

GODHEAD COURSE

Lesson 6

Monotheism in the OT

Having established the fact that the God of the Bible is monotheistic (one God) and not tri-theistic indicates that the teaching of three Gods is not in harmony with scripture. However, there are other options to consider:

1. Trinity
2. Jesus only (oneness)
3. The Father & Son message

Did the Jews in the O.T. worship a “triune” monotheistic god or a “one individual” monotheistic God?

The Jews of that era were limited to the O.T. in understanding what they worshipped. With the N.T. scripture, a greater knowledge and understanding of God is afforded to the Christian.

Below are some facts as presented in the Old Testament:

1. There is evidence that God is One.
 - *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is **one LORD**” Deuteronomy 6:4*
 - “Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.” Deuteronomy 4:35*
 - “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3*
2. The word “Elohim,” translated as “God” in English, is a plural noun in Hebrew. Does this prove the plurality of our monotheistic God?
3. Though there is only one God, there is evidence of *two divine Beings*.

Examples:

Sodom and Gomorrah

“Then the LORD [Jehovah] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [Jehovah] out of heaven.” Genesis 19:24

This verse speaks of two beings referred to as Jehovah. In the previous chapter one finds the conversation between Abraham and the being who appeared to him. In that conversation, the One who appeared and spoke with Abraham was called Jehovah.

Consider:

“And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD [Jehovah].” Genesis 18:22

And the LORD [Jehovah] said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.” Genesis 18:26

So, Jehovah, who appeared to Abraham with the two angels, rained down fire and brimstone from Jehovah up in heaven. This is evidence of two Beings referred to as Jehovah. Two divine beings.

Joshua and the heavenly being:

Joshua asked him:

“...Art thou for us, or for our adversaries” Joshua 5:13

The heavenly being replied:

*“And he said, Nay; but as **captain of the host of the LORD** am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?” Joshua 5:14*

Joshua worshipped the Captain of the host of the LORD.

Two Beings are mentioned in this verse:

1. The *captain* of the angels (or host).
2. Jehovah, to whom the heavenly host belong.

The captain cannot simply be a high-ranking angel, because angels reject any worship from men. We see this demonstrated when an angel appeared to John:

*“... And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then he saith unto me, “**See thou do it not:** for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: **Worship God.**” Revelation 22: 8-9*

The angel who appeared to John, rejected John’s worship, whereas the Being who appeared to Joshua, and identified Himself as the “*captain of the host of the LORD*” did not reject Joshua’s worship, indicating that this Being is divine and worthy of worship.

This example gives evidence of two divine beings worthy of worship:

1. Jehovah, to whom the angels belong
2. The captain of the angels.

These two examples disprove the “Jesus only / oneness” theology. The fact that there are two divine beings disprove the idea of only one divine being manifesting in three different forms.

If the “Jesus only” theology is correct, then there can not be more than one divine being, however, the scriptures clearly disprove this notion.

So far tri-theism (three gods) and modalism (Jesus only theology) have been ruled out.

4. The fourth fact in the O.T. is the existence of an entity referred to as the Holy Spirit, or the *Spirit of God*, found in the account of creation and other places. (Genesis 1:2, etc.)

Summary:

- There is one God.
- There are two divine Beings referred to as Jehovah.
- The word translated as *God* is a plural word.
- There is another entity identified as the Holy Spirit.

What does one conclude from these facts? There are two options that harmonize with them:

1. God is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A triune monotheistic God.

2. There is One God, the Father, of whom are all things, who has an equally divine Son, by whom are all things, and can be in all places present by His omnipresent Spirit – His very own life and presence, with all of His power, attributes, and characteristics?

Considering the question “*What did the Jewish people believe from the Scriptures?*”, one must focus on what God’s chosen people understood, and who they worshipped. Did they worship a triune monotheistic God, or a singular monotheistic God (only one divine being, referred to as the God of the Bible)? The answer depends on the following key points:

- The plurality of *Elohim*
 - How do we read it?
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in the O.T.
 - How do we understand it?
- The presence of more than one divine Being referred to as God
 - How do we interpret it?

This Study will address the first two points. The last point will be addressed in the next lesson.

1. The plurality of the word *Elohim*.

The word *Elohim* is the plural form of the word “*El*.” However, it does not automatically imply that God is a Trinity:

- a) The plural form of the word *Elohim* can be used for a singular person.

For example:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god [Elohim H430] to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.” Exodus 7:1

God said to Moses, I will make you an *Elohim* to pharaoh, meaning: I will make you very great.

*“And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was **very great** in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people.” Exodus 11:3*

Although *Elohim* is a plural noun, it is used in reference to Moses, a singular person, to indicate greatness and majesty. This means that even though it is a plural word, it does not automatically prove a plurality of persons.

It's use in reference to God can be understood to indicate greatness and majesty, instead of plurality of persons.

When a King or Queen uses the pronouns “we” or “our,” they are only referring to themselves as (one, singular person). This is called the “plural of majesty,” and is the reason why God used this plural noun to describe how He would make Moses mighty and powerful in pharaoh's eyes.

The use of “Elohim” is an indication of greatness and majesty not a trinity.

b) Elohim is not the only Hebrew word which is singular, but grammatically plural. Other words include:

- “mayim” Water (Gen 16:7)
- “Panim” face (6440)

“And he [Joseph] washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.” Gen 43:31

The word translated “face” is mayim, and just like “Elohim”, has a plural masculine ending. Abraham didn't have more than one face. This is unique to the Hebrew language.

Although Elohim is a plural word, the idea that God must be more than one person does not rightly divide the word of God.

c) If Jesus and the apostles understood the Word “Elohim” as plural, then they would have translated it into the plural in Greek. But, they translated it into the singular, shedding light on how they understood the word Elohim.

