

# Who is the Creator—Col. 1:16?

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Some time ago a friend from Georgia asked me for some basic scriptures that we base our belief in One God upon. They were going to discuss them at their fellowship. It was quite satisfying for me to do this but I realize though seeds were planted, no fruit may be born at the present. This friend pondered on a forum that I peruse, as to why these conferences continue. What could there be to discuss after the first few conferences? Yet these same brethren continue to attend the eight day feast of tabernacles every year for decades, and listen to the same material much of the time. Similarly for most of us, we find these conferences reinforcing, rewarding, uplifting, and informative.

Too often in a discussion, we want an explanation for our pet texts instead of taking a fresh look at the other person's texts first. I heard one church leader say that when you are confronted by someone with a different doctrine, "you just simply set the other person's scriptures aside." In that way, of course, one can be sure to keep one's teaching intact, even when in error. I find that, so often, Christians seem to want the scriptures to confirm their beliefs rather than reveal new truths. I've concluded that many Christians need to reexamine many of their beliefs at least twice during their Christian journey; or am I the only one who has been wrong the first and sometimes the second time around on many issues?

After my last presentation two years ago, I was questioned by an individual about Col. 1:16 seemingly teaching that Christ was the Creator. Even though most of these types of texts have been explored at one of the conferences before, it does show the need to revisit some of these as the venue and audience change every year. This individual seemed to be an Arian which I can relate to. I used to be one as well. But Mr. Buzzard was kind and gentle with me as I tried to see if I was in error.

So let's explore Col. 1 and see if we can harmonize it with the rest of the scriptures. We want to look at vs.12-16—"giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints of Light.v.13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, v.14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. V.15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. V.16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him." Most will conclude at this point that Christ created the universe. But I ask that you withhold judgment until you hear the rest of the story.

There is no problem to stay here in this section and explain it when preaching to the choir. However, since this message is directed to all who are willing to examine their position, it has been my experience that one must go through and firmly establish which God did what. Only then will people understand Col. 1. Two years ago I could not persuade this individual by staying in this text.

## Who is the OT God?

In my former association, we were taught that in the OT, they didn't know of God the Father. And since God can't be where there is sin, He therefore had the pre-Christ Being serve

as the OT God. Christ was the God they knew and interacted with. Col. 1:16 of course was cited as well as a few other texts such as John 1:18; 5:37, and a few others. But the scriptures just don't teach that Christ was the OT God. Let's notice Jesus' words in Mat. 11:27— "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Notice that this text does not support that position as it shows that both Father and Son have to be revealed, not just the Father. In chap. 16 when Peter said that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, Jesus told him that the Father revealed this to him. Jesus never once suggested that he was there at the creation in Gen. 1 & 2.

When Jesus talked about the creation, he spoke in the third person. We can see this in Mark 10. Jesus was being queried about Moses allowing divorce. Jesus answered in v. 6—"But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female." When Jesus referred to himself in the third person, he used the terms "Son of man" and "Son of God" but never God. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chap. of Heb., Jesus and the Father are clearly distinguished from one another. And in v. 4 it states "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." So it was not Jesus who rested on that first seventh day in Gen. 2:2. And if you'll notice Heb. 6:13, we have this: "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself." The scriptures teach us that the Father is always greater than Christ. So in the OT Christ could have sworn by someone greater. This text can't refer to Christ either. People will often simply ignore these statements to remain comfortable in their beliefs.

I had to travel this road for a while, ignoring certain texts when I was trying to reaccept the binatarian view in the mid '90's. However, I could not resolve the many texts that declared that God was only one Being as the new teaching from the Worldwide claimed. So I was brought back a full circle to one of the clearest texts in all of scripture which identified who the God of the OT was. I was unable to accept the meaning of this text while believing in the Armstrong doctrine as it conflicted. Let's take a look at this unambiguous text in Acts 3:13. Here we have the singular "Theos" as a translation from the Heb. "elohiym". V.13—"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him." So who is the God of our fathers and of Abraham? Clearly He is Jesus' Father. This phrase is used quite often in scripture and never once refers to Christ. It is very significant because it shows that the Father is the OT God. Many other NT texts show that someone other than Christ was the OT God. This verse itself proves that both elohiym and Theos are used for a single person who is God, not 2 or a family etc. If I said I have a ewe sheep, would you insist that I had at least two sheep since the word sheep is plural? One wouldn't think so? Why then do so many insist that one must be referring to at least two when using elohiym in spite of the fact that it clearly refers to a single individual several thousand times?

