



Churches Of God Outreach Ministries
People working together to proclaim the Gospel

"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

1-800-611-8080 / www.cgom.org
PO Box 54621, Tulsa, OK 74155-0621

GOD IS ONE

Does 'monotheism' mean that God is a solitary being?

by James McBride

Arguments about the 'unity' of God rage even after almost two thousand years of theological jousting. For most the controversy closed in the fourth century with the conclusion that God is a 'Trinity' of immortal beings. But there have also been dissenting Unitarians for whom God can be but a single being.

God is 'one'

There is no doubt that the Scriptures teach the unity of God. It lies at the heart of Jewish belief. Wrote Moses: *'Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah'* (Deuteronomy 6:4). The proclamation by Moses emphasizes there can be but one supreme Creator God. And Jesus answered an enquirer: *'The first [commandment] is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one'* (Mark 12:32). There can be only one God, though the apostle Paul points out that in our world *we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we live for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life'* (I Corinthians 8:5-6)

'That is a puzzle: *'...one God, the Father'* and *'...only one Lord, Jesus Christ'*. Does that mean Jesus isn't divine?

Divine Nature

Let's look first at God's nature, His attributes.

Paul tells us that God - the Father - alone has immortality.

'For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honour and power to him forever!' (I Timothy 6:15-16)

The Father has sovereignty over all His creation - over all political and religious endeavor. He is unapproachable by humans. He has never been seen by any of us nor ever will be seen by the human eye. He created everything. He is *'Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last'*. He is revealed to us by His Name *'Jehovah'*. [There are various spellings of this Name.] His supreme authority cannot be questioned.

What, then, of Jesus? He appears to have a subordinate role to the Father.

In a couple of texts Jesus uses the title *'the Alpha and the Omega'*, yet this is the title ascribed (Revelation 1:8) to *'the Lord God...the Almighty'*. Yet Jesus tells John: *"Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"* (Revelation 22:12-13). Clearly, Jesus shares these August titles with the Father.

As the apostle Paul states: *'...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (II Corinthians 5 18-19). God, the self-existing One. was 'in Christ'. But was that only since his resurrection from the dead? Well, no. The Father was working through Jesus of Nazareth throughout his earthly lifetime to*

GOD IS ONE

reconcile us to Himself. And before? Paul again, of Jesus: *“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together”* (Colossians 1:15-19)

Paul there says that Jesus was instrumental in creating angels (*‘the heavenly realm’*). All creation? That would include all those galaxies observed by the orbiting Hubble telescope - and more. The universe ‘works’ because of the awesome power He exerted, and continues to exert. And everything on planet Earth - including Earth. He also oversees all human government.

Clearly, the Bible understanding is that Jesus existed from ‘the beginning’: *“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone”* (John 1: 1-4).

So, since Jesus ‘was God’ - and God alone has immortality - then He, too, was ‘self-existing’ and shared all the divine qualities and nature.

Human Birth

Jesus, of course, also shared our humanity, being born like all of us from a woman. He fought the same battles of human nature but without ever giving in to wrong desires, wrong thoughts: *“So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). Quite a transformation - from God to man.

He had no ordinary birth. Just as the universe was created from nothing by divine power, by the Spirit of God, Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb by the same Spirit (Matthew 1: 18ff) *“This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to*

be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”.

The angel adds: *“She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means, God is with us”.* As wrote the apostle John: *“The Word became flesh”.* ‘The Word’ - the Logos - no philosophical concept but the very means by which the Creator communicates with His creation. Endowed from birth with ‘the fullness of God’ Jesus developed the divine gifts in the service of humanity.

Jesus says he ‘came down from heaven’. He was ‘sent by the Father’. He would ‘ascend where he was before’. In his prayer just prior to his arrest Jesus said: *‘Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began’.* That glory Jesus willingly gave up - for us: *“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:6-11)

Divine Family

All Christians understand that Jesus is ‘the Son of God’. We are ‘children of God’. We are ‘sons and daughters of the Almighty’. We pray to God as ‘Father’. We belong to ‘the household of God’. And we are brothers and sisters of Jesus. A family relationship. God, in other words, has a family. That family now consists of Himself and a born Son who is the Father’s image. Then there are his as yet unborn children - men and women conceived by that same

GOD IS ONE

Spirit that begat Jesus. We await our resurrection when our flesh will be destroyed and all that remains will be the image of the Father - our character - mirrored in the holy Spirit in us.

Because of that indwelling Spirit we will be joint heirs with Jesus: *“For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory”* (Romans 8:16-17).

“God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. For he said to God, I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people.” He also said, *“I will put my trust in him,”* that is, *“I and the children God has given me.”* (Hebrews 2:10-12)

Through His Spirit dwelling in us, Christians have in a sense co-existed with God from eternity past. Should we remain faithful till death we will co-exist with our Father and our ‘elder brother’ Jesus throughout eternity to come. Jesus, the Word of God, has *consciously* existed co-eternally with the One who became his - and our - Father. We will all, at our resurrection, be ‘one’. One divine everlasting Family. That has been God’s intention, His plan, from the beginning.

Since no man has seen the Father at any time we must live with the fact that the ‘divine appearances’ recorded in the Scriptures were a manifestation of the Word - the one who became Jesus.

Published by:

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
PO Box 54621
Tulsa, OK 74155-0621
©2006 The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
www.cgom.org

This article may be freely copied and distributed as long as it is done in its entirety, including this notice, and is given away free, without any charge to the recipient.

Write us for a free catalog of other free articles we have to offer.