

## "One God Three Persons"

How can there be one God but three persons? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." We've studied the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And today we're going to look at the Godhead. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for the will of God. We want to be right with God, and we know that the Lord teaches the truth in the word of God. And when we believe and obey the truth, we know that we're in a right relationship with the Lord; but when we stray from the truth, we put our souls in jeopardy. Truth matters. James 5 verses 19 and 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Now if truth matters this much to God, it ought to matter as much to us. So we turn to the Scripture, because we love the Lord and we want to remain right with Him. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

For the last few weeks we've been looking at God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We've seen how each of these three possess the nature and characteristics of God. The Bible, as we will see, teaches there is but one God yet three Persons. We don't believe in three Gods but in One God. Nor do we believe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all the same person. Instead we believe in one God whose essence and substance is found in three distinct persons. And this teaching provides a mystery for us, and we confess it's hard to understand. But we believe this not because of the church tradition but because the Scriptures clearly teach it. We want no other foundation than the Word of God. And if we can't read it in the Bible, we can't hold it to be the truth that God wants to believe and obey.

Now it might be that you want to study more about this one God, well we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free online at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from John 16 verses 12 to 15, and we'll explore what the Bible says about one God and three Persons.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John, chapter 16, verses 12 to 15. And these are the words of Jesus. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." That's from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You through Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit, have guided us into all the truth, so that we may be able to distinguish truth from error and know what we need to do to please You, and to be right with You and to live with You forever. Father we're grateful. And we pray this in Jesus name, Amen!

The Scriptures boldly and clearly teach that there's only one God. Now here are some statements from the Old Testament which declare this: Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6 and verse 4, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" Now in his prayer of thanksgiving David prayed in 2 Samuel 7 and verse 22, "For this reason You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and

there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears." At another time David sang in Psalm 86 and verse 10, "For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God." Nehemiah declared in Nehemiah 9 and verse 6, "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly host bows down before You."

The prophet Isaiah quoted the Lord in Isaiah 45 verses 5 to 7, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these." In 2 Kings 19 verse 15, "Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, 'O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.'" So it's clear from the Old Testament, that the Old Testament teaches one God, and only one God.

Now in the same way, the New Testament also clearly emphasizes there is one God. The Lord Jesus in Mark 12 answered a scribe who asked Him what the foremost commandment of all was. He said in verses 29 and 30, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is 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.'" Well, Jesus certainly taught there is one Lord and no other. The apostle Paul by inspiration taught in 1 Corinthians 8 and verse 4, "we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one." James also said in James 2 and verse 19, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." Now according to Rex Turner Senior and Don Shakelford in their book, *Biblical Theology*, there are more than forty-five passages in the Old and New Testament which express the concept that there is "one God," and that there is "only one God," and there is no other God.

Someone now asks, "Well Phil, how can this be? Didn't you teach Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are divine?" Well if God is one, can there be one God, if there all three persons are considered God?

Well the New Testament writers help us to understand this problem by their reference to the Godhead or to Deity. Now this designation "Godhead" anticipates the concept of Deity revealed in God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Although it doesn't appear in the Old Testament, "Godhead" appears three times in the King James translation of the New Testament. Newer versions translate the words for Godhead as Deity or the Divine Nature.

This word first appears in Paul's speech at Mars Hill in Athens. Paul said in Acts 17 verse 29, in the King James Version, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." The word "Godhead" in this passage is an adjective meaning "that which belongs to nature or status of deity, or something that's divine." Paul was making clear that the true and living God was not like the idols of the pagan world. Since He created all things, He didn't live in temples made with hands.

The word "Godhead" appears a second time in the King James Version in Romans 1 and verse 20. Paul said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Well we've seen how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all involved in the creation of the world. Well when we look at the how great and how magnificent our world is, it's easy to see how only a supernatural, divine Being could have created it. The amazing design and harmony found within the universe points to the unity of the Godhead in purpose.

The word "Godhead" appears the third time in the King James Version in Colossians 2 and verse 9. Paul wrote, "For in him (that is in Jesus) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Now this word "Godhead," found in the last two passages is an abstract noun describing "the state of being God, that is divine in character or nature, that is deity." So again, we see the divine nature of God dwelling in Jesus in bodily form. This passage helps us to understand that the one God is a Godhead and distinguishes the Son as having a body.

The New Testament says much more about the three persons in the Godhead. The New Testament in two passages list the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These passages unite these three with the word "and." The word "and" here means these three all fit in the same category. First, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28 verses 19 to 20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." People are to be baptized in the name (and that's a singular word by the way) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To be baptized into Christ means we're baptized into the name of all three. When you become a Christian by being baptized into Christ, you have God as your Father, Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as the earnest or guarantee of your inheritance according to Ephesians 1 verses 13 and 14.

