

The Unity Series

ONE GOD

ONE
GOD

Contents

Part I. Monotheism

1. God is one	14
a. Early church leaders	15
2. Basic Christianity	17
a. No mystery to it	18
3. The God of the Jews	23
a. Don't deny your roots	24
b. Jews who didn't know God?	25
c. Only one God for Jews and Gentiles	26
d. Be humble	26

Part II. Who is God to Jesus?

1. Jesus prays to God	29
2. Jesus glorifies God	30
3. Jesus worships God	32
a. God as the maximum object of worship	32
4. Jesus has a God	34
a. Jesus said so	34
b. The apostles said so	34
i. The highest praise	35
c. God says so	35
d. The saints say so	36
e. Christ's consolation	36
f. Name giving	37

Part III. Who is Jesus to God?

1. God's love for Jesus	39
2. God's love for us	39
3. God loves Jesus... conditionally	41
4. God shares all with Jesus	44
5. Jesus is not the "one God"	44
a. The only God	45
b. The only true God	45
c. Apostolic affirmation	45
d. Facets of the diamond-cutter	46
i. Jesus was chosen by God	46
ii. Jesus was offered to God	48
iii. Jesus gets his life from God	49
6. Jesus is "God"	51
a. No reason to be confused	52
b. John's Prologue	53
i. Association with God	53
ii. God who is with the one God	54
iii. God dependent on the one God	56
c. The origin of Jesus' deity	57
i. The wonderful discovery: Love	58
d. Jesus proceeds from God	59
i. Jesus belongs to God	60
ii. Jesus lives to God	60
iii. More on proceeding from God	61

iv. We are also “of God”	62
e. Jesus is begotten of God	62
i. Was Jesus created?	62
ii. “Not made”	65
iii. The begotten Son	68
iv. The Son of God as God	71
f. Jesus receives worship	72
i. Jesus is a divine being	73
ii. Jesus is the “I am”	73
iii. Jesus is “a man” and also “God”	75
iv. Jesus has God’s name	76
v. No confusion	76
g. The one God shares his divine nature	78

Part IV. Differences between God and Jesus

1. God is invisible, Jesus is seen	83
2. God is immortal, Jesus died	84
3. God knows everything, Jesus has limitations	85
4. God honors who he will in the Kingdom, Jesus cannot	86
5. God cannot be tempted, Jesus was tempted in all things	87
6. God does not receive advice from anybody, Jesus does	87

7. God is spirit, Jesus is flesh	88
8. God is an elder, Jesus is a young man	89
9. God needs nothing, Jesus needs God	90

Part V. God in the absolute sense

1. What do we mean by <i>absolute</i> ?	94
2. A word on the Holy Spirit	96
a. Balanced doctrine	97
b. Authority and subordination	97
c. The Spirit's role	98
d. God sent the Holy Spirit	98
e. Subordinate to Jesus	99
f. Tri-unity	99
g. An order and a hierarchy	100
h. Just don't leave out God	101
3. Jesus' miracles point to God	102

Part VI. Distinguishing between God and Jesus

1. The Lord Jesus contrasted himself with God	107
2. The apostles differentiated between Jesus and God	109
a. Jesus is God's Messiah	111
b. Jesus was "raised up" by God	112
c. God made the universe through Jesus	113

i. What Jesus didn't make	115
d. Jesus represents God	116
3. What should we learn to do?	116
a. We should pray to God in Jesus' name	117
b. We should glorify God through Jesus	118
c. Men should lead women	118

Part VII. Who is greater?

1. Jesus only does what God wants	122
2. Jesus imitates God	123
3. Jesus is God's servant	124
4. Jesus is God's messenger	125
a. Jesus came from and went back to God	125
b. Jesus was sent by God	126
c. Jesus did God's miracles	129
d. Jesus spoke on behalf of God	130
5. Jesus will always be under God's authority	132

Part VIII. What God does for Jesus

1. It was God who resurrected Jesus from the dead	135
a. Why did God do it?	139
b. Why do we need to believe this?	139
c. It's a big deal	140
i. Our problem is with God	141

d. Are you sure about this?	141
2. God honors Jesus by giving him... everything!	146
a. God gives Jesus titles	147
b. God gives Jesus authority	150
c. God gives Jesus the judgment	151
d. God gives Jesus glory	151
e. God gave us to Jesus	153
3. Jesus has been given a place of great honor	153
a. God is on a throne	154
b. God is in the Heavenly Temple	155
c. Jesus is seated at God's right hand	157

Part IX. Jesus as our High Priest before God

1. Jesus intercedes for us before God	161
---------------------------------------	-----

Part X. Knowing God

1. What does it mean to "know God"?	163
a. It's eternal life	164
b. It's not what you think it is	165
c. Who doesn't know God	167
d. Challenges ahead	168
e. How Jesus knows God	169
2. What does it mean to "have God"?	170
3. All Jesus has is from God	170

a. Through Jesus we can believe in God	171
b. Through Jesus we can love God	172
i. Why Jesus reveals God to us	172
ii. How to love God	173
iii. Satan only helped	173
c. Christian unity is like Jesus' unity with God	174
i. A crucial doctrine	177
d. Chain-link relationships from God to us	178

Part XI. How important is this really?

1. Knowing God is the key for interpreting the Bible	181
a. The starting point	184
b. You must ultimately place your faith in God	186

Part XII. Why is this so difficult?

1. The current confusion is apostasy	188
a. Weak Christians	189
b. Persecuted for God	190
c. Ambiguous worship	190
2. God is the Great Judge and to be feared	191
a. The fear of the fear of God	192

Appendices

Appendix 1. Questions for healthy discussion	195
Appendix 2. Historical Overview	196
Appendix 3. The Nicene Creed	198
Appendix 4. Longer Passages	198
a. Moses meets God	198
b. Humanity turns from God	200
c. Paul in Athens	202
d. God's throne as seen by Ezekiel, Daniel, and John	203
Appendix 5. The Apostles differentiate between God and Jesus	206
Appendix 6. Jesus was sent by God	210
Appendix 7. Names used exclusively for the one God	211

Affectionately, we dedicate this book to Aiden, Phoebe, and Christian; trusting that it will help safely guide your steps to the Kingdom. May you persevere in the faith; loving everybody, even your enemies. The truths revealed here serve us nothing if we have not love.

If I have the gift of prophecy
and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge...
but do not have love,
I am nothing.
(1 Cor. 13:2)

Our legacy to you is this:
God's word on your lips
and his Spirit in your heart.

Mom & Dad
NY, 2012



Part I.

Monotheism

You may have heard of the term *monotheism*, the belief in the existence of just one God. Most Christian people are either uncomfortable or unwilling to describe who the one God is. Jews and Muslims, on the other hand, will be glad to enter into a discussion on who the one God is and, in general, are more than willing to fervently defend their monotheistic religions. That's because to them monotheism is an essential part of true religion.

On the other hand, in Christian circles, there's widespread confusion and sometimes even sharp disagreement on the issue of monotheism. Due to this, there's hardly a more fundamental matter for you to resolve in your hearts. For us not to be able to give a clear and concise answer to the inevitable question "Who is God?" would be painfully embarrassing—particularly with our Jewish and Muslim neighbors. But, if we can profess without any reservation that we believe in one God, and if we can unwaveringly articulate *who* that God is, it will be joy to us and a light to those around us. So, which will you choose: shame or gain? Will you win people over to God, or will you lose their respect with a flimsy faith?

» Most Christian people are either uncomfortable or unwilling to describe who the one God is.

» There's hardly a more fundamental matter.

1. God is one

» A focus on the NT revelation of the one God should help to strengthen Christians.

Emphasis on God’s “oneness” is found all over the Bible; however, in this book we’re going to focus particularly on the New Testament (NT) revelation of the one God. This will help us to be more brief and direct in our defense of the faith. The beliefs of a Christian are based on the NT, and a Christian should know how to use it in defense of the fundamental doctrines. At the same time, some Old Testament (OT) passages are so significant, that it’s quite necessary to include them here—but just a few.

One indispensable OT proof of monotheism is the *Shema*, a passage repeated by devout Jews twice daily in prayer. It is also the first portion of Scripture taught to Jewish children when they are old enough to speak. The *Shema* unequivocally affirms that there is one God:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, *the LORD is one*. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).¹

» Does monotheistic faith belong only to the Jews, or is it Christian too?

But, we ask: “Does this monotheistic faith belong only to the Jews, or is it also ours?” To answer this question, the key issue is finding out whether the NT Christians were monotheists or not. So, “Were the NT believers of the same faith as the OT Jews?” For anybody who studies the NT, the answer should be a resounding “Yes, they were!” Observe how parallels to the *Shema* can be found in at least eight NT passages:

... the Lord is one (Mark 12:29).

... God is one and there is no other but him (Mark 12:32).

... there is only one God (Romans 3:30).

There is no God but one (1 Corinthians 8:4).

¹ All of the Bible passages cited are taken from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise indicated. The reason why this version was chosen is because it was ranked as the most popular version for English Bible readers in 2011 (http://www.cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf) and we would like to use terminology that the greatest number of people are familiar with.

... there is but one God (1 Corinthians 8:6).
 ... God is one (Galatians 3:20).
 ... there is one God (1 Timothy 2:5).
 ... there is one God (James 2:19).²

The expression “God is one” has a clear enough meaning: There is only *one singular* God. There’s not much difficulty in interpreting it. That means precisely that if someone asks you who God is, you must reply by naming *just one*—not two, three, four, or five. To respond with more than one person is to immediately *deny* that God is one.

