

## God Is—Is Not!

God is three persons—not one person! God is one in essential being—not divided! These facts were made clear in the Council of Nicaea, in 325 A.D. by Athanasius, in the Creed that bears his name. He wrote:

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

The Bible opens with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). It is much later on that we learn that God is three persons who are in such complete accord that they are one God. One of these persons is called “Father,” another “Son” and the “Word” of God;” and the third one is called the “Holy Spirit.” The dual term “heavens” seems to refer to more than one atmosphere; no doubt the one, his principal abode, the other one in which he placed the single object—earth—on which he later placed man.

The terms “father” and “son” seem to imply sexuality in the Godhead; but they are just metaphors—physical terms used to explain spiritual realities. There is no sexuality in God or in angels though Genesis 1:27 does read: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” What is not made clear here is that their creation as male and female was just for time; for in eternity we will no longer be sexual beings. “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30).”

We can now be Christ-like, but becoming fully “in his own image” awaits another great event: the Second Coming of Christ! “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). So the terms “Father” and “Son,” used for two persons of the Godhead, are not “actual” but “metaphorical” terms that are used to help us understand the spiritual closeness of these two persons.

If they were actual terms, it would mean that the “Father” preceded the “Son”; but since both are eternal beings, this is not true. And if they were actual terms, the question would arise, “Who was the mother, the Holy Spirit?” If the metaphor for the two were carried out, the term “Mother” would apply. This would fit the facts that this person is also subject to the “Father,” and in a much lesser sense to the “Son.” Taking this metaphor on still farther would call attention to the fact that, just as mothers in most cultures bear the major responsibility for the tasks in the home; just so the Holy Spirit bears the responsibility for God’s ongoing activities on earth.

Most Christians have consistently not divided the Substance [essence], of the three persons; but many do consistently confound [confuse] the persons. It is not easy for us to think of persons without doing so in sexual terms; and the Scriptures do state in Genesis 2:24: “... a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” The term “one flesh” here has to have more than a physical meaning, for after the union there are still two separate persons.

In the NIV, 159 passages use the phrase “God is” to refer to his activities or attributes; but there are only a few passages that refer to his essential being. Several of these refer to his eternality, as when he said to Moses, “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14), but only two refer directly to his essential being. Psalm 99.9 says, “God is holy”; and in 1 John 4:8, we read that “God is love.” So, God is three separate, co-eternal, persons who are so equal and in such harmony that they are One God.

Some passages that refer to God's holiness are quite austere, so some conclude that God is very austere! And some passages that refer to his love are taken to mean that God is really quite tolerant. The truth is that the eternal God is not just holy or just love, but God is eternal holy love!

The Bible speaks of God in such glowing terms that it is inconceivable for this writer to believe that this earth and its heaven were anything short of being perfect when created. Yet something drastic happened, for the next words in Genesis (verse 2) read: "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

To summarize briefly what happened: Lucifer, one of God's highest-ranked angels, became jealous of the Son, for he is later referred to as an "Anti-Christ." So he decided to overthrow God, and enlisted one-third of the angels in heaven to join this rebellion. But oh how he under-estimated God! God just threw him down to earth! Isaiah 14:12 reads: "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations." And he is still here today, still trying to do everything he can to undermine the Kingdom of God; for Ephesians 2:2 refers to him as "... the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Much has been written questioning why God allows the innocent to suffer; with much less written about the fact that God is not the only person that influences events such as storms and other catastrophes. Though God is the Final Cause of all, he obviously decided to make such events possible when he created angels and man with free wills.

Some interesting facts about creation can be drawn from the three-fold nature of God. In Genesis 1:26 he said: "Let us make man in our image." Our world is three-fold: solid earth, liquid water, and atmosphere. As persons we are three-fold: body, mind, and soul/spirit. Our bodies in turn are three-fold: solids, liquids, and gasses. Our minds are three-fold: intellect, emotions, and volition. Our spirits are three-fold: made in the image of our Triune God.

This three-fold pattern also applies as outlined in two articles available on our website shown below that set forth the balanced, scripturally-sound insights in God's salvation plan. The abbreviated version is entitled, Good News Final Edition, and the full version, with the Bible passages supporting each insight shown, is entitled, God's Salvation Plan. These insights show that sin is three-fold: essence, expressions, and effects. Faith is three-fold: belief, trust, and obedience. And, the three works of grace by which God's power makes possible our salvation are: first, being "In Christ"; then, "Holy and Blameless"; and then fully, "In His Image."

Yours, "in Christ,"

Brother Jim, Founder

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