“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

The Jews did not read tri-unity into the plural word *Elohim*. Hence, it is not a decisive argument to use the plural form of *El* as proof of a trinity.

The plural word *Elohim* can be used in its singular meaning to describe a singular Being using the plural of majesty, or to describe a triune being, as when the word *Elohim* is used in reference to idols. Interpretation is not an argument that can stand alone. One must consider the full weight of Biblical evidence, and then allow the bible to determine how to interpret the word.

2. Reference to the Holy Spirit in the O.T.:

Below are the key O.T. references in regards to the Holy Spirit:

- a. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters.” Genesis 1:1-2*

Note the possessive terminology used in this verse, i.e. “The Spirit of God.”

It **does not** say: “God the Spirit.” Big difference!

It is clear there are two Beings referred to as Elohim in the O.T. There is no mention of a third being called “Elohim the Spirit”. The Holy Spirit is just referred to as the Spirit of Elohim.

Regarding the account of creation, the bible says:

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath ^(H7307) of his mouth.” Psalms 33:6

The Hebrew word for “breath” ^(H7307) is “ruach” which is the same word translated as “Spirit” in Genesis 1:2 where it said “And the Spirit ^(H7307) of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Genesis 1:1

These two verses demonstrate that “the Spirit of God”, the same spirit mentioned in Genesis 1:2, is “the breath of God”.

Jesus confirmed this when he said:

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John 20:22

Jesus breathed His own breath or Spirit upon them. In the same way, it is *the Spirit of God* that is mentioned in Genesis 1:2, not God the Spirit. “Spirit of God,” can also be translated “breath of God”:

In Job the bible says:

“The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Job 33:4

The Spirit of God is the breath (the life) of God. That is the definition of “*ruach*.”

Therefore, Genesis 1:2 tells us that when God created the world, His Spirit, or His breath, moved upon the face of the waters. It is interesting that when you speak, your breath comes out with your words. The Bible tells us that “*by the word of the Lord the heavens were made*” Psalms 33:6, and that “*He spake and it was*” Psalms 33:6.

Thus, the creative words:

“Let there be light: and there was light.” Genesis 1:3

When the bible says “the spirit of God hovered on the face of the deep” it is not referring to a third divine being or person called “God the holy spirit”. One must conclude that the use of “the spirit of God” refers to the breath of God, the word of God, and the life of God:

b. *“The Spirit of the LORD (Jehovah) spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”* 2 Samuel 23:2

It is the Spirit of Jehovah. Jehovah, by His Spirit, spoke through David. “*His*,” Jehovah’s, word was in David’s tongue. The “*his*” refers to Jehovah, not to another entity called God the spirit. It is a possessive pronoun. The *word* belongs to Jehovah, just as the *Spirit* belongs to Jehovah. The following verse sheds light on this as well:

*“Cast me not away from **thy presence**; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”*
Psalms 51:11

The Holy Spirit is equated with the presence of God. God can be everywhere present through His Spirit. It is His very own life, breath, and energizing presence with which He anointed His prophets:

c. *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”* Isaiah 61:1

Just as God anointed His prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus would also be anointed with the Spirit or life of God. This is revealed in the prophecies of Isaiah and in the account of Jesus’ baptism:

*“And **the spirit of the LORD** shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” Isaiah 11:2*

*“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put **my spirit** upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” Isaiah 42:1*

*“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:” Matthew 3:16*

These verses say nothing about “God the Holy Spirit,” but speak of the Spirit of a holy God. And because the Spirit of God is the life and presence of God, God the Father Himself was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world unto Himself as we read in the following verses:

*“To wit, that **God was in Christ**, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Cor 5:19*

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” John 14:10

d. *“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.” Isaiah 48:16*

A very brief look at this verse in the original language reveals that it has been mistranslated and misunderstood. Here is the same verse in a few other translations:

- *“...and now the Lord God has sent me, and given me his spirit.”*
(Bible in Basic English)
- *“And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.”*
(Revised Standard Version)
- *“And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and His Spirit.”*
(Young’s Literal Translation)

According to the context, the speaker appears to be Christ. It was God the Father who sent Jesus on His mission to earth (John 3:16).

When Jesus came into the world as the Messiah, God sent His Holy Spirit to rest upon Him as mentioned repeatedly in the bible (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1–3; Matthew 3:16; Luke 4:18–21; John 1:32, 33; Acts 10:38).

In this text Christ was simply stating that God the Father sent Him and anointed Him with His Spirit. There was only *one sender* (the Father) *not two*. Jesus expressed this in the New Testament many times (John 5:30, 36, 37; 6:39, 44, 57; 8:16, 18, 29, 42; 12:49; 14:24; 17:21,25; 20:21; Galatians 4:4-6; 1 John 4:10, 14).

As a matter of fact, Jesus indirectly explained this text by saying:

*Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: **as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.** And when he had said this, he **breathed on them**, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: John 20:21, 22*

Jesus sent the disciples in the same way the Father sent Him. He gave them the commission to go, and breathed on them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). That is exactly what the verse we are examining says. Here it is again from the Bible in *Basic English translation*.

- “...and now the Lord God has sent me, and given me his spirit” (Bible in Basic English)

The O.T. does not teach that the Holy Spirit is a third member of the Godhead or is an individual named “God the Spirit.” Rather, it teaches that it is the “*ruach*,” the breath of God; the Spirit and life of God. It is His own presence.

Points in this lesson:

1. There is one God
2. Elohim is a plural word but used in a singular sense
3. The Holy spirit is not another God. It is not called “god the Holy spirit.” The Holy spirit is the spirit, presence and person of God
4. There are two divine beings. Both referred to as God.

The next lesson will show who the two Divine Beings are.