

GODHEAD COURSE

Lesson 9

Monotheism According to the Apostles

As far as the Bible is concerned, all Christians have the same words of Jesus recorded in the gospels. One would assume that this would lead all to come to the same conclusion about the identity of God. But can be seen, not all Christians share the same understanding about God. The problem is not in the words written, but in how the reader understands them.

Jesus once asked a lawyer:

*“What is written in the law? **how** readeest thou?” Luke 10:26*

“How” does one read and understand it?

For example: Consider the difference of interpretation between Trinitarian and Non-Trinitarian:

Inspired words	Trinitarian understanding	Non-Trinitarian understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One God• Son of God• Spirit of God• Only Begotten Son	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Triune God (3 in 1)• God the Son• God the Spirit• Unique Son	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God the Father• Son of God• Spirit/Life of God• Only born of God

This lesson will examine how the disciples understood the teachings of Jesus in regards to Biblical Monotheism. Their understanding regarding the Sonship of Christ and the identity of the Holy Spirit will be examined in latter studies.

If it can be established that when the bible says “One God,” it refers to God the Father, not a unity or triunity or a family, then whatever one’s understanding is regarding the Holy spirit and the Son of God, it must fit in with the true concept of Monotheism.

One cannot conclude that the one God of the bible is made up of two or three, if it be agreed that the bible clearly teaches the one God is God the Father.

In this lesson we will examine the writings of the Apostles to discover what they believed and taught regarding the identity of God.

Surely, the disciples who walked and talked with Jesus, saw Him ascend to heaven, received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and wrote the New Testament, would have correctly understood Jesus’ teaching about God.

So, what did *they* understand from the O.T. and the teachings of Jesus on this topic? Did they believe in monotheism? And if so, what type of monotheism? Let us begin by addressing the first question:}

1) Did the disciples believe in monotheism (one God)?

*“Seeing it is **one God**, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” Romans 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 Corinthians 8:4*

*“**One God** and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:6*

*“For there is **one God**, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” 1 Timothy 2:5*

*“Thou believest that there is **one God**; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” James 2:19*

It is rather obvious that they believed in Monotheism. However, someone who believes in the Trinity, Modalism or one, singular God and His Son can say “Amen” to these verses. It is important to understand what the disciples *meant* by **one God**.

2) What did they understand about the identity of this one God?

Paul:

In 1 Corinthians 8:4 he said ‘there is no other God but One.’ In verse 6 he tells us who this one God is:

*“But to us there is but one God, **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 Corinthians 8:6*

When Paul wrote “one God,” what did he mean by it? Did he mean a triune God, or was he referring to one, singular God, God the Father?

The question is not what does a 21st century Christian understand. The question is, what did Paul understand; what did he believe and teach?

Paul was not uncertain about who the one God of the Bible is. It is the Father, the Source of all things. He repeatedly brought this point out:

*“That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even **the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Romans 15:6*

*“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, **One God and Father of all,** who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6*

Although Paul mentioned one Spirit and one Lord, he still emphasized only **one God**. He also specified who this one God is. It is not the Spirit, neither is it the Lord, neither is it a combination of all three; it is the Father.

Simply quoting verses that mention father, son and spirit does not automatically mean a trinity. One must understand what the author is saying. He clearly and repeatedly stated that God, is the Father of Jesus:

*“Blessed be **God,** even **the Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ...” 2 Corinthians 1:3*

God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Again, notice:

“And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him that God may be all in all.”
1 Corinthians 15:28

Jesus will be subject unto the Father! Why?

- So that God, the Father, might be all in all. Why?
- Because the Father is *the Source of all things*, including the life of His Son.

Paul understood the term “one God” in the Scriptures and in Christ’s teachings to refer to God the Father, the one Source of all things. He did not understand the term “One God” to refer to a unity of 3 persons.

James

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” James 2:19

What did James mean by one God? Is He a triune God or God the Father?

*“Therewith bless we God, **even the Father**; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.” James 3:9*

According to James, this one God is the Father. Just like Paul, James says that the God whom Jesus and the O.T. spoke about, the God they worshiped and who Christians ought to worship is the Father of Jesus Christ.