The affirmation of God being “one” has long been a part of Christian doctrine, from the time of the apostles up to the present. The only matter to determine—and the very purpose for which we have written this book is to determine it—is *who* that God exactly *is*. This is a point upon which many well-meaning but uninformed Christians (shamefully) disagree.

a. Early church leaders

But there was not always disagreement on the issue of who the one God is. In the Christian church, the first approximately 350 years of theology and doctrine were clearly (and even *strictly*) monotheistic. For example, the Nicene Creed (penned in 325 AD) concisely asserts: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty.”³ The authors of this early and highly esteemed creed, who came from all around the Roman Empire⁴ and who met in what is called the *First Ecumenical Council*, made a concise declaration as to who

» The OT foundational text for monotheism is repeated at least 8 times in the NT.

» If someone asks you who the one God is, you must reply by naming *just one*, or you deny that he *is* one.

» The first 350 years of Christian theology were strictly monotheistic: the one God was the Father.

² Please note two things about the way we use Bible passages in this book: 1.) When words are *italicized*, the italics are mine. They are intended to indicate my emphasis on important concepts. [I use them much more than most editors normally allow, but my passion for truth has made me zealous for no meaning to be lost. Forgive me if so much italicizing takes away from a smooth reading experience]. 2.) The passages are listed in order of their appearance in the Bible. For example, I’ll list a passage from Matthew before I’ll list one from Mark.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed#The_original_Nicene_Creed_of_325; all Internet references are from the months of January-March, 2012. No exact dates will be given.

⁴ They came from all provinces of the Roman Empire, with the exception of Britain.

» “We believe in *one God, the Father Almighty.*”

the one God is—stating that the one God Christians believe in was *the Father*.

Of those approximately 300 bishops in attendance, only 2 refused to sign the Creed, and that was not because of any disagreement they may have had with the statement that there is one God. Rather, it had to do with their disagreement with the affirmation that Jesus was of “one substance” with the one God (whatever that means). Although the issue had become quite philosophical, one thing is for certain, and that is that these two bishops’ faith in the one God was actually much *stronger* (it was not not at all weaker) than what the wording of the Creed expressed.⁵

The 300 Nicene Council church leaders participated in the first general council in the history of the Christian church since the *Council of Jerusalem*, a council which was much more significant because its proceedings are found in the Bible itself (Acts 15). The Council of Jerusalem is a council worth describing,⁶ especially with regard to the way the early

⁵ These two, along with Arius, couldn’t imagine that God could share his very “substance” (that is, his *nature*) with another. In other words, the divine nature is *intransferable* for them. I hope that you are able to believe what they couldn’t because God certainly *does* share his divine nature.

⁶ Jerusalem and Nicaea were impressive, and, like I say, “worth describing,” but the *First Council of Constantinople* (381 AD), the follow-up council to Nicaea, was when Spirit-led doctrine was abandoned for academic debate. This shouldn’t be a surprise to us because, by the time 381 rolled around, none of the bishops from the time of persecution were around anymore. Their lifestyles had become more easy and academic, being that the Roman Empire ceased persecution of Christians in 313 AD, under the *Edict of Milan*.

It was in Constantinople that the highly intellectual Cappadocian Fathers promoted the terms *ousia* (meaning “nature”—you can see it used in 2 Peter 1:4 and in Luke 15:6) and *hypostasis* (interpreted at the Council to mean “person”—you can see it used in Hebrews 1:3 where it is translated as “being” [NIV] or “essence” [LEB]) as the key terms in their reformulation of Christian faith. Practically every issue about the relationship between God and Jesus revolved around how these two terms were applied. This all had its start in Nicaea where the term *homoousia* (often translated “of the same substance”) was first—rather innocently—used to explain the divine nature in God and Christ. By the time the *Council of Chalcedon* came around in 451 AD, the philosophical new terminology had overshadowed the simple Biblical concept of “one God and Father,” and theology had become irreversibly Trinitarian. Since they (*ousia* and *hypostasis*) are of vague interpretation and are scarcely used in the Bible, they easily became overly-charged with meanings that only the most philosophical debater could comprehend or use.

church expressed its monotheistic faith. It was held by the original apostles of Jesus Christ some 275 years earlier than Nicaea, in 50 AD. The Bible says that this very first council of Christian apostles, missionaries, and pastors was convened for the sake of “the Gentiles who are *turning to God*” (Acts 15:19). So God had the central place in the discussion there. We notice that the name “God” is mentioned no less than 7 times in Acts 15! Just as in the case of Nicaea, there was no debate whatsoever with regard to the doctrine of monotheism. Their one God was indisputably *the Father*.

» The early church expressed its monotheistic faith.

» For the apostles, the Gentiles were “turning to God.”

2. Basic Christianity

Now, faith in one God and describing who that one God *is* does not require a degree in advanced theology, as some would have us think. On the contrary, it is a basic doctrine for all, even—according to the Bible—unbelievers (that makes it as basic as it gets). Some religions and their teachers may make it appear as if belief in one God was an issue for a group of theologians to handle, but the Bible treats it like a very fundamental truth. Furthermore, it is one of the truths we need to believe if we are going to be in real spiritual unity with other Christians. In other words, we need it for true Christian fellowship—if a church is not taught that the one God is the Father, their sense of Christian community is just a mirage. There is no real unity among them.

» The Bible treats monotheism like a very fundamental truth.

Let’s be honest: If two people can’t even agree on who God is, can they really experience unity? Could two people who disagree on the highest object of their worship, the focus of their deepest adoration, and the one they regard as their maximum authority possibly share true brotherhood? If they *could*, than in what sense are they “brothers”? How could

The style of defining God popularized in 451 AD would pave the road for the Athanasian Creed (circa 500 AD)—even today the primary source for Trinitarian doctrine.

two who have different fathers be truly brothers? Would disagreement on who God is allow for two people to share fellowship, or—higher still—the bond of matrimony? I think not. Basic Christian unity is born when two people come to agree on who the one God is.

» Basic Christian unity starts when we come to agree on who God is.

» “There is... one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

» Why is *one* such a difficult concept?

And do not call anyone on Earth ‘father,’ for you have *one Father*, and he is in Heaven (Matthew 23:9).

Make every effort to keep *the unity of the spirit* through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; *one God* and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

a. No mystery to it

Many people will attempt to avoid the issue of defining God by claiming that God is a “mystery.” This is an easy way of avoiding the issue altogether, but is it Biblical? Making God out to be incomprehensible may help someone come across as being spiritual (the person who says so has an aura of mysticism around them), but is it true that we *can’t* grasp the reality of one God? Why is *one* such a difficult concept? Isn’t the essence of the doctrine of one God—simplicity? It’s supposed to be *simple*. I’ve never found even one Bible passage that says that God proper⁷ is a mystery. I’m truly willing to have

⁷ By “God proper” I mean that “God himself” is not a mystery, for he is *one* and singularity is not mysterious. A person could argue that “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9) proves that he is incomprehensible; but in saying so, they are not interpreting the passage properly. It says that his *ways and thoughts* are higher than ours—not that he *himself* is beyond our understanding. The simple question we mean to answer in this book is “Who is the one God?” Is it beyond our capacities to answer that question?

What God does and how he does it with such great authority is expressed in Job 38-41, four chapters which we don’t have the space to print even as an appendix, but we highly recommend them as readings. In them, God says that the basis for his rebuke of Job is that Job needs to see that he doesn’t understand what God *does*—so Job should not question God. Job repents with these conclusive words: “I know that you can *do* all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. You [God] asked, ‘Who is this that obscures *my plans* without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of *things* I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (Job 42:2-3). Job’s confession was never that he couldn’t know *God*, but that he couldn’t

someone show me such a passage. If someone does so, we'll be sure to include it in future editions of this book.

In trying to comprehend the viewpoint of those who hold the “mystery” position with regard to God, I have sought to find a verse that might state what they believe. In my search, I found that yes, the Bible does talk about a “mystery of God” (Colossians 2:2-3), but even that is said to be a mystery we now understand, since God has revealed Jesus to us as the long-awaited Messiah. Here's the passage:

My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know *the mystery of God*, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:2-3).

Let's observe here that the text never says that the mystery is God *himself*, but only that the mystery is “God's.” So, what has not been understood until now, and what had been for many generations difficult to comprehend was who the *Christ* is, but not who *God* is. We now know that the Christ is Jesus, the “son of David.” That wasn't known until he was born; but at what point in history was it not known who the Creator of the Universe is? Never, in my recollection. God has never played hide-and-seek with humanity.

understand God's ways: what God does, his purposes, his plans, and the things that God is responsible for—those are the terms used in the Bible to demonstrate what all believers humbly recognize we don't understand.

Furthermore, just before Job repented, Elihu (Job's only wise counselor) also made a case for how God's ways are beyond our understanding, saying in Job 37:5, “He *does great things* beyond our understanding.” I recognize that Elihu did state “How great is God—beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out” (Job 36:26), but this should not be interpreted to say that God is a mystery. Since the surrounding context is all about God's works, from Chapter 32, when Elihu begins, to his final remarks in Chapter 37, the gist of what Elihu says in Job 36:26 cannot be that God is a Trinity. Since all interpretations should be made with context in mind, this passage should be understood as saying that it is the one God's *greatness* that is beyond our understanding. Elihu is saying that we can't comprehend God's *age*—because God has been around for so long.