Now the second passage that lists all three comes in Paul's final greeting to the church at Corinth, and that's found in 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 14. Paul said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Now each of these three persons of the Godhead bless us. They act together in unison with one purpose to bless us with their grace, love and fellowship. If Paul didn't think of all three as divine, he would not have listed them together.

But you ask, "How can three be one?" Well consider with me the prayer of Jesus to the Father found in John 17 verses 20 to 23, He prayed, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. Now the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Now Jesus wanted His followers to be one, and to be united, He says "just as We are one," in His prayer to the Father. Just as the church can have many members and yet be one body, so the Father, Son, and Spirit can be united as one.

We noted last week that God the Father was not alone in the beginning. John 1 verses 1 through 3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." So while the Father is God, the Son or the Word was God and was with God. Genesis 1 and verse 2 speaks of the Spirit "hovering" over the face of the waters, so we know that all three were present in the beginning and were involved in creation. Now while the Old Testament doesn't use a word describing the Godhead, some passages do recognize the fact of a plurality of persons as one God. For instance, Genesis 1 and verse 26, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." Now these passages necessarily show God the Father was not alone at the time of creation.

And in the same way, the writer of the book of Hebrews in Hebrews 1 verse 8 quoted from Psalm 45 verses 6 and 7. The Hebrew writer said God was speaking about His Son Jesus. God said, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever"; and then again in verse nine it says, speaking of the son, "You have

loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." Now here you have one person in the Godhead speaking to another, and calling Him God.

You see the New Testament also reveals how each person in the Godhead interacted with the others and how the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all distinct. Now you might remember when Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. Matthew chapter 3 verses 16 and 17 says, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'" Now wouldn't it be absurd to suggest the Father who was speaking from heaven, and the Son who just came from the water and being baptized, and the Holy Spirit who was a dove, were all the same person?

Let's look at another passage. You remember the Lord Jesus said to the apostles in John 14 verses 16 and 17, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." Now as you look at that passage all three are distinctly seen in that one passage. The Lord Jesus was praying to the Father that the disciples would have another Helper or Comforter to be with them, and that would be the Holy Spirit. So there's Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit all mentioned.

Again, the Lord Jesus said in John 14 and verse 26, "But the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." Here again we have three persons! The Father will send the Holy Spirit to teach and to bring to the remembrance of the apostles the things that the Lord Jesus Himself taught. Now you see, each were involved in the teaching of the church.

Again, we have Jesus speaking, and He said in John 15 and verse 26, "That when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me." Here Jesus is sending forth the Spirit from the Father to testify about the Lord Jesus. Now if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all the same person, it would be illogical and meaningless to speak of them interacting with one another as these passages do. Jesus wouldn't make such an error. And nor should we. It is right to believe in One God, but it's also right to recognize that there are three Persons. So those are the things that we need to think about as we begin to look at One God, and three persons. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful that You are our Father. That You have loved us with a great love. That You always with us. And Father we're thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood on the cross that we might have the forgiveness of sins. And Father we're thankful that You have sent the Holy Spirit to be a helper and to deliver the truth so that we might know all the things that Your son Jesus has taught to us. Father help us always to love You and to serve You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

The concept of one God and three persons is difficult for many people. When we hear the word "apple," we may think of a fruit, a tree, or a seed. Well now these are distinct things yet the same in essence. When we think of H<sub>2</sub>O, we could speak of ice, water, or steam: their distinct and yet one in nature. The Lord Jesus said in John 10 and verse 30, "I and the Father are one." He prayed to His Father in John 17 verse 22 that His followers in the church may be one, "even as We are one." Now unity comes only when people are united in heart and mind with the same purpose.

Philippians 2 verses 5 to 8 says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Now Jesus could be one with the Father, because He took the form of a servant. Though He existed in the form of God, He humbled Himself and was willing to die on the cross for our sins.

Now to be one with the Father and Son, we too must humble ourselves and be obedient. Hebrews 5 verses 8 and 9 says, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source (or the author) of eternal salvation." When we believe the gospel, when we repent of our sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and are baptized into Christ, we too are obedient and come to have the hope of eternal life. Only God can save, and that's why we must do things God's way. And if we wish to be God's people, let's do things God's way.

Well we hope that today's study about God has stirred you to consider obeying the gospel of Christ. We're now publishing this little book entitled "One God, Three Persons," and we'd love to send you one free when they're ready in November. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can also download these lessons on our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And if you write' and ask for one, don't worry, we won't hassle you for money or put you on a list. We're not here to exploit you.

But we do ask that you please get involved, get involved, with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we can help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So that we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.