

# CHAPTER 4

## Attributes of God—Part 2

### One God

In the last chapter we examined from the Scriptures several of the attributes of God. And our hearts were thrilled and encouraged as we discovered that our God is glorious in holiness, sovereign, all powerful, everywhere present, full of goodness, righteous in all His ways, and that His tender mercies are over all of His works. As the worship song proclaims,

Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from  
heaven above with wisdom, power and love. Our  
God is an awesome God.<sup>1</sup>

In this present study we will learn another truth about God, one that the Bible declares in very clear and simple terms. There is only one true God and one person who is God. All Christians agree that there is only one true God. But all Christians do not agree on whom precisely that one God is. Millions of Christians profess that God is a Trinity of persons. They have been told that God consists of three distinct persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who together make up one God. And they have been told that this doctrine is the foundation of all Christian Truth. For example, here is a statement on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity—that God the Father,  
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each

equally and eternally the one true God—is admittedly difficult to understand, and yet is the very foundation of Christian truth. Although skeptics may ridicule it as a mathematical impossibility, it is nevertheless a basic doctrine of Scripture as well as profoundly realistic in both universal experience and in the scientific understanding of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

Some questions come to my mind after reading this statement. How can something that is “admittedly difficult to understand” and a “mathematical impossibility” be the “very foundation of Christian truth”? And how is the teaching of one God in three persons “profoundly realistic in both universal experience and in the scientific understanding of the universe”? What does that mean? If you ask me it is just a lot of gobble-de-gook! The teaching that the one true God consists of a union of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit would have been absolutely unknown and repugnant to the earliest Christians. So how did the belief in the Trinity come about?

To put it simply, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, church leaders known as apologists, tried to make Christianity more attractive to those who were educated in Greek philosophy and paganism. And so they borrowed ideas and concepts from these philosophies and religions and united them to Christian themes. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Constantine, who wanted to unite the empire under a new faith, put pressure on theologians to affirm the belief that God was a Trinity of persons.<sup>3</sup> Following are two quotes on the development of the Trinity.

... the reinterpretation of biblical theology in terms of Greek philosophers has been both widespread throughout the centuries and everywhere destructive to the essence of the Christian faith ... Neither Catholic or Protestant theology is based on biblical theology. In each case we have the domination of Christian theology by Greek thought.<sup>4</sup>

If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure deism [belief in one person who is God] of the first Christians . . . was changed by the church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the Trinity. Many of the pagan tenets, invented by Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief.<sup>5</sup>

Now I don't deny that many Trinitarian Bible scholars would reject those statements. They would say that biblical evidence exists for belief in the Trinity, especially that Jesus is God, but consider the words of Bible scholar William Barclay,

It is when we begin to examine the [biblical] evidence that we run into very real difficulties [in proving the Trinity]. The evidence is not extensive . . . 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.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, many if not all of the supposed biblical proofs for the Trinity are unclear, stand on shaky ground and are often wrongly translated. If you ask me that is not a firm foundation for our faith!

So let's go to the Bible and see for ourselves what it reveals about the one true God and who He is. And we will begin with the Old Testament. The Old Testament makes up 75% of our Bible. Our Lord Jesus Christ was nourished from these Scriptures, they are the root and stem of the New Testament flower. Cut off from the Old Testament the New Testament quickly withers and becomes something it was never intended to be. In the Old Testament God is declared to be a single person. Let's begin with the classic command to love God recorded in Deuteronomy.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

(Deuteronomy 6:4, 5)

In this classic command to love God, Moses declares that the Lord our God is one. And the intent of this declaration was to make clear the truth that there is only one true God and one person who is God. Thus this statement has also been correctly translated as follows,

The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.<sup>7</sup>

The words “The LORD” are a translation of the Hebrew word *YHWH* meaning Yahweh.<sup>8</sup> This word “Yahweh” is not a title, it is rather the personal name for God and it means “I am who I am.” It is always a singular name and it is always associated with singular pronouns like, “I”, “me”, “he”, and “him.” The word “God” in Deuteronomy 6:4 is translated from the Hebrew word *elohim* which is not a name but a title. *Elohim* is used to express the reality or fact of deity or godhead. It is never used as a personal name.

For some reason Yahweh is always translated in our English Bibles as “The LORD” with capital letters. So when Deuteronomy 6:4, says, “The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!” it is really saying, “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone!” There is only one true God and one person who is God and that is Yahweh. The first of the Ten Commandments states this same truth as well.

And God spoke all these words, saying; “I *am* the LORD [Yahweh] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

(Exodus 20:1-3)

The first commandment declares that the person of Yahweh is the only true God. There is only one person who is God and His name is Yahweh.