Another way of reflecting on the greatness of the “One” God (Job 34:17-18) is to ask ourselves “Who appointed him over the earth? Who put him in charge of the whole world?” (Job 34:13). God's authority and existence go much beyond what human minds comprehend.

» I've never found one Bible passage that says that God is a mystery.

» What has been difficult to comprehend is who the *Christ* is, but not who *God* is.

» God never plays hide-and-seek with us.

The human race has always been able to discern the hand of the one God in the natural order of created things.

According to the Bible, the fact that there is only one God is something that even *demons* believe.

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the *demons* be-lieve that—and shudder (James 2:10).

» Monotheism is “beginner’s” Christianity.

So if it’s obvious even to those who *hate* him, how much more clear should it be to those of us who *love* him? Again, for you to know that there is one God puts you on the level of beginner’s Christianity. It’s no big deal to understand it—no big deal at all! I should also warn you to be careful of pride here. Let’s not imagine that we are especially enlightened or that we’re exceedingly spiritual if we know who God is and if we’ve come to the knowledge that he’s the only God.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author and apostle rebuked believers for not maturing beyond the “elementary truths of God’s Word,” among which he listed “faith in God.” In other words, he chastised them for being so slow in their growth and went so far as to say that the foundation of “faith in God” was for immature, that is, *new* believers. Here’s the passage we’re referring to:

... though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again... let us *move beyond* the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, *not laying again* the foundation of... *faith in God* (Hebrews 5:12;6:1).

Observe closely and you’ll see that the apostle who wrote this actually wanted the church members to *leave* the teaching about God *behind* them! Why? So that they could finally become the mature Christians he expected them to be. That means that if you can put the information in this book behind you, it will be time for you to really start growing as a mature follower of Christ! We say that without being con-descending and without looking down on anybody, but we also say it *seriously*, just as the apostle to the Hebrews spoke seriously in his day. A serious dad will help his foolish young

son to grow, but a father who entertains his foolish child's thoughts actually hates his child. So do true Bible teachers demand maturity.

It might seem like a big deal to believe in one God and be a monotheist, but the truth is that you don't even have to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit—*common sense* suffices. It's clear from the testimony of the mountains, valleys, plains, rivers, oceans, plants, animals, trees, sun, moon, stars, and planets seen all around us... that one all-powerful God exists. The harmony and design point to one source—one wise and loving origin. The Word of God says that it's plain who God is even from the natural environment. No special revelation is required. The judgment of Paul the apostle is that mankind has turned from its original, primitive, simple knowledge of God and has suppressed the evidence, denying him altogether.

In the following passage, the "immortal God" is mentioned. We know that this term refers to the *one and only* God of whom, in another passage, it says "who *alone* is immortal" (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16). Immortality (complete freedom from death) is an exclusive characteristic of the one God. There's only *one* who never has nor never could ever die; and it couldn't be Jesus who died at Calvary—so it must be the Father of Jesus. In Romans 1 we see that although all humanity originally knew God, they turned from the light and towards the darkness—avoiding him, ignoring him, denying him—but they have no excuse for their denial.

... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the Creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles... (Romans 1:19-23).

» Common sense suffices to be a monotheist. No special revelation is required.

» There's only *one* who never has nor never could ever die.

» All humanity originally knew the one God.

» Although people *knew* him, it wasn't worth their time to retain the knowledge of God.

» Man has hidden from God and not vice-versa.

They exchanged *the truth about God* for a lie... Furthermore, just as *they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God*, so God gave them over to a depraved mind (Romans 1:25,28).⁸

Again, let's observe from these Bible verses that any person can see that God has a divine nature. It's "plain" to us. Anybody who hypothesizes with evolution or who theorizes with the "Big Bang" is just ignoring the obvious truth: there is one Intelligent Designer. Humanity started off with the knowledge of God, and then renounced it: It wasn't worth their while. At one point in history, the ancestors of the Amazonian jungle tribes, the Eskimos, the Indian Hindus, the Communist Chinese, the Australian Aborigines, and even modern American atheistic city dwellers, were people who knew about God. The predecessors of all these groups turned their backs on God and opted for idolatry and darkness over the knowledge of the one true God. In response, God abandoned them for a time, delivering them over to their depravity; but let's be clear on this point: Man has hidden from God and *not* vice-versa. Adam's experience is still the experience of human beings everywhere...

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and *they hid from the LORD God* among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God *called* to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; *so I hid*" (Genesis 3:8-10).

⁸ This is just a part of a magnificent larger passage. You can check out the complete passage in Appendix 4b.

3. The God of the Jews

In view of the fact that today such a bone of contention exists on the issue of monotheism, what a surprise it is to find absolutely no controversy *whatsoever* about who God is recorded in the NT. While the message of Jesus was being spread among the synagogues of the world, no Jews ever charged the Christians with convoluting monotheistic faith.⁹ Now, there *was* major controversy over whether Jesus was the true Messiah; and there *was* controversy over whether it was obligatory to keep the Law of the commandments given to Moses, yes. Certain issues *did* spark controversy and persecution, but not monotheism.

So, as the apostles suffered rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom what *was* the main issue at stake? It was basically that Jews were being called upon to decide whether their covenant with God would continue to be the one which is through *Moses* or whether they would commit themselves to God through *Jesus*. That was the #1 issue at stake, but not monotheism. Monotheism was a given. The *covenant* was the key—and if you don't read your NT in the light of that great issue, I don't know how it will be possible for you to understand the NT at all.

The apostle's assertion that Jesus was the mediator of the long-expected New Covenant produced conflict, friction, and debates revolving around the interpretation of the Scriptures. However, isn't it striking that *not one* debate

» In the NT, Jews never charged Christians with convoluting monotheistic faith. Today they do.

» Monotheism was a given.

⁹ This is a vital footnote which I wish all Christian people would research and act upon: Both Orthodox Jews and Muslims do persecute Christians around the world, and they do it most of the time precisely because they think that Christians blaspheme God, *denying* that he is *one* by affirming that the one God is *three*. If Christians in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, or Morocco could respond to their persecutors with a coherent defense of their monotheistic faith, at least they won't be jailed, tortured, or killed for a lie—the Christian faith *does* uphold monotheism. Furthermore, how many Jews and Muslims would be evangelized by now if Christians were trained to share their faith with a robust monotheistic apologetic? Multitudes, I imagine.

» Not one debate is registered in the NT about who God might be.

» Christians had the *exact* same God as the Jews.

» The Jews who heard the apostles were confronted by this element of the preaching: God can only be reached through Jesus.

or argument is registered in the epistles or the Book of Acts about who *God* might be? Why not? The answer is simply because Christians had the exact same God as the Jews! In fact, the great majority of Christians *were* Jews in the earliest years of the development of the Christian church—for example; all of the original 12 apostles, as well as the other 70 missionary disciples were Jews. And there’s no doubt as to who the God of the Jews is: Yahweh.

Again, the challenge raised by the writers of the NT for their Jewish hearers was not “We want to explain to you who God is and how he should be understood as a Trinity” but “We present Jesus to you as the one in whom you must trust in order to have a covenant *with* the one true God.” The great confrontational element in apostolic teaching is that God can *only* be accessed through Jesus Christ. The apostles taught that Jesus was the way to God, and in fact their religion was called “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22), recalling Jesus’ words “I am *the way*... no one *comes to the Father* except through me” (John 14:6).

a. Don’t deny your roots

We have already seen that monotheistic belief is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Let’s also recognize the fact that Christian monotheism *has its roots in Judaism*. It’s not good to deny your roots: Christians should give due recognition to the fact that they inherit their faith in God from their “ancestors” the Jews. Paul didn’t lose opportunities to give such recognition:

I am a Jew... I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our *ancestors*. I was just as *zealous for God* as any of you are today (Acts 22:3).

[Ananias speaking to Paul when Paul was converted] *The God of our ancestors* has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One [Jesus Christ] and to hear words from his mouth (Acts 22:14).

I admit that *I worship the God of our ancestors* as a follower of *the Way*, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in

accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have *the same hope in God as these men themselves have...* (Acts 24:14-15).

Did God reject his people? *By no means!* I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. *God did not reject his people*, whom he foreknew... (Romans 11:1-2).

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles... at that time you were... without hope and *without God* in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been *brought near* by the blood of Christ... His [Christ's] purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to *reconcile both of them to God* through the cross... For through him [Jesus] *we both have access to the Father* by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but *fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household* (Ephesians 2:11-19).

Here are some questions which may help you to analyze the last passage more fully:

- To whom did Christ “bring us near”?
- With whom does Christ propose to reconcile us?
- To whom do we now have access?
- Of whose “household” do we now belong?

b. Jews who didn't know God?

Notice in the next passage that the knowledge the Jews are missing is not a knowledge of God, but a knowledge of *his righteousness*. In other words, they didn't understand how God demonstrates his righteousness to us. Do *you*? [Hint: It's through Jesus].

... my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that *they are zealous for God*, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since *they did not know the righteousness of God* and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness (Romans 10:1-3).

» Paul had the same hope in God as his Jewish compatriots.

» Christ's purpose was to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God.

c. Only one God for Jews and Gentiles

» The basis for all unity is the reality that there is only one God.

In the following passage we have a grand truth: The basis for all unity, that is, the reason for the unification of Jews and Gentiles is this: the fundamental reality that “there is only *one* God.” In other words, the apostolic thinking is this: “With just one God, how *could* Jews and Gentiles be separate?” Such a division is unimaginable among those who believe in just one God. Trinitarianism, on the other hand, has divided Jews and Christians more than any other doctrine.

