

# CHAPTER 5

## Attributes of God—Part 3

### One God in the New Testament

If you were to ask most Christians (and I am speaking of good, Bible believing Christians) who Jesus Christ is, you will get answers like, “He is my Lord and Savior,” “He is the Son of God,” and “He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.” And all of those answers are correct. But another answer you will receive from most sincere Bible believing Christians is that Jesus Christ is God. They will tell you that he is a part of a Trinity, where the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. And these three persons, in some mysterious way, make up one God.

For many Christians this belief in the Trinity is the acid test for real faith. There is only one problem with this acid test, however. Nowhere does the Bible ever claim that God is a Trinity of persons. As we saw from the last chapter the Old Testament states that there is only one God and one person who is God. The great creed of Old Testament faith was, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one!” And this creed of one God who is one person is repeated over and over again in the Old Testament like an echo rolling through a canyon.

But now, when we come to the New Testament is there some new revelation given about the nature of God that teaches a Trinity? Or are we told the same great truth that there is only one

God who is one person? Let's begin our investigation with the words of Jesus Christ in Mark 12.

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment . . .

So the scribe said to Him, "Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He . . .

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

(Mark 12:28-34)

In answering the scribe's question about the first commandment Jesus clearly confirmed the Old Testament creed. And when the scribe affirmed what Christ had said, saying, "Teacher, You have spoken the truth" the Lord saw that he had answered wisely as well! This statement from the Lord Jesus did not swerve as much as one millionth of a degree from the strict monotheism of the Old Testament.

Surely if there was indeed a Trinity in the Godhead, here was a good place for Jesus Christ to reveal it, but he didn't. The Lord Jesus wasn't trying to be secretive about the matter; there was no Trinity to reveal. In John 17, in his high priestly prayer before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus again makes a clear statement about the person who is God.

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, **that they may know You, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent,

(John 17:1-3) [my emphasis]

Once again, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, God is strictly one person and that person is Jesus’ Father. Good and sincere Christians who believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, should seriously consider Christ’s words here to be authoritative and final as to the person of God! The New Testament consistently and clearly reveals to us that God is not a Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Rather God is one person and one person only and that is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To re-quote the scholar, William Barclay, those verses that could be understood as Trinitarian are:

. . . not extensive . . . [and] on almost every occasion in the New Testament on which Jesus seems to be called God there is a problem of textual criticism or of translation.

And therefore, the hundreds of clear verses about who God is should take precedence over the few difficult verses. And the difficult verses should be interpreted and understood in the light of the clear verses.<sup>1</sup>

Another great opportunity for Jesus to declare that he was God occurred right after his resurrection. But let’s read what he said to Mary Magdalene when he appeared to her.

Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My

brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and *to* My God and your God,'"

(John 20:17)

Speaking to Mary, the Lord Jesus revealed that his Father was his God. That's right! Jesus Christ is not God and like us he serves and worships the one true God who is his Father and our Father. This verse is one of the strongest proofs that there is no Trinity. If Jesus is God, than he cannot have a God. But here he clearly states that he, Mary and his brethren share the same God. Here are a few more sections of the New Testament that proclaim that the Father of Jesus Christ is the one and only true God.

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 15:5, 6)

These verses call us to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If language has any meaning and logic then verse 6 states that the Father of Jesus Christ is God alone.

If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

(2 Corinthians 11:30, 31)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

(2 Corinthians 1:3)

Here again God is referred to as both the God and Father of our Lord Jesus. The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort is not a Trinity of persons, rather He is one person and the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.

