three Persons, each of whom have all the characteristics of Deity. The Bible presents three Persons, and only three, with Divine titles. Notice Haggai 2:5-7. **According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you; do not fear! For thus says the Lord of hosts. Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of all nations, and I will fill this temple with glory, says the Lord of hosts.** Three Beings are mentioned as Deity: The Lord of Hosts, the Spirit, and the Desire of All Nations. The Desire of All Nations is clearly a reference to Jesus. In a similar manner, these same three Beings are mentioned as God and mentioned together in Matthew 28:19. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** In this passage, the word "name" is singular. Thus, three Beings make up the One name. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul refers to all three together in 2 Corinthians 13:14. **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

The idea of the Godhead would not be expected to be seen much in the Old Testament, yet many statements in the Old Testament are certainly consistent with the doctrine of the Godhead. One of the

clearest is the use of plurals in respect to God. If God is One, then only singular forms should be used in respect to God. Yet, the Hebrew name for God, Elohim is plural in form. That by itself would not necessarily indicate plurality, but notice Genesis 1:2. **Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.** The word "said" is singular, but the verb "Let us make" is plural, as are "Our image" and "Our likeness". Other similar examples can be found. **Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil"** (Genesis 3:22). Notice one more example, this time from Isaiah 6:8. **Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send. And who will go for Us?"** The shift of number from singular to plural is significant.

How Can We Understand The Godhead?

We have seen that the Bible plainly declares God to be One, yet at the same time, declares and indicates a plurality in form at other places. How can we understand this mysterious concept? God is One, but He is not One in number, but One is essence or unity. Consider the best known unity passage in the Bible, Deuteronomy 6:4-5. **Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!** The Hebrew has two words for one. One word indicates one or uniqueness, such as when Abraham is told to offer his only son. Another word, which is used in Deuteronomy 6 indicates a unity or composite of several factors. This same word is used in Genesis 2:24, **Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

Several analogies have been proposed to illustrate the Godhead but none are perfect. The Godhead has been compared to water, which can

exist as a solid, liquid or vapor. The main problem with that illustration is that water cannot exist in all three forms at the same time. The Godhead has been compared to an egg which is composed of a shell, yoke and white, but it is still one egg. The Godhead has also been compared to several physical objects. Another illustration is that a human being can be a father, son, and husband all at the same time. The problem with that illustration is that one person cannot be a father, son, and husband to the same person. I particularly like an illustration from the Bible. In Genesis 1, God commands that man should leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Obviously they remain two separate individuals, but they should be completely united. Similarly, in John 17:11 Jesus prayed that Christians would be one just as He and God were one. Obviously, all Christians cannot literally become one person. Likewise, Paul said that "he that plants and he that waters are one." Of course, we must realize that the factors limiting the oneness of human beings do not apply to God, thus the Godhead is united to a much greater extent than humans.

Another way of looking at the Godhead is to view the Godhead as a society, a complex of persons. They are bound together by love for God is love (1 John 4:8,16). Love binds them so closely that they are One. Love requires a subject and an object. Thus, before the creation, God could not have really loved unless He was more than One. This may seem insufficient, but there are several limiting factors among human beings that is not present in Deity. We are separated by physical bodies. Since God is a spirit, He does not have that limitation. All humans have differing experiences which affect all aspects of our lives. Obviously

that limitation is also not present with God. All humans are preoccupied with one's self, one's own needs and problems, but that preoccupation is not part of God's nature. All of these factors, and maybe more, make it impossible for us to completely focus on, understand or empathize with other humans; however, those limitations are not true with God, thus He is able to be completely united to a much greater extent than is possible with human beings.

Conclusion

In this series of lessons we have been attempting to explain the concept of the Godhead. While we can never completely understand it, hopefully this study has enabled us to better comprehend it, and even more so, strengthened our faith in this vital doctrine. The Godhead is composed of three persons or centers of consciousness, but all are so completely united that they become one. All three beings of the Godhead interpenetrate one another, supply life to the others, and all are involved in all aspects of the work of God.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. How many Beings are spoken of in the Bible with Divine titles?
2. What does Isaiah call the three Beings?
3. God is one in _____ or _____.
4. What binds the Godhead together?
5. What are some qualities of mankind that prevent our unity like God would have?

True / False

1. God (Elohim) is often used in the plural form in the Bible.
True / False
2. No analogy perfectly illustrates the idea of the Godhead.
True / False
3. The Hebrew word for one always means a literal number of one.
True / False
4. For love to really be love you must have an object different from yourself.
True / False
5. The work of the Godhead is equally divided among all the members and this work is not shared by the other members.
True / False