Or is God the God of Jews *only*? Is he not the God of Gentiles *too*? Yes, of *Gentiles too*, since *there is only one God*, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith (Romans 3:29-30).

d. Be humble

» It may seem like Gentile Christians know so much more about God than the Jews, but is it true?

» Judaism is the foundation of Christianity.

Another important matter to bring up is that Gentile Christians (that’s most of us) should not consider themselves to be above the Jews. The following passage is a challenge to any Christian who may think that he knows more about God than his Jewish counterparts. People from Trinitarian theologies may think that they know more about God than the Jews because it seems like their God is so much more¹⁰ than the God of the Jews, while believers in “Oneness” (who consider God to be Jesus and no other) might also suppose that what they know far surpasses the Jew’s knowledge of God. The issue at stake is this: Are Christians supported by the revelation given to them through the Jews, or do Jews depend on Gentile Christians for revelation? Who learns from who? What does the Bible say on this issue?

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the

¹⁰ Perhaps Trinitarians are tempted to think that the one they call the “Godhead” is three times greater. I don’t know, but the presumption is clear enough in many Christian writings.

others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, *do not consider yourself to be superior* to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but *the root supports you...* if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again (Romans 11:17-18,23).

» Do not consider yourself to be superior to the Jews.



Part II.

Who is God to Jesus?

Did Jesus see God as his equal? Did Jesus see God as himself? Or did Jesus see God as someone much greater than he? When Jesus made reference to God, what was the tone? Was there passive indifference, cool acquaintance, casual friendliness, warm regard, solemn piety, respectful obedience, or utter dependence? What was Jesus' *tone* with God?

If we can figure out who God was for Jesus, then it will be much easier for us to understand how we ourselves should approach God. The Lord Jesus' way of dealing with God will most certainly be the correct way for *all* of us to deal with God. Let's briefly look at how Jesus prays to God, glorifies him, and even worships him; and beyond that, let's commit ourselves to follow his example.

» Let's follow Jesus' approach to God.

1. Jesus prays to God

For Jesus to pray *to* God is a clear demonstration of his dependence *on* God. Prayer to another requires devotion, faith, trust, and humility. Jesus had all this with regard to the one God. And it wasn't only while he was in the flesh that he prayed:

[Jesus said] And *I will ask the Father*, and he will give you another advocate... (John 14:16).

Since the Holy Spirit was sent *after* Christ's resurrection, that means Jesus prayed *after* he was resurrected. In other words, Jesus makes humble requests to God even when he's

» "I will [future tense] ask the Father," said Jesus, "and he will give you" the Holy Spirit.

» Jesus depends on God even after his resurrection: after having been made perfect!

not in the flesh—he still depends on God even after being made perfect! Jesus relies on God constantly:

During the days of Jesus' life on Earth, *he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death* [God], and he was heard because of his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).

Other prayers Jesus lifted up to God can be observed in the following verses:

» Jesus prayed to the one who could save him.

... he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).

But *I have prayed for you*, Simon, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32).

» We should direct our prayers upwards to God.

Then Jesus *looked up* and said, "*Father*, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me..." (John 11:41).

... *he looked toward Heaven* and prayed: "*Father*, the hour has come..." (John 17:1).

We, as followers of Jesus, should also direct our prayers to God. Jesus and the apostles modeled this pattern for us.

» Jesus said: "When you pray, pray to your Father."

... *when you pray*, go into your room, close the door and *pray to your Father*... This, then, is *how* you should pray: *Our Father in Heaven*, hallowed be your name... (Matthew 6:6,9).

We remember before our God and Father your... endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

I always thank my God as I remember you *in my prayers*, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus (Philemon 1:4-5).

2. Jesus glorifies God

When he was with us, Jesus glorified God, and he does it even today. The Bible says that God glorified Jesus also, but it's not some sort of reciprocal treatment between the two;

in other words, the glorification that comes from Jesus is not the kind of glorification that God gives to Jesus. God glorified Jesus as a result of Christ's obeying him. It's not the same glorification that goes from Jesus to God. Jesus' practice of giving glory to God was built upon reverence.

Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. *If* God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once (John 13:31-32).¹¹

Notice the remarkable "if" in the last passage. With it, we can see that there was *a condition* that had to be met if Jesus was to be glorified by God: He had to glorify God *first*. After Jesus did what was expected of him, God responded by resurrecting Jesus and by giving Jesus the Kingdom authority.

Another way of looking at it is to notice that God didn't just resurrect Jesus and place Jesus at his right hand for nothing. God glorifies Jesus for *a reason*: It's because Jesus glorified God by doing God's will—completing the work God had given him to do. Therefore their glorification is not some mutual favor (like back-scratching), but a *conditional* response. That's why I said it's not "reciprocal." The following passages show how Jesus glorified God:

"... it was *for this very reason* I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from Heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:27-28).

... [Jesus speaking to the disciples] I will do whatever you ask in my name, *so that* the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13).

[Jesus prayed to God] I have brought you glory on Earth *by finishing the work* you gave me to do (John 17:4).

» God glorifies Jesus because Jesus obeyed him. Jesus glorifies God out of reverence for God.

» *If* God is glorified in Jesus, *then* God glorifies Jesus.

» There was a condition Jesus had to meet if he was going to be glorified by God.

» The reason why Jesus ever got to the cross was to glorify the name of God!

¹¹ Two other very literal translations translate verse 32 in the following ways: "If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and will glorify him immediately" (LEB); and "If God was glorified in him, God also will glorify him in Himself; yea, immediately He will glorify him" (YLT).

3. Jesus worships God

Not only did Jesus pray to God and make it a point to glorify him, but we also can see that Jesus was absolutely committed to worshipping God—and *only* God. Satan tried to stop Christ from living with such a high degree of devotion, but no temptation could get in the way of this firm commitment that Jesus kept his whole life long. He “hallowed” God’s name at all times. Jesus lived in “reverent submission” to God (Hebrews 5:7).

» Jesus would
worship God
and serve
him only.

Again, the Devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him *only*’” (Matthew 4:8-10; cf. Luke 4:8).

[Jesus taught us to say] Our *Father* who is in Heaven, Hallowed be *Your* [God’s] name... For *Yours* is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen (Matthew 6:9,13; NASB).

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will *worship the Father* neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; *we worship what we do know*, for salvation is from the Jews (John 4:21-22).

[Jesus said to God] I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; *in the assembly I will sing your praises* (Hebrews 2:12).

a. God as the maximum object of worship

We welcome you to look at some additional examples of Christian worship to God here in this section. The final one we present, the “Song of the Lamb,” is a song that Jesus composed (with Moses) to God. So *Jesus composes worship music to God*—That’s telling. But even more telling is what Jesus says about God *in* the song:

“You *alone* are holy.”

Let's assimilate that statement; let's soak it in: Jesus teaches us to sing that *only* God the Father is holy! Lots of very emotional "only you" language is used in Christian music nowadays, but normally, if you listen closely, you'll see that the "only you" lyrics are making reference to Jesus and *not* to the Father. Could these songs be considered to be "worship in truth"? Are they composed under the inspiration of the Spirit of Jesus? Apparently not.

... they [the members of the primitive Church] raised their voices together in prayer to *God*. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the Earth and the sea, and everything in them (Acts 4:24).

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of *God!* How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ... To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:33,36).

Now to *him* who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, *to him be glory in the church* and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

To *our God and Father* be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Philippians 4:20).

To *him* who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the *only* God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen (Jude 24-25).

... the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, *Lord God Almighty*. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you *alone* are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Revelation 15:3-4).

» Jesus sings: God *alone* is holy.

» To God be glory in the church!

» To the only God our Savior be glory!

4. Jesus has a God

a. Jesus said so

» The one
God is Jesus'
God.

It may sound strange to some who have not yet researched the issue thoroughly, but Jesus made it clear that the one God was *his* God. He had no difficulty referring to his Father as *his* own (but not private) God. We say “not private” because the same God we consider to be our God, is the God of Jesus. In other words, Jesus shares his God with us.

Let’s ask ourselves: Do we have difficulty calling God “the God of Jesus”? I hope not. Still, it’s practically unheard of in churches to refer to God that way. What’s the cause of this anomaly between Bible truth and Christian jargon? False teaching is obscuring the truth of God to such a degree that we can’t even hear *Jesus* anymore!

» Theology
has made it so
that we can’t
hear Jesus!

The passages listed below reflect Jesus’ thoughts about God. They may surprise you.

... Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*’ (which means ‘*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*’) (Matthew 27:46).

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to *my God* and your God’ (John 20:17).

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ... “Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, *my God*” (Hebrews 10:5,7).

The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the Temple of *my God*. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of *my God* and the name of the city of *my God*, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of Heaven from *my God*... (Revelation 3:12).

b. The apostles said so

We get the teaching that God is the God of Jesus first from Jesus himself, but it is not at all foreign to the writings of the apostles.

In the passages of this section, these men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, confirm that the Father is in fact *the God* of Jesus. And if he is the God of Jesus, what does that imply? It implies a great deal of things! For one, it means that Jesus *belongs* to God as God's servant—which is what the passage that follows says so clearly:

All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and *Christ is of God* (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

» Christ belongs to God.

i. The highest praise

If the one God is the God of Jesus, then logically this also means that God is the one to whom the *highest* praise and glory is due. The following verses demonstrate this principle. They all give God greater glory than they give to Jesus.