(1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

This is another powerful statement about the person of God. The context surrounding these verses is about meat offered to idols. The local butcher shops in Corinth received meat to sell that had been offered up in sacrifice to pagan gods. The city was awash in paganism and polytheism. Christian believers were concerned. Could they buy those steaks and grill those burgers? After all, they had been dedicated to a pagan deity. The apostle Paul calmed their fears by saying that for us believers there is only one God, and then he designates who that one God is, “the Father.” In defining who God truly is Paul could have made it very clear that for us Christians there is one God who consists of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, but he didn’t. In the flood of “many gods and many lords” the Christian serves only one true God, the Father, and one Lord who is Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus is not called our Lord because he is God. Rather Jesus is Lord because the one true God exalted him to that position of honor and power because of his obedient, righteous life and his sacrifice for our sins. Remember, just because God is called LORD in the Old Testament and Jesus is called Lord in the New

Testament, this does not mean that Jesus is God. LORD in the Old Testament is a name, Yahweh. Lord in the New Testament is a title of honor given not only to Jesus but to other men as well.<sup>2</sup>

When we say that Jesus is Lord, what we mean is that God has glorified His Son and made him to be the head over the church and all things. The following section of Scripture from Acts 2, is from Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection and ascension. On this Jewish festival the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the believers just as it had been promised in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> Having the Spirit the believers spoke in tongues and magnified God<sup>4</sup>. In his address Peter explains that this occurred because Jesus had ascended into heaven and been made Lord and Christ.

Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades [the grave], nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

“The LORD [Yahweh] said to my Lord [*adoni*],  
‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies  
Your footstool.’”

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

(Acts 2:29-36)

First, please notice that “This Jesus **God has raised up** (vs. 24),” and also Jesus was “exalted to **the right hand of God** (vs. 33).” And secondly, notice the truth that “**God has made** this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ (vs. 36).” Jesus isn’t Lord by virtue of his being the eternal God, he was made Lord as a reward for his obedience to God. To support his point that God exalted Jesus and made him Lord and Christ, Peter quotes from Psalm 110:1 (“Sit at my right hand . . . vs34, 35).

This Psalm is a song of David’s which he wrote as a royal coronation song for a future king. It is a prophecy of God’s anointed Messiah, the Savior, the Christ. It tells us that God would one day exalt this king called “Lord” to His right hand. And in its detail the Psalm also tells us of the relationship between “The LORD [Yahweh]” and this other person who is called “Lord.”

The first word “LORD” in Psalm 110:1 is the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, the personal name of God. The second word “Lord” is the word *adoni* and this word is always used in the Old Testament of human beings.<sup>5</sup> It is a word that designates a high position of honor but it never makes one God. Here are two examples of how *adoni* is used.

Then Saul knew David’s voice, and said, “*Is that your voice my son David?*” David said, “*It is my voice, my lord [adoni], O king.*”

(1 Samuel 26:17)

So David said to Achish, “But what have I done? And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord [*adoni*] the king?”

(29:18)

In Psalm 110:1, when David wrote “Yahweh said to my Lord [*adoni*], sit at My right hand,” he calls his future son and heir to the throne “Lord” not because Jesus is God, but because the Messiah is David’s superior. In Psalm 110: 1, the “Lord” is the one who will be “King of kings and Lord of lords.” This makes the Messiah second in authority to Yahweh, God himself. But it is still Yahweh who sits on the throne as God supreme. God has made Jesus Christ to be Lord. God has exalted Jesus to His right hand and given him all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:19-23), but Jesus is not a part of the one unique and true God. The Father alone is God.

Those who believe in the Trinity assert that Jesus Christ as a part of the Godhead is co-equal with God the Father. But nowhere is this ever taught in the Bible. The Bible always presents the Father as greater than the Son. Here is the truth in Jesus’ own words.

You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming *back* to you.’ If you loved Me you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.

(John 14:28)

If Jesus Christ were truly co-equal with the Father then why didn’t he say, “Rejoice—I am going to the Father and we are equal in glory and honor”? The words of Christ however are clear and simple to all who have a humble heart. The Father is greater than the Son. In pointing out this truth it’s as funny as trying to convince someone that the sun is not the moon!