If language has meaning, then we are compelled to reach conclusions based on proper word definitions. I'm reminded of a joke from an African American who was the contractor of several jobs we did. He asked us how we know that God is white. And then he said, "God said, 'I AM THAT I AM', not 'I IS THAT I IS'". This contractor was correct by showing how language must have meaning. I had seen for many years that Mr. Armstrong's explanation of how to understand elohiym doesn't work. He taught that elohiym is like a family name. This creates a small problem as neither scripture nor the Lexicons subscribe to this definition. I have seen ministers use Armstrong's formula in explaining certain OT texts. And then remark "see how simple and easy that is?" Then go merely on their way without having proven their point. However, none could ever make the language work. Let's look at an example. Isa.45:5 is just one of many texts that we could cite to illustrate the point. V.5—"I am the Lord (Yahweh), and

there is no other; Besides Me there is no elohiym” or besides me there is no Jones. Or are we supposed to say “besides me there is no Jones family”. One person is not a family. It would have to read “Besides us there is no Jones family”. But the scriptures just don't support that kind of language. And in Deut. God even says “there is no elohiym with me.”

Herbert Armstrong did teach that in the NT, God refers to the Father. I don't know of any place where he transferred an OT plural meaning for God into the NT. Many of his followers don't seem to realize this and will read Christ into texts that are addressing the Father. They even apply this identity incorrectly to the plain text of Rev. 4. Why don't we read that to see how simple it is to identify the subject? Rev. 4:8-11—“And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come (and of course right here many interpret wrongly Christ). And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of your will they existed, and were created.” Why do people think that this is referring to Christ? It's certainly addressing whoever is the Creator. So because of a bias, many conclude that this refers to Christ. But how easy is it to untangle this to be sure who is being referred to? Let's continue reading. Remember, there's no chapter break in the story flow. 5:1-7—“I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne (Realize that this is still the same person sitting on the throne as in the previous chap. V.9 &10) a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals? And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals. And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” So we have a Lamb who was slain take the book out of the one who was sitting on the throne. One person who just couldn't bring herself to admit that chap. 4 refers to the Father replied that the one sitting on the throne and the one taking the book out of his hand are both Christ. The very first verse of Rev. says that God gives a message to Christ. A lot of this is just not that complicated.

The Jews in general did not accept Jesus. Who did they accept as God? John 8:41 gives us some insight. Realize that they did not accept Christ's teaching so we can't say that they learned about the Father's existence from Jesus V.41—Jesus is speaking here and continues his discourse “You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” So it's quite clear that they acknowledge that the God they had been trying to serve was the Father. Jesus of course was teaching that people have to be careful about which God they serve: the Father or the devil. Not the Father or Christ. One more verse. V. 54—“Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, He is our God;” He also said that he and his Father are one. He did not say that he and the Father are one God. God says that He is not a man, and Paul said that Christ is a man even now. So scripture seems to be saying that they are neither one God nor one man. In spite of all these scriptures that show that the OT God was the Father, they simply don't register to many because of a preconceived notion that Christ was the OT

God. There are other clear texts in Acts that claim that Jesus' Father was the Creator, and the individual who led Israel out of Egypt.

## Switching Gods?

In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary to announce the good news of the Christ appearing. It is important to establish some of these points to see that Col. 1 couldn't be claiming that Christ was the Creator in Gen. Luke 1:26—"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God (was this God, the Father or Christ?) to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, v.27—to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. V.28—And coming in, he said to her, 'Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you.' V.29—But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. V.30—The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. V.31—And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. V.32—He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; v.33—and He will reign over the house of David forever, and His kingdom will have no end.' v.34—Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' v.35—The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.'" As Sir Anthony says, the Greek phrase here is (dio kai) meaning "for this reason precisely." In other words, the Father literally begets a son in Mary through the Holy Spirit and He is born with Mary's genes. The Father is not a doctor implanting an already existing person in Mary. He would then need to adopt Jesus just as He will adopt each of us. But the Bible does not teach that Jesus is adopted. God did not act as the doctor did with the octomom by implanting someone else's sperm. The doctor of the octomom is not the father of those eight babies. Yet it appears that some would hold that the Father played the same role and became the Father. Strange indeed!

It is claimed that Jesus was the same Being as that of the OT God with some limitations. Are they not rejecting the scriptures that state that he would be of the seed of David? And also that he was made of a woman from Gal. 4:4? Do we really think that when Adam and Eve sinned, that God told Eve that someday she would be his mother?

Now according to many, Mary had worshiped Christ as the OT God. Surely she had to ask Gabriel when she should switch from the worship of one God who will soon be in her womb to his Father. But when you read of Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna in Luke 1 & 2, it's obvious that they all had been worshiping the Father all their lives, not Christ. They never once implied that this babe had been their God.

## The NT Creator

These people realized that there was going to be a pretty large role that this babe would eventually play in God's play book. But surely there were many aspects that they did not know until after his resurrection. Even the disciples didn't realize to ask certain questions that some just assume they must have. One question that they never thought of asking Jesus: When was he going to return from heaven? (His return is addressed however. That's why they weren't at the tomb Sun. morn with breakfast). Another question would have been to ask Jesus what it was like to be God if he had preexistence.

What many fail to realize is that there are two creations with two Creators. The Father created the universe and living things. He did this all by himself alone. (Isa. 44:24; Job 9:8). Christ is the Creator of the new man.