... that with one mind and one voice you may *glorify the God* and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *Praise be to the God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:2-3).

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be *praised forever*, knows that I am not lying (2 Corinthians 11:31).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Praise be to *the God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Peter 1:3)

» God gets greater praise than Jesus in the Bible.

» Praise be to the God of Jesus!

c. God says so

Not only Jesus and the apostles say so, but God also says that he is Jesus' God. The passage that appears below is remarkably clear that God gave Jesus a place above Jesus' companions¹² for a reason: Jesus loved what was right and

¹² Who could these "companions" be: the prophets, the angels, the apostles? This would be a marvelous point to research.

hated what was evil. Jesus proved himself to be *faithful to God*, and was duly rewarded by his God!

» His God has set Jesus above his companions.

You [God speaking to Jesus] have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore *God, your God*, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy (Hebrews 1:9).

d. The saints say so

If you are a believer, you should also publically confess that God is the God of Jesus. The saints who are in Heaven will cry out:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood [that's Jesus], and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve *his God and Father*—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:5-6).

e. Christ's consolation

Jesus' greatest suffering did not consist in the nails that passed through his hands and feet, although that certainly was excruciatingly painful. We don't look with even a smid-geon of disdain on his tremendous courage and selfless sacrifice at Calvary; but by what the Lord Jesus *said*, he demonstrated that his greatest sorrow came from the fact that the one God had abandoned him.

» Jesus' greatest sorrow was that God had abandoned him.

God most certainly *did* turn his back on Jesus. Furthermore, God offered Jesus no comfort on the cross, but this was because God had made the heart-wrenching decision to place on Christ the just punishment for the sins of the world. During the Passion, God loved *us* more than Jesus, and in order to get that love *to* us, he had to renounce his Son. The anguish that such abandonment produced in Jesus gives us an opportunity to see something tremendously beautiful: that God was, in fact, Christ's great consolation—that God was Jesus' God!

My God, my God, *why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46).

You will leave me all alone. Yet *I am not alone, for my Father is with me* (John 16:32).

f. Name giving

The idea behind receiving a name is getting meaning or *significance* placed on your life. God gave meaning to the life of Jesus by giving Jesus a name. The Lord Jesus discovered his purpose and the reason for his existence by studying what God said about him. Jesus read these things in the prophecies of the Bible and interpreted them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

As we look at the texts that follow, we should also remember that when someone gives a name to another, it is a demonstration of *the authority of the name giver*. For example, Adam gave names to all the animals, exercising authority over them. Adam also gave Eve her name. In the same way that fathers and mothers give names to their children, using their parental authority to instill meaning in their child's life, so did God invest meaning into Jesus' life by giving him a name. Through it, he also demonstrated that he was Jesus' God.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will *call him* Immanuel (Matthew 1:23).

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to *call him* Jesus (Luke 1:31).

» Jesus studied what God said about him, which is how he discovered his purpose in life.



Part III.

Who is Jesus to God?

When we ask ourselves who Jesus is for God, wonderful realities emerge. Herein lies one of the most beautiful truths of the Universe; and we'll state it clearly from the start: *God loves Jesus*. God loved Jesus before the Creation of the world, and we know that God loved Jesus because he *glorified* Jesus. That's the way that God loved him.

» The way God loved Jesus was by glorifying him.

1. God's love for Jesus

Behold how God gave Jesus what God himself already had: divine glory. According to the verse that is shared below, God gave Jesus glory in the time before Creation for one startlingly simple reason: Because he *loved* him! (You'll only see that if you pay close attention to how the word "because" is used in the passage, so read carefully please.)

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me *because* you loved me before the Creation of the world (John 17:24).

» God glorified Jesus (when Jesus was "the Word") for a simple reason: because he loved Jesus.

2. God's love for us

In the John 17:24 passage we just saw, the earliest manifestation of the love of God in known history is revealed to us. That's exiting! But it's even more exiting to know that this ancient love that God had towards Jesus is the *same* love that

God has for *us* today. Wow!—but *how so?* Well, right now Jesus promises that this *same* love of God, when it is channeled through our faith in Jesus, will be used to glorify *you and me!* The fact that God promises us this same divine glory, and that he was willing to sacrifice the one he most loved in order to get it to us, is called the *Gospel* or “good news”!

» God promises us the same divine glory Jesus got, and God paid the highest price in order to get it to us.

Does it sound like *good news* to you to know that God loves you this way? Is it good news for you when you realize that he *already* glorified Jesus (as an example and *guarantee* for all who follow Christ)? It’s God’s love for Jesus, established before the Creation of the world, which was destined to become the *foreshadowing* of all the wonderful things that would later come to us who believe. God’s pre-Creation love for Jesus was the anticipation of the Gospel of Grace!

» God guarantees glory for us in the Gospel.

Let the Gospel inspire you today. Know that God’s love is intended to glorify all who are in Christ’s Church—God’s love should be the fuel for our lives. In it we should always place our confidence. If we do so, we’ll truly live by grace.

But let’s look even more closely at the love that God has for Jesus. Notice, please, that the Bible never tells us that Jesus loved *God* before the Creation of the world, although of course he did. The Biblical emphasis is placed on the fact that *God* loved Jesus. Why? This is so that we might be made aware of what *God’s love can do* for someone.

» What did God’s love do for Jesus?

If we would like to ask ourselves what God’s grace can do for us, let’s first ask ourselves what it did for Jesus. To what degree did God love Jesus? In sharing *all that he was* with “the Word,” God selflessly entrusted Jesus with divine authority, divine honor, and a divine *nature!* As it says in Philippians 2:6, before he came to us as Mary’s son, Jesus was “in very nature God” and he had “equality with God.” That was the *glory* that God gave Jesus before the Creation of the world!

If we are willing to follow Jesus to the end, then a divine nature will be ours also! Again, the hope that such a promise will be fulfilled is called *the Gospel*. It’s good news for all who want eternal life.

3. God loves Jesus... conditionally

Chances are that most people will not like the sound of the heading of this section because they are so accustomed to hearing that God's love is "unconditional." Well, we must be frank: It's not. This may be the most disturbing reflection in the entire book for some people, but we can't hide it because it's what the Bible teaches: The love God has for Jesus has always been *conditional*. That is, Jesus has to maintain God's love on his life—Jesus has to do his part.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love (John 15:10).

Jesus has to remain in God's love by meeting certain conditions. He could have fallen out of grace especially when he was in the flesh and subject to so many powerful temptations, but he didn't.

God loves Jesus for a reason: It's because Jesus obeys God in all things, even unto death.

The *reason* my Father loves me is that I lay down my life (John 10:17).

God heard Jesus' prayers not because he was obligated to hear them; but again—it was for a *reason*. It was only because Jesus lived in "reverent submission" to God. Jesus experienced no favoritism from God.

During the days of Jesus' life on Earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard *because of* his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).

In all of his careful keeping of God's commandments, Jesus has given us an example to follow, and *we* must follow it if we are going to remain in *his* love too—but that's a subject

» The love God has for Jesus has always been conditional.

» God loves Jesus for a reason: his utter obedience.

» God heard Jesus' prayers for a reason: a lifestyle of reverence.

we can look at more closely in another book. For now, the matter under scrutiny is that there is one God, and that he is Love. The love of God is not permissive or condoning. It is “tough love.”

God’s love for Christ is superior to any you’ll ever know. There can be no doubt that God’s love is greater than the love of any other. He is benevolent and kind. He is much more patient than any of us. In fact, he revealed his name to Moses this way:

The LORD, the LORD, *the compassionate and gracious God*, slow to anger, *abounding in love and faithfulness*, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 34:6-7).

God wants to be known as a patient and gracious God, but as it is with *us*, so it was with *Jesus*: God’s love for Jesus depends on Jesus’ behavior. The following verse demonstrates that God’s love for Jesus is, as we’ve said, *conditional*. As Jesus remarked in John 10:17, there is a “reason” why the Father loves him. Along that same line of thought, there’s a reason why God glorified Jesus: Because Jesus did God’s will unto death.

» God’s love for Jesus depends on Jesus’ behavior.

» God glorified Jesus for a reason: Jesus suffered death to do what God wanted.

... we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor *because* he suffered death (Hebrews 2:9).

Why was God with Jesus through thick and thin? Jesus felt the consolation of God in his life, but there was a reason for that consolation: Jesus pleased God. Jesus had to do what made God happy first, before God would console him. God placed that condition on Jesus’ life: That if he was going to be with Jesus, the Lord Jesus had to do what pleased his God.

[Jesus said] “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, *for* I always do what pleases him” (John 8:29).

Due to God's love, all things have been placed in Christ's hands. Because God loves Jesus, he reveals all of what he does to Jesus. Because of God's great love, he gives Jesus all that Jesus asks of him. The following passages demonstrate these points and, in a more general sense, express that *God* is the original source of love.

The Father *loves* the Son and has placed everything in his hands (John 3:35).

For the Father *loves* the Son and shows him all he does (John 5:20).

[Martha said to Jesus] I know that even now *God will give you whatever you ask* (John 11:22).

... giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the Kingdom of Light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of *the Son he loves* (Colossians 1:12-13).

Because of God's love for Jesus, we can *also* live in love. Because God inspires us: His love can be in us! From him all love *flows through Jesus* to us. Remember that love is his most formidable instrument for making us heirs of the Kingdom. The next two passages reveal to us that we are the final object of the love of God. We are destined to receive the love of God through Jesus.