In Scripture, God the Father is greater than His Son Jesus Christ in knowledge, in power and even in divine authority. As for knowledge, Acts 15:18 states, “Known to God from eternity are all His works.” The one true God is omniscient, He knows all things, even the end from the beginning. But the Bible reveals that Jesus didn’t know certain aspects of his second coming.

But of that day and hour [of Christ's return] no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

(Mark 13:32)

If Jesus were truly God then he would know the end from the beginning. He would know the day and hour of his return. But it is evident that he doesn't. What Jesus does know about the future, God His Father revealed to him as the following verse from Revelation shows.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.

(Revelation 1:1)

Secondly, God is greater than Jesus Christ in power. Though our Lord Jesus did many wonderful miracles, they were not accomplished because he was God. The Bible tells us that the miracles resulted from the power of God at work in Christ.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but whatever He sees the Father do; for whatever He does the Son does in like manner.

(John 5:19)

The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the work.

(John 14:10)

Peter, in Acts 2, makes it very clear that Jesus Christ's miraculous power was not due to the fact that he was God but that God was at work within him.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst . . .

(Acts 2:22)

Jesus of Nazareth is a man, a very unique man being the only begotten Son of God, but a man none the less. And God attested or verified that Jesus was the Messiah through the miracles that God worked through him. Again, if Jesus were truly God this would have been a very good place for Peter to reveal this truth. In Acts 10, Peter makes a very similar statement.

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(10:38)

Jesus, our Lord did wonderfully good things not because he was God but because God was with him and worked within him. So God is greater than Christ in knowledge and in power, and also in divine authority.

1 Corinthians 15 tells us about the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his world wide kingdom. And it also tells us that one day Christ himself will be subject to the Father.

Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him [God] who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:24, 25, 28)

In the end, Christ himself will be subject to the Father that God may be all in all! Nowhere do we find in holy Scripture a declaration that Jesus is co-equal with God the Father. And logically if Jesus is not co-equal then he cannot possibly be the one true God. Here are what the scholars have to say:

There is no trace of ‘three divine persons in one’ in the New Testament . . . No apostle would have dreamed of thinking that there are three divine persons . . . The mystery of the Trinity proclaimed by the church did not spring from biblical doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of equal essence.<sup>7</sup>

Christianity derived from Judaism, and Judaism was strictly Unitarian [believing that God is one person]. The road that led from Jerusalem to Nicea [where later church councils developed the Trinity] was scarcely a straight one. Fourth century Trinitarianism did not reflect accurately early Christian teaching regarding the nature of God; it was, on the contrary, a deviation from this teaching.<sup>8</sup>

Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Old Testament; “Hear, O Israel, YHWH [Yahweh] our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4) . . . the doctrine [of the Trinity] developed gradually over several centuries . . . By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since.<sup>9</sup>

The formulation ‘one God in three persons’ was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession

of faith prior to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century . . . Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.<sup>10</sup>

If no original apostle would have ever dreamed that there were three divine persons in the Godhead, and if the early Apostolic Fathers who followed couldn't conceive of it either, then why should we blindly accept the belief? The answer is that we shouldn't. It's not the truth. It is not a sure foundation for our faith.

Over and over the Bible, the Word of God, asserts that there is only one God and one person who is God. This person is Yahweh, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully human, but absolutely unique because he was conceived through the power of God's Spirit<sup>11</sup>.

Jesus is the seed of the woman as foretold in Genesis 3. He is the prophet like Moses to be raised up from among the people as promised in Deuteronomy 18. He is the descendant of King David as declared in 2 Samuel 7. And he is the perfect reflection of the one true God as stated in Hebrews 1. He is the one and only begotten Son of God. He is my Lord and Savior but he is not God.

The stark simplicity of this truth may be shocking and even threatening to some but it is only years of wrong teaching that make this hard to accept. The Bible is clear in both the Old and the New Testaments that God is one person. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of Moses and David. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take your stand on that foundation. It's a firm one.