Now, there are Trinitarian scholars who teach that the Hebrew word *elohim* is another personal name for God. And since *elohim* is a plural noun this points to the fact that God is more than one person. But *elohim* is not a personal name, it is a title that signifies godhead or deity. As a plural noun it describes awesome majesty, infinite fullness and unlimited greatness.<sup>9</sup> Here are some examples of *elohim* as a title meaning god and not used as a personal name.

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; . . . so they said to one another, “Who has done this thing? . . . But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? . . . If he *is* a god, let him plead for Himself . . .

(Judges 6:28-31)

In Judges 6, the word “god” is *elohim*, the same title given to Yahweh as God. The personal name of this pagan god is “Baal.” Here is another example from Judges 16.

Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god.

(vs. 23)

The “god” or *elohim* of the Philistines was “Dagon.” That was his personal name. Dagon was a sea god with the head of a fish and the body of a man. Let me give you one more example from 1 Kings 18, where we read about the great conflict between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal to determine whether Yahweh or Baal was the true God.

So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD [Yahweh] *is* God [*elohim*] follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.

(vss. 20, 21)

*Elohim* is not a personal name. It is simply the Hebrew word for deity, for god. This may seem like a boring grammar lesson but it is important to grasp in our study of who God is. Let's return to Deuteronomy 6:4 for one more lesson in Hebrew words.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!

The Hebrew word translated "one" is *echad*. It is the normal word for "one" in mathematics. It denotes a single unity, a single item. Again let me cite a few examples.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one [*echad*] of his ribs . . .

(Genesis 2:21)

When God made Eve from Adam He took one of Adam's ribs not a full slab!

So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all of the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel not one [*echad*] died. Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one [*echad*] of the livestock of the Israelites was dead.

(Exodus 9:6, 7)

And the LORD turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one [*echad*] locust in all the territory of Egypt.

(Exodus 10:19)

Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one [*echad*] was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth.

(Ruth 1:4)

There is one [*echad*] alone, without companion . . . Two *are* better than one [*echad*], because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one [*echad*] will lift up his companion . . .

Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one [*echad*] be warm *alone*?

(Ecclesiastes 4:8, 9, 11)

I could give you many, many more examples like these and they would all point to the fact that the Hebrew word *echad* means one and no more than one.<sup>10</sup> When Deuteronomy 6:4 declares, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yahweh] our God, The LORD *is* one!” it should be clear to anyone with any sense of logic at all that there is only one God and one person who is God—Yahweh.

The Old Testament tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is no evidence that any sacred writer even suspected the existence of a [Trinity] within the Godhead.

Even to see in the Old Testament suggestions or foreshadowings or “veiled signs” of the Trinity of persons, is to go beyond the words and intent of the sacred writers.<sup>11</sup>

Isn't that amazing? Even to suggest that there is a Trinity in the Godhead is to go beyond the words and intent of the holy men who wrote the Bible! And if you go beyond the words of the Bible you no longer have the sure and certain Word of God, all that we are left with is the speculations of men. “The doctrine of the Trinity . . . is the very foundation of Christian truth”—I don't think so! The Bible says that there is only one God and one person who is God.

To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD [Yahweh] Himself *is* God; *there is* none other beside Him.

(Deuteronomy 4:35)

Now see that I, *even I, am* He, and *there is* no God beside Me.

(Deuteronomy 32:39)

O LORD [Yahweh] of hosts, God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You *are* God, You alone . . .

(Isaiah 37:16)

“You *are* My witnesses,” says the LORD [Yahweh], and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I *am* He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, *even I, am* the LORD [Yahweh].

(Isaiah 43:10, 11)

I *am* the LORD [Yahweh], and *there is* no other;  
*There is* no God besides Me.

For thus says the LORD [Yahweh], who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD [Yahweh], and *there is* no other.

(Isaiah 45:5, 18)

But the LORD [Yahweh] *is* the true God; He *is* the living God and the everlasting King . . .

(Jeremiah 10:10)

And the LORD [Yahweh] shall be King over all the earth. And in that day it shall be—The LORD *is* one, and His name one.

(Zechariah 14:9)

The doctrine of the Trinity is not the teaching of the Old Testament. It is a corruption of the clear and simple truth that there is one true God and one person alone who is God. The teaching of one God in three persons is not a firm foundation for our faith. It is a shell game that hides the glory of the one true God in the garments of paganism. The clarion call of the Old Testament proclaims there is one true God who is one in person, alone and unique. Now that's a firm foundation!