[Jesus said] I have made you [God] known to them, and will continue to make you known *in order that the love you have for me may be in them* [the disciples] and that I myself may be in them (John 17:26).

[Jesus prayed to God] ... the world will know that you sent me and *have loved them* [the disciples] *even as you have loved me* (John 17:23).

» Jesus had to do what pleased God for God to be with him.

» God is the original source of love.

» Love is God's most formidable instrument for making us heirs of the Kingdom.

» We [as Christ's disciples] are the final object of the love of God.

4. God shares all with Jesus

All that God has, he shares with Jesus. The Lord Jesus wanted his disciples to get to the point where they really comprehended this, but *why?* Why is it so important for us also to come to understand that God shares all he has with Jesus? In order to get an answer to that question, we first have to ask ourselves: “Who is Jesus to the Father?”

- Of course Jesus means a lot to God, but he means *more* than a lot: Jesus is the one with whom God wants to share *everything*. There is practically nothing God will hold back from Jesus. The reason, as we mentioned earlier, is because God *loves* him so much. This sharing that God does with Jesus demonstrates to us what *true love* is. It’s not meant to confuse us (I say “confuse” because Trinitarian teachers, when they point out how much Jesus has from God, normally ignore Jesus’ subordination and blur the Biblical distinctions between God and Jesus, confusing their hearers), but to show us how the love of God can make someone complete. That same love of God that made Jesus complete, can make anyone willing to carry their cross just as complete.
- » Jesus is the one with whom God wants to share everything.
 - » In Jesus we see how the love of God can make someone complete.

All that belongs to the Father is mine (John 16:15).

Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you (John 17:7).

[Jesus speaking to the Father said] All I have is yours, and all you have is mine (John 17:10).

5. Jesus is not the “one God”

Let’s consider how Jesus made reference to the one God. He *never* used the term to refer to himself, but *always* to another: His Father.

a. The only God

First of all, as we look at our first passage (John 5:41-42,44), we'll notice that the Pharisees were not able to patiently wait for God to glorify them. That impatience proved that they didn't really love God (because "love is patient"). The situation in which Jesus confronted them gave our Lord the opportunity to direct them to the real source of glory: the "only God."

» Jesus only used the term "one God" to refer to his Father, never to himself.

I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts... How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from *the only God* (John 5:41-42,44)?

b. The only true God

In the next passage (John 17:3), we see that Jesus considered that it was the "only true God" who sent him. Now, it stands to reason that the one who *sends* is distinct from the one who is *sent*. Anyhow, Jesus uses the conjunction "and" to show that he is speaking of two different beings when he mentions God and himself.

» The "only true God" is the one who sent Jesus.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the *only true God*, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3).

c. Apostolic affirmation

The apostles seem to have picked up on Jesus' belief. Likewise, they were absolutely clear that the Father is the one God. They *never* mixed up Jesus with the one true God in their writings, but consistently made clear distinctions between the two. For them, and—I hope—for us, the *one God* is the Father, while the *one Lord* is Jesus. This is the undeniably concise distinction they lay out for all of us to believe. Do you believe it?

» The apostles were absolutely clear that the Father is the one God.

There is no God but *one*... for us there is *but one God*, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is

» "For us there is *but one God*, the Father."

but *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:4,6).

[There is]... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; *one God* and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:5-6).

For there is *one God* and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

For certain men have crept in unnoticed... who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the *only Lord God* and our Lord Jesus Christ... Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling... *God* our Savior, who *alone* is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 4,24-25; NKJV).¹³

» God alone is wise.

d. Facets of the diamond-cutter

Like the facets of a well-cut diamond, there are still other facets you discover about who Jesus is with relation to God, and we should contemplate them. If we can see the beauty of these facets of who Christ is, his position before God should become crystal-clear. We will highlight three of them in the following passages, which show us that he was chosen by God, was offered to God, and that he gets his life from God.

» The many dimensions of who Jesus is to God are beautiful.

i. Jesus was chosen by God

God chose the Word before the Creation of the world, but he did not reveal his choice to mankind until the baby Jesus came to us in the flesh. Even the title "Christ" *really* means that Jesus is "chosen by God," because it signifies "the Anointed One." And Jesus was aware of his role as God's Anointed, as we can see in the following passage:

» God chose Jesus to be Messiah and King.

¹³ We recognize that there are legitimate questions as to the King James translation of v. 4 here, although it seems to us that the Holy Spirit is being consistent throughout Jude and using the Greek word *monos* ("only one") strictly with reference to God the Father, just as the KJV translators thought. But even if the "only" does refer to Jesus in v. 4, that would not contradict our premise that there is only *one God*; for the words "Master" and "Lord" can very neatly refer to Jesus, the "one Lord" (Ephesians 4:5) without taking anything away from the doctrine of monotheism.

He [Jesus] stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he [God] has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He [God] has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21).

The Spirit of God came upon Jesus to demonstrate that God had anointed him. But what was Jesus chosen *for*? According to Isaiah, he was chosen to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. This is *some* of what God had planned for the Messiah he would send us, although there was much more. Certainly many other things were prophesied about the Messiah: He would save God’s people Israel, he would establish peace on Earth, he would be the King who would reign eternally in God’s Kingdom, etc.

But how did the Lord Jesus get *chosen* for this task? God didn’t select Jesus arbitrarily, did he? No, certainly not. By the time the world was created, the Word (not yet known by the name “Jesus”) was already God’s most trusted and beloved servant. God had predestined that the Word would be the sacrifice for sins even from the time of the Creation of the world.

... [Jesus is] the *Lamb who was slain* from the Creation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

Then, in the Garden of Eden, God vowed to the Devil that someone would defeat him—someone who would overcome man’s sin and the world system. That person was the Word, who would be given the name “Jesus,” meaning “Yahweh saves.”

» Jesus was chosen to reign over the Earth.

» Jesus was chosen to be the sacrifice for sins.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and *hers*; *he* will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

» God chose someone who men deemed worthy of death.

One of the most amazing aspects of God’s selection is that neither the religious leaders, nor humanity in general would have done what God did and have chosen Jesus to be the King he is now. God chose someone who men deemed worthy of crucifixion. God’s choice was someone humble and meek. Could the future King of all be that poor disgraced man who got the death penalty? Yes, Jesus was God’s chosen one. All this comes to prove that *we don’t think as God does*. Humanity’s thoughts are so far off course that we outrightly

» We don’t think the way God does: Mankind rejected his chosen one, Jesus.

rejected the one who God cherished so greatly.

... [Jesus is] the living Stone—rejected by humans but *chosen by God* and *precious to him*... (1 Peter 2:4).

A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom *I have chosen*; listen to him” (Luke 9:35).

ii. Jesus was offered to God

» With scar-filled hands in the chalice of his own blood, Jesus presented the only viable sacrifice for sins to God.

In order to appease the just wrath of God against sin, Jesus willingly made his own body the offering for the sins of the world. This sacrifice was made on the cross, as most people know; but it didn’t end there. It was later presented by Jesus himself, with his scar-filled hands, in a chalice containing his own blood, and presented before Almighty God in Heaven. This offering made to God comprises the only viable and acceptable sacrifice for sins. There is no other way a person can be forgiven, but only by being washed in the blood of Jesus.

How critical it is to grasp this: That Jesus blood was not some ransom he paid to the Devil, but the propitiation for our sins before *God*. It was God, in his righteousness, who demanded a sacrifice. For the blood of Christ to have been the “atoning sacrifice” (1 John 2:2)¹⁴ for sins, means precisely that

¹⁴ “Atonement” is also rendered as “propitiation” or “expiation” in some translations. When we hear the term used in religious conversation, it is referring to this: that God’s righteous demand of capital punishment for sins was met. Someone had to

his blood *satisfied the justice* which God (even today) *demand*s for sins committed against him. Where was that demand of justice established? God established the death penalty for sin in the Garden of Eden, when he said to Adam,

“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it *you will certainly die*” (Genesis 2:17).

The Devil contradicted God’s words soon afterwards, deceiving Eve by saying “You will *not* certainly die” (Genesis 3:4). But Jesus carried his cross all the way to Calvary because he knew that *God* demands death as the satisfaction for sin. Only death will be acceptable as the atoning payment for offenses against God; so Jesus paid God with his life. His life is in his blood.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb *of God*, who *takes away the sin* of the world!” (John 1:29).

... walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice *to God* (Ephesians 5:2).

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering *you* did not desire, but a body *you* prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings *you* were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do *your* will, *my God*’” (Hebrews 10:5-7).

iii. Jesus gets his life from God

Here is a great truth that, if understood correctly, makes things quite clear about who Jesus is to God: Jesus *lives* because

die for sins, and the person God chose to do that was Jesus, who “atoned” for our sins at Calvary. The term “atonement” is found more than 100 times in the OT, but in the NT we only see it in Acts 27:9; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; and 9:5. That may seem like very little, but the *meaning* of the atonement is found all over the NT, for example, in *all* the passages that refer to Christ’s *cross, body, and blood*.

» God established that his just demand for sins is death.

» Jesus went to Calvary because he knew what God’s justice demanded.

» Christ gave himself up for us as a sacrifice to *God*.

» Jesus feeds
on God

of God. In other words, Jesus is sustained by God; if you will, he “feeds” on God (you can see that according to the way Jesus uses “just” and “so” in the next verse):

Just as the living Father sent me and *I live because of the Father*, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me (John 6:57).

