

GODHEAD COURSE

Lesson 4

How many Gods are there?

To come to the correct understanding of *Who* God is, one must consult the Bible, not tradition or man's philosophical ideas. In this topic, the first and most basic fact that needs to be established is that there is one God.

The monotheistic (one God) teaching is a widespread belief not only within Christendom, but also in other religions, such as Islam and Judaism. However, not all monotheistic believers worship the same God.

The concern in these studies is the God of Christianity. Almost all Christians agree there is one God. Although there are some who believe in tri-theism, a polytheistic belief of three Gods in one Godhead, monotheism (the oneness of God) is clearly the biblical truth.

Simply believing in the oneness of God does not mean that one believes biblical truth. Some believe in a triune monotheistic God, like the trinity, while others believe in a one, numerical, monotheistic God, like Modalism. Holding to a monotheistic belief does not automatically equate to Biblical truth.

The Bible clearly teaches there is one God. Both the Old and New Testament testify that "*God is one*" Gal 3:20.

God is One

Consider these monotheistic statements:

- "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.*" Deut 6:4
- "*Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*" Rom 3:30

- *“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that **there is none other God but one.**” 1 Cor 8:4*
- *“Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” Gal 3:20*
- *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:6*
- *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” James 2:19*
- *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” 1 Timothy 2:5*

Clearly the God of Christianity is one God. The Bible is a Monotheistic book. It does not say one Godhead or three gods. It says one God.

The Hebrew word for God is “Elohim” and it is a plural word. Hence a tri-theist might use this line of reasoning to prove a plurality of God. Trinitarians, on the other hand, use a different variation of the same argument.

With this in mind, please note that the New Testament was not written in Hebrew but in Greek. The word translated as “God” in the verses above is “theos” which is the singular form for God.

The Greek plural form of the word “theos” is “theoi”. The plural form is used 5 times in the NT (John 10:34; Acts 14:11; 19:26; 1 Cor 8:5)

Notice how Jesus used the plural form:

“Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (Θεοί Theoi)” John 10:34

John, the writer of the gospel, deliberately used the plural form of the word.

In that passage, Jesus was quoting from Ps 82:6 that says:

“I have said, Ye are gods (Elohim 430); and all of you are children of the Most High.” Psalm 82:6

When John recorded the words of Jesus, he interpreted the Plural Hebrew word “Elohim” as “Theoi” (plural in Greek). He understood that the word Elohim was not referring to the God of heaven but to the believers.

In contrast, when talking about the true God, Jesus used the singular form of the Greek word:

“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God (Θεὸς Theos) is one Lord:” Mark 12:29

Jesus was quoting the verse we read earlier, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [Elohim] is one LORD.” Deuteronomy 6:4*

The Hebrew word for “God” in this verse is Elohim, the same word used in Psalms 82:6 referring to the believers. But the interesting thing is that when John wrote the gospel, he interpreted the word Elohim when referring to our God, as “Theos” (singular), not “theoi” (plural).

Clearly this indicates that the God of the bible is a singular (one), monotheistic God. Jesus and the disciples did not understand the word “Elohim” when referring to the true God, to mean a plurality of Gods (polytheism).

The concept of three Gods (tri-theism) contradicts scripture. If tri-theism is correct, the writers of the NT would have always used the plural Greek word “Theoi” instead of “Theos”, when referring to God

Paul confirms this:

“For though there be that are called gods (theoi - Plural), whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)” 1 Cor 8:5

“But to us there is but one God (theos - singular), the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” 1 Cor 8:6

The verses stating “God is one”, plus the intentional Greek word used by the New Testament (NT) authors referring to the true God is sufficient evidence to rule out tri-theism, three Gods. Monotheism, was believed and taught by Jesus, the disciples, and all the Jews in the first century.

The problem is that Trinitarian theology, the Oneness theology, and the One True God theology all agree there is one God. Hence simply stating there is “one God” does not clearly define where one stands.

For example, a Trinitarian can say “Amen” to the above verses and still hold to his Trinitarian belief, because according to the Trinity, there is one God. Yes, this God is made up of three persons, but at the end of the day, God is one. The same with the individual who believes in the Oneness theology or the One True God theology. All of these theologies are monotheistic, but they are not Biblical. Therefore, one must study the bible to find out the answer to this dilemma.