Now let's analyze Col. 1. And begin with v.12—"giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (which is only for a time until he turns the kingdom over to the Father) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Jesus was the first one harvested from the dead. He was a perfect proto type who was going to be used to create many others into his image.) For by (1722-or in or through—all things were created in—not by—him) Him all things were created, both in (1722) the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through (1223) Him and for (1519) Him. (One can apply texts out of contexts and still draw a correct conclusion from time to time. But staying within the context gives us an understanding we might miss otherwise. If you will notice the things that were specifically mentioned as being created in v.16 are things related to the church, authorities etc. of v.18. Not the physical cosmos. It is all these things that Christ is the creator of. There is a great parallel of this section in Eph. 1:17-23 which is included in your paper. The Greek numbers in v.16 above can reflect different prepositions even with the same number. I want us to notice towards the end—"all things have been created through #1223 him". The preposition means "because or for the sake of." But Christ is the Creator of the new man; therefore, to say things pertaining to the church and spiritual things were created through him is proper.) v.17—"He is before all things, (in priority and supremacy, not age) and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--."

1722=en---in, by, with, through, at, on.

1519=eis---towards, for, into, unto, to, among.

1223=dia---through, on this account, the ground or reason by which something is done.

Let's see what Paul wrote in Gal. 4:19 because sometimes people seem to get the different creations confused. There is a new creation that is taking place now. V. 19—"My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—" I'm sure many people are aware of the term born again or some variation but may not really realize someone is doing a real work—creating something new. Col. 1:26-28—A lot of things are revealed in the NT that the prophets were not privy to. Paul writes in v.26—"that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

Hebrews supports this idea as well. Chap. 12:2 is a very familiar text to many which says: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; (the active work of our new creation by Christ) who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is fully employed in forming himself in us.



When Jesus was talking with the disciples on his last night, he told them that he and the Father would make their abode with them. Let's look at a few more texts that support Christ as our new creator. Col. 3:3-4—"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." V.10-11-"and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." God fashions us after Christ through Christ. Paul goes into this in Gal. 2:20. Here we read "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." And if we look at an often neglected text in Eph. we see this. We know chap. 2:8 tells us we're saved by grace, but we should continue on to read v. 10 which says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." As we view our penultimate text, I have a question for all who view God as being more than one person. Please write down a phrase or two that would cause you to reconsider that perhaps God is only one person if you could find a similar phrase in the Bible. And I would like for you to share that with us. I think that could be very interesting. One final text in this vein is in 2 Cor. 3:17-18. We see this active work in our lives described this way. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

We have a very active Messiah. He intercedes for us and is our mediator. He gives us access to God. He died for us but not in our place or as our substitute. He died on our behalf. The Christian world teaches that the penalty for sin is torture forever in eternal fire and that Christ paid our penalty. Unless Jesus is eternally tortured in hell fire, he didn't pay that penalty. One cannot say that a life sentence for murder is paid for by another person by serving only one day. Neither can one say that the penalty for sin is death for eternity but that Jesus paid it with a three day death. He could never be alive in order to pay that kind of penalty. Rom. 5 states emphatically that sin was introduced by man and death through sin just as God told Adam. Death passed upon all men because all have sinned. It clearly states that everyone dies which is the penalty for sin. Jesus redeemed us for a ransom price.

Now for me, herein lies one of the biggest problems with evolution. Precisely when did misbehavior become sin; because if we evolved gradually, then at some point actions became sinful even though those actions had been the same for many thousands of years previously? Actions such as fighting, stealing, selfishness and the like. I have never seen this addressed by Christian evolutionists.

As with most doctrines, there are some scriptures that are clearer than others. But I'm not aware of one doctrine where the Bible directs us more clearly to our beginning point upon which to build a doctrine than our final text. In Mark 12 a lawyer asked Jesus a very helpful question because it solicited a response so clear that commentary is of little need to clarify. The clear language of the text however is most often not received as given.

Let's notice and ponder if we believe what Jesus believed as expressed in Mark 12, V.28-34—"One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, What commandment is the foremost of all? Jesus answered, the foremost is, Hear O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; (and how many fingers does it take to count one Lord?) and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this; you shall love

your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. The scribe said to Him, right Teacher; you have truly stated that He is one, and there is no one else besides Him; And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions." And Mat. 22:40 adds: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." So what we have here seems to be the most important scriptures if you will. In summary of these texts I conclude: that there is only one who is God which follows that one must have total devotion to Him alone; and secondarily, one must love one's neighbor as one's self. These two commands coming from one Supreme Being sum up the law and the prophets. This is the core that all the other texts align with. These two commands have less spiritual value if God is not just one Being as they are predicated on that fact. If we cannot understand the clear language that "God is one Lord", then surely we cannot understand what "love your neighbor as yourself" means either can we? If scripture is correct that God is only one Lord, then Col. 1:16 can't mean that Christ was the God who created the universe.

Jesus had some unkind words and warnings for those in his time who twisted the scriptures. What will he say to us when we do the same thing with texts that are clear by any elementary standard for clarity? Do we dare risk losing out on the first resurrection by not agreeing with Jesus that eternal life is knowing the Father as the only God, and come to know His son as well (John 17:3)?