It is safe to understand the words of Jesus the same way His disciples did.

Peter

*“Blessed be the **God** and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” 1 Peter 1:3*

Peter is repeating the same understanding. The one God of the Bible is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only our God, but He is the God of Jesus as well.

John

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” 1 John 4:9
Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

According to John, who is God? It is He who had a Son to send, the Father of Jesus.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:9-12

Clearly, John is speaking about God the Father (the source of all things) who has a Son.

“God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” 1 John 5:11

Eternal life is not found in words, deeds or efforts. Eternal life is found in a Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He who has the *Son* has eternal life. If life is found in the Son, then the enemy of souls is aiming to take away your eternal life by taking the Son of God from you. God has chosen to give us life through His Son.

Tragically, the enemy has managed to do this in people’s lives by replacing the Son of God with “God the Son.” These titles might sound similar, but in reality, they are worlds apart.

The term “Son of God” identifies whose Son He is. This identity qualifies Him as the only possible Saviour of the world, as the only divine Being who could die on man’s behalf. However, the term “God the Son” no longer identifies a true Son, but rather introduces another god whose title is “Son.” A good way to illustrate the difference is with the following parallel:

“The dog of John” vs. “John the dog.”

It is rather obvious that it makes a big difference in meaning.

Going on in the passage, John writes:

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20

Does this verse say Jesus is the true God?

Read it again:

*“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know **him that is true**, and we are in **him that is true**, even in **his** Son Jesus Christ. This is **the true God**, and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20*

Him that is true has a Son named Jesus. *Him that is true* is therefore the Father.

According to Jesus, in the gospel of John, the Father is the only true God. In prayer to His Father, Jesus said:

*“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3*

It was John who wrote that gospel. Would he contradict the words of Jesus he had earlier recorded? Absolutely not!

Jesus referred to His Father as the only true God. John is reiterating the same idea: Christ’s Father is the true God.

*“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath **both** the Father and the Son.” 2 John 1:9*

Who is “God” in the above verse? Two Beings are mentioned in the first sentence—**Christ** and **God**. John is explaining that if you reject one, you reject the other. In the next sentence he presents the opposite scenario—that if you have one, you also have the other—and here he identifies God as **the Father**, and Christ as **the Son**.

This is in perfect harmony with the words of Jesus recorded by John in his gospel:

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we** will come unto him, and make **our** abode with him.” John 14:23*

In his second letter, John again echoed the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospel, revealing the existence of two divine Beings, God and His Son.

According to Paul, Peter, James, and John, the one true God of the Bible is the Father. The apostles, after Christ’s death and resurrection, and after receiving the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, believed in and taught that God is one, singular individual. They did not teach that God was a trinity of three persons.

Allow me to highlight only one verse out of the ones mentioned. To me, 1 Corinthians 8:6 is one of the clearest verses in Scripture regarding this topic.

“But to us there is but one God, 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 Corinthians 8:6

If Paul believed in a triune God, this passage would have been the perfect place to reveal it! He could have easily said, “But to us, Christians, there is but one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of whom are all things...” But he didn’t. He identified his

“one God” as the Father alone, who is the Source of all things. He then presented Jesus Christ as his one Lord, or Master, “*through whom are all things.*”

Obviously, Paul believed and taught that the Father is the Source of all things, and His Son is the channel through whom God creates, sustains, and redeems His creation. He described this in several other places:

“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, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds ...”
Hebrews 1:1, 2

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ ...” *Ephesians 3:9*

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” *Colossians 1:15-17*

He understood that there were two divine Beings, both involved in creation. However, One (the Father) is the *Source* of all things; the Other (the Son) is the *Channel* by whom God made all things. According to Scripture, there is only one Source of all things, and that is the Father.

Two Divine Beings are discovered in the Old and New Testament, yet there is only one Source. Two involved in the work of creation and redemption, but One is the Son of the Other. One is the messenger, presence and word of the Other.

This is important to understand because *the Bible refers to Jesus as God*. Jesus is divine and worthy of our worship. He was begotten, not created.

Unless one understands the foundational principle that *the term “one God”* refers to the “*one Source of all things*”, the Father, he will run into all kinds of confusion.