» Let’s
realize how
much Jesus
needs God.

Jesus wouldn’t be alive without God. He compared the dependence we have on *him* for life to the dependence he has on *God* for life. So, if you can ask yourself: “How much do I need Jesus?” and then can answer truthfully, then you’ll realize how much Jesus needs God. Just by way of reminder, here’s a teaching from Jesus on how much we need to depend on him for life:

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit *unless* you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; *apart from me you can do nothing*. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and *withers*; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned (John 15:4-6).

In Jesus *lives* “all the fullness of the Deity.” That divine life that’s in him has no other source but *God himself*. God gave it to Jesus and therefore God is the source of Christ’s life.

For in Christ all the fullness of *the Deity* lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

» Jesus is
the vessel in
which God’s
fulness
abides.

We hope that you’ll be able to see that the fact that the fullness of the Deity lives in Jesus means precisely that Jesus is *not* that Deity, but the *vessel* in which the Deity’s fullness abides. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be necessary to even mention anything about someone else’s fullness dwelling in Christ. In other words, you don’t have to say “God’s life is in God,” because that’s obvious. Jesus was *made* great through what God has done *in* him. Jesus himself is *not* the one God, the “Deity” mentioned in Colossians 2:9 (above), but he *is* the person in who the fullness of God abides.

Like it says in another passage, speaking of Jesus:

For *God* was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Colossians 1:19).

» Jesus was made great through what God has done in him.

6. Jesus is “God”

Although Jesus is not the “one God,” there should be no denying that he is “God.” We may most certainly call him “God” thereby giving recognition to the fact that he is a divine person. Jesus’ “godhood” (or, as the term has been used in older versions of the Bible, “godhead”¹⁵), is proven by the fact that he is directly referred to as “God” 8 times in the NT.¹⁶ These passages are listed below:

» Jesus’ godhood is a proven fact.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him *Immanuel* (which means “*God* with us” (Matthew 1:23).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *God*. This one was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2; LEB).

¹⁵ This term has been redefined from its original KJV usage, and it unfortunately means something altogether different now. Trinitarians use it to explain their God—the “one in three” that they often refer to. In other words, the “Godhead” for them is the one God who is constituted by the inexplicable unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This “Godhead,” *not the Father*, is their version of the “one God.”

¹⁶ Although some would argue for it, by no means do we consider that Acts 20:28 should be included in this list. It would go totally against the sound doctrine of God and the incarnation of his Son to interpret “God” as referring to Jesus in that passage. Although the NIV translated it as saying “...with his own [meaning “God’s”] blood,” the best translations will supply the word “Son” to say “with his own *Son’s* blood.” This choice of translation is not personal, but can be seen in the LEB: “Shepherd the church of God which he obtained through *the blood of his own Son*.” The LEB translators add this note: “Or “through his own blood”; the Greek construction can be taken either way, with “Son” implied if the meaning is “through the blood of his own.” We believe that “Son” *must* be implied, to avoid the unbiblical, grotesque, and even blasphemous picture of God (who is spirit) shedding his own blood. The entire NT stresses the fact that the shedding of blood was Jesus’ role—and that he even presented that blood to God; so how could God have possibly shed blood that was presented to himself? Frankly, it is a denial of the atonement to translate the passage the way the NIV has done it.

» Jesus is referred to as “God” 8 times in the NT.

» Jesus is God manifested in flesh.

» Jesus is “God” but it’s illogical to call him the “one God.”

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself *God* and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known (John 1:18).

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my *God!*” (John 20:28).

Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is *God* over all, forever praised! Amen (Romans 9:5).

God was manifested in flesh, declared righteous in spirit, seen by messengers, preached among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory! (1 Timothy 3:16; YLT)¹⁷

... while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great *God* and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our *God* and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours (2 Peter 1:1).

a. No reason to be confused

What does all this mean with regard to the topic of this book—monotheism? Are we to say that because Jesus is called “God,” then he must be the same “God” to which the Bible refers when it mentions the “*one* God”? Absolutely *not*. It’s not logical to declare that there is one God and then to turn around in the next breath and refer to two or more beings as that one God—which would be a contradiction because “one” means “only one” or “just one.”

It’s not rational to declare that there is one God and then to refer more than one beings as that one God.

We have to remember that while the term “God” appears some 1,327 times in the NT,¹⁸ only 8 of those occurrences refer to Jesus, which is not even one percent, but about 0.6% of the occurrences!¹⁹ Although 8 times is certainly enough for

¹⁷ Although most translations don’t use “God” but “who” at the beginning of this verse, the KJV also uses “God.”

¹⁸ This information was gathered by looking at the use of the Greek word for “God” (*theos*) in the NT, as listed in Strong’s Concordance (<http://concordances.org/greek/2316.htm>).

¹⁹ Keep in mind that one time “god” is used for the stomach (Philippians 3:19) and

us to believe that Jesus is divine (amen), it's *not* enough for anyone to justify confusing Jesus with the One God.²⁰

b. John's Prologue

In order to demonstrate further that there is no reason for us to confuse God with Jesus, let's closely consider the only passage in the NT (yes, there's only one) where both Jesus and the Father are together called "God," John 1:1-2. It is a passage which has stood at the heart of the "One God" de-bate for about 1,500 years. Some might say that it's a passage which is ambiguous—that it demonstrates that people are justified in being confused about monotheism; but we dis-agree. We believe that the Scriptures are inspired by a God of order, and that they were written with the express purpose of enlightening us, never with the intention of confusing us.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2).²¹

i. Association with God

There are certain things which are essential to notice about the passage at hand, commonly known as *John's Prologue*, before one builds any fundamental doctrines upon it. For example, although Jesus is certainly called "God" in the passage, he is—with double emphasis—described as the one

» The 8 references are enough for us to believe that Jesus is divine, but not enough to confuse us about the identity of the one God.

» There is no reason for us to confuse God with Jesus.

» Who was with God? "This one" was with God.

another time it's used for Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4), so we're not only comparing the one God with Jesus when we see how the term "God" is used in the NT. Still, the overwhelming number of uses of "God" in the NT do refer to Yahweh God.

²⁰ By the way, we do believe that there are numerous OT passages that prove that Jesus is God. The 8 listed in this section are merely those that we have found in the NT. Jesus' divinity is substantiated by many more passages of the Bible which, due to the challenge of interpreting them in the context of the OT, when Jesus hadn't been incarnated yet, would greatly lengthen the size of our book. We chose to leave them out, but would love to discuss them personally with any interested reader.

²¹ Here it is as rendered in the two most literal translations available (the Lexham English Bible and Young's Literal Translation), which both agree exactly on the wording of the appropriate translation.

» Twice it is emphasized that Jesus was "with" God.

» Jesus gets his divinity through his association with God.

» Jesus "is in closest relationship with" the one God.

who "was *with* God" (John 1:1-2). The key word repeated there is "with." What does "with" mean? It's simply this: Twice in two verses Jesus is described as having gotten his glory from his *association* with the one God. Therefore Jesus' glory as "God" is directly related to his having been "with" the one true God. John is trying to say that *Jesus' divine identity is dependent upon his relationship to the true God*. In other words, Jesus wouldn't be divine if it weren't for God. In fact, without God, Jesus himself told us that he could do *nothing* (John 5:19-20,30;8:28). This is the soundest interpretation of John 1:1-2, and it corresponds²² to what is affirmed in another passage, which appears below:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, *which was with the Father* and has appeared to us (1 John 1:1-2).

Did you notice how the word "with" carries the weight of the meaning in John 1:1-2? John is showing that Jesus' *association* with God is what makes Jesus divine. As another key passage says, Jesus is "in closest relationship with the Father," which is the reason why he himself is God:

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and *is in closest relationship with the Father*, has made him known (John 1:18).

ii. God who is with the one God

A second point which is essential for us to notice about John 1:1-2 is that when Jesus is called "God" in the passage, there is no article ("the") before the word "God." Now, many Evangelicals discard this argument altogether since the Jehovah's Witnesses use it to prove that Jesus is "a god"—but

²² Here we're using the trusted interpretive method called the *analogy of Scripture*.

that is not our argument here. Most solid Biblical scholars will recognize that the grammatical structure of not having an article before the word “God” means that the Word had the divine *nature* or the *qualities* of deity—and that *is* our argument here. The apostle John, then, is not saying that Jesus was the same “God” with whom Jesus *was* (which would not only be bad theology, but completely illogical—Why would anybody take the time to highlight that somebody was with himself? The absence of the article (“the”) before “God” in “the Word was God” indicates that what John refers to by saying that the Word was “God” is that the Word had a *divine nature*.

Notice also, please, that when reference is made to the one God in the same two verses (and it’s done twice), there is always the article “the” before “God,” in such a way that the best translations should help the reader to see that it’s “the one God” who is being given the greatest importance in John’s Prologue.

If we were to translate the passage literally, it could say:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with *the one* God, and the Word was *also Deity*. This one was in the beginning with *the one* God.

Now, although I do have a Master’s degree in theology, and have studied Greek, I am not a Greek translator. This is only my translation, especially the words written in italics. Still, I am convinced that many of the best NT Greek scholars would have few disagreements with the interpretation expressed in it.²³

» The Word had the qualities of deity.

» The Word was with the one God. The Word was also Deity.