Both Father & Son Referred to as “God”:

To add to this confusion, the Bible says there is one God, yet both the Father and the Son are referred to as God.

Jesus is called God more than once in the New Testament. Thomas called Him “*My Lord and My God*” (John 20:28). God the Father also refers to Jesus as God in Hebrews 1:8. And though Jesus testified that He is the Son of God, and never directly claimed to be God, the New Testament presents Him as:

- Equal with God (Phil 2:6)
- Divine (John 1:1)
- Using the name of God (John 8:58)
- Receiving worship (Matt 14:33)

Clearly the New Testament (N.T.) presents Jesus as “God”; and the Old Testament (O.T.) testifies to this as well. Here are some examples:

Isaiah

Matthew says the following about John the Baptist:

“For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Matt 3:33

Matthew was quoting from Isaiah 40:3 where it says:

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the LORD [Jehovah], make straight in the desert a highway for our God [Elohim].”

Isaiah 40:3

This prophecy speaks about John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Interestingly, Isaiah calls the Messiah Lord (Jehovah) and our God (Elohim).

This is what Thomas was referring to when he said *“my Lord and my God”!* *John 20:28*. Thomas was a Jew and no doubt he knew these prophecies and was waiting for the promised Messiah like all the other Jews. By his words *“my Lord and my God” John 20:28* he was proclaiming to Jesus, “you are the One Isaiah prophesied– the promised Messiah to whom the prophecies pointed!”

Joel

Another example is found by comparing the prophecy in Joel with Peter and Paul’s applications of it:

*“And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD [Jehovah] shall be delivered:** for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” Joel 2:32*

Both Peter and Paul quote this verse in reference to Jesus:

*“And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**” Acts 2:21*

Peter was referring to Jesus in his discourse on the day of Pentecost. If you keep reading you will come to verse 36 where he says:

*“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both **Lord and Christ.**” Acts 2:36*

This is the conclusion Peter wanted to reveal: Jesus is the Lord and the Christ: He is divine; He is the One who was prophesied in the Scriptures. Peter does this by taking a prophecy which speaks of Jehovah and applies it to Jesus. It shows his conviction of Christ’s deity. Paul does the same in Romans 10:13 *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

In both the old and new testaments there are many verses that show Jesus was referred to as God and called God.

Another common verse says He will be called: *“mighty God [Elohim]” Isaiah 9:6*

So, is Jesus God? Yes, *most certainly and unequivocally*, Jesus is God.

This presents a problem in some people’s understanding:

- If the Father is God, and Jesus is God, yet there aren’t two or three Gods but only one God, then doesn’t this mean the Trinity is the most logical answer to this conundrum?

To harmonize these apparent problems, some have resorted to believing in the Trinity while others deny that Jesus is God (either by denying His deity altogether, or describing Him as a *lesser God* than the Father). Both positions

are extreme and miss the intended meaning of the Scripture. To better understand these issues and come to a harmonious and Biblical understanding, we need to answer few questions, some of which are:

- What does the Bible mean when it says there is one God?
- Who is it referring to?
- Why is Jesus called God?

These questions will be addressed in future lessons as we examine the Scriptures in relation to these five stages:

1. **The Old Testament:** Who did the Jews worship? What did monotheism mean to them? Was their monotheistic God a trinity or was He one, individual, divine Person?
2. **John the Baptist:** What did this man who was divinely chosen to announce the coming of the Messiah understand about God?
3. **The Gospels:** During His incarnation, what did Jesus teach about God? What version of monotheism did He advocate? And what did the Jews in His day believe?
4. **The Apostle's writings, from Pentecost onward:** What version of monotheism did they advocate?
5. **The Revelation:** In this book which gives us insight into the future and what goes on in heaven, what version of Monotheism do we find there?

These are perplexing questions. In following Bible studies, the answers become clear and easily understood.

In closing, the intention of this lesson was to present the God of the Bible as a monotheistic God, the very foundation of this topic.