²³ One place where a much similar translation to mine is recommended is in Wallace, D. 1996. *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, p. 269, where the “God” in John 1:1c is considered to be *qualitative*, that is, stressing the “God quality” of the Word.

iii. God dependent on the one God

The issue boils down to this: Jesus is God, but the deity of Christ is a doctrine which is never presented out of the context of his relationship to the one true God. This is such an important observation that I'll restate it: *Jesus' deity is a reality which is never presented in the Bible unless it's framed within the context of his relationship to God.* In other words, what we learn from John's Prologue and the other passages where Jesus is called "God" is that we should never think of Jesus as "independent God," but as "God dependent on the one true God."

» Christ's deity is *only* to be understood in the context of his relationship with God.

» Jesus is God dependent on the one true God.

An illustration of Jesus as "dependent God" would be how 15-year old John Doe Jr., a minor, would be dependent on John Doe Sr., the 45-year old head of household and John Junior's father. Both of them are legitimately "John Doe"; in fact, they have the same genetics (i.e., nature), being of the same family. Each one deserves respect as an individual capable of making his own decisions—but they would each be offended if you confused one with the other. One clearly is dependent on the other, even though they are both truly "John Doe" and each of them has real autonomy. We should understand this kind of relationship of dependence as the one that Jesus, the Son of God, has with his Father.

Like the Nicene Creed of 325 AD affirms, Jesus is "... God *of* God, Light *of* Light, very God *of* very God..."²⁴ We affirm that Jesus is "very God" (in other words, he's not just "a god" as the Jehovah's Witnesses say). But still, we also must resoundingly insist (with the Nicene Fathers) that he is "very God" who is "*of* of the one true God." He *comes* from God and *got his deity from God*. Notice that we could never say the same thing about the Father. He is the one God and *comes from no one!*

» Jesus is very God *of* the one true God.

» The one God comes from no one!

This basic premise of Biblical faith is what makes the brazen title "Mother of God" (for Mary) all the more anti-Biblical. Marianism takes things so far out of context

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed

that ignorant people imagine Mary's title to mean that she is above God Himself—logically, God *has* no mother, although Jesus does, which is why Mary is only referred to as "Jesus' mother" in the Bible. Building religion on confusion is very dangerous, and people are confused about Jesus' deity. We have to get back to the basics. Job's wise friend Elihu asks:

Who appointed him [God] over the earth? Who put him in charge of the whole world? (Job 34:30).

c. The origin of Jesus' deity

In order to follow the argument at hand (that Jesus got his deity from the one God) to its logical conclusion, we must eventually ask ourselves the question: "What ever made Jesus 'God' in the first place?" It's not just curiosity, but a healthy search for answers to the heart's deepest queries that should lead someone to ask this. Luckily, others have inquired about it before us.

The participants in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea debated this issue and ended up ostracizing Arius and about four of his followers for insisting that Jesus was created by God. Arius taught that there was a time when Jesus did not exist. Although we have not been able to find a Bible pas-sage that explicitly says that Jesus was with God from all eternity,²⁵ neither have we seen a verse stating that he was created; so we couldn't be Arians—who taught that there was a time when Jesus did not exist—but neither can we say that Jesus is "co-eternal" with the Father—as other teachers do. Not without any Biblical support, at least.

We're not fearful of entering into this debate (commonly held between Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelicals), but there's no need to throw wood on the fire of controversy and

» What made Jesus God in the first place?

» Was Jesus created? Was he eternally with God before the Creation?

²⁵ To exist from all eternity is different from being "in the beginning," as it says of Jesus in 1 John 2:13-14 and in other passages. This is an area where we should do more research: Does the Bible say anywhere that that God is from all eternity? Is there anywhere where it says this about Jesus? If it says it about God but not about Jesus, what would that imply?

to generate division unless such a debate is necessary for establishing fundamental doctrine.

» When it was that Jesus became divine is not laid out for us in the Scriptures.

Why did Arius and his followers make such a big deal about an issue that's not made clear in the Scriptures? Was it really worth arguing over? What was their goal in pursuing the argument? They seem to have been trying to defend God's preeminence and sovereignty (something Calvinists and others are also very fervent about) because they referred to him as the "Unbegotten"—but I'm not sure what the Arians were up to, exactly. Being 1700 years removed from the situation and with none of Arius' writings remaining (they were ordered to be set on fire), it's hard to tell.

» Jesus' nature before he got a divine nature is not a fundamental doctrine.

We know that Jesus was called “the Word,” but what his nature was *before* God gave him a divine one (before the Creation of the world) is not anywhere laid out for us, nor is it presented in the Bible as a foundational matter of doctrine. Be sure to note that his coming in a human nature, the incarnation, *is* foundational—it must be guarded with the utmost zeal. Yet the nature of the Word (Jesus) before God glorified him is not part of what determines the Christian body of truth; therefore, it is not an issue over which there should be dispute in the Church, nor should it be a cause for disfellowship (what other churches might call “excommunication.”) During the 4th c. AD, Arius and his followers were ostracized twice for their doctrine. Ironically, during the same period, Athanasius was exiled 5 times for being a Trinitarian!²⁶

» Can this be a matter of sincere and loving Christian debate?

The issue remains a matter of sincere Christian debate; we only hope that now the debating will be done in love.

i. The wonderful discovery: Love

Again, we innocently²⁷ ask ourselves: “What makes Jesus

²⁶ That's not counting the 6 times he had to flee Alexandria to save his life from opponents! (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_of_Alexandria#Exiles)

²⁷ The reason why we say “innocently” is because for certain fervent Trinitarians, just asking the question may cause an inquisitive person to be judged as a heretic.

‘God’?” For one thing, it’s certainly not the same thing that makes God “God.” In fact, *nothing* makes God “God.” The Father is and always has been completely self-sufficient. He is completely independent. On the other hand, from what we just saw, Jesus derived his divine nature from God. Unlike the one God who is the source of all glory, life, authority, and divine power, Jesus was “brought forth” (Proverbs 8:24, as it says in most translations) or “given birth” (NIV), or “born” (NLT) of God before the Creation.

So, in answer to the philosophical question “What made Jesus ‘God’?” The only sure answer is: Simply the fact that the one true God *loved* him. God’s love made Jesus “God!” (That answer—if contemplated well—*should* be enough to silence all arguments, anger, and theological rivalries). We must behold and stand in awe of the great love of God! Let’s stop bickering so that we may see the truth that really *can* produce unity. And it can because there is just one God, the source of all life, and to know him is to know Love.

» Nothing makes God “God.”

» Jesus derived his divine nature from God.

» God’s love made Jesus “God!”

d. Jesus proceeds from God

We can’t say “God is of Jesus.” It would be untrue. But along with the Nicene fathers, we must affirm that Jesus is of God. What the Nicene fathers understood when they said that Jesus was “of God” shouldn’t be a surprise to us. Even earlier than the Nicene Creed was written, the apostle Paul affirmed the same thing (1 Corinthians 3:23). To say that Jesus is “of God”

We ask the question for no other reason that there is a real dilemma before us: We know that there is one God, we know that Jesus is *not* that one God, but we also know that Jesus *is* “God.” Some might consider that merely reflecting on the issue could make us “disruptive and divisive,” and that the issue was already settled in Nicaea back in 325 AD, when Arius and his followers were “defeated.” But I wonder whether that Council, in a spirit of dialogue and love, ever came to recognize that there is a *grey area* in the revelation God provides us about the time before the Creation, and that it’s permissible to ponder what happened at that time. I wonder whether what happened in Nicaea wasn’t more *political* than spiritual. Were people treated fairly? Was there brotherly love? If there wasn’t, then let there be brotherly love today—as the issue is investigated by sincere believers all over again.

is quite a statement as we look at the issue of the deity of Christ—but it's more than a matter of "proceeding."

i. Jesus belongs to God

If we look closely at the context of what Paul was saying when he said that Jesus is "of God," we'll see that he was affirming that Jesus actually *belongs* to God; that Jesus is God's *servant*.

» Jesus is God's servant.

[Jesus said] Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not *belong to God* (John 8:47).²⁸

All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is *of God* (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

» The one God belongs to *nobody*.

Notice that the one God belongs to *nobody*, but Jesus belongs to God—just as the apostles belonged to the early church believers (in service to them), and the believers belonged to Jesus (in service to him). There is an order expressed here that starts with God at the highest level, then Jesus (who serves God), then believers (who serve Jesus). The meaning of the expression "Christ is of God" is therefore that Jesus is God's *servant*.

ii. Jesus lives to God

In another similar passage, the apostle Paul declared that Jesus "lives to God" (Romans 6:10), meaning that Jesus does what he does for God; that is, Jesus dedicates his life to God, just like a soldier might say "I live to my country." Please note that we can also deduce from this same passage that the Lord Jesus finds his purpose in God's will *to this very day* (because it twice affirms that he "lives to God" [the present tense] in contrast with "the death he died" [which is the past tense]).

» Even today Jesus dedicates his life to God.

²⁸ Here we can see that Jesus said that "belonging to God" is a prerequisite for hearing God. Would that include himself or was he only speaking to the people who were listening to him? Is Jesus any less of a "Lord" on account of his belonging to God?

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he *lives*, he *lives* to God (Romans 6:10).

iii. More on proceeding from God

Some more passages that affirm similar truths, all leading us to the conclusion that Jesus proceeds from God, are listed below. Here's the first one, in which the apostles expressed their faith to Jesus:

We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One *of* God (John 6:69).

For the apostles, it was a big accomplishment for them to have come to believe that Jesus *proceeded* from God. Is it one of the accomplishments of today's Christian church as well? We could easily do a survey to see whether people in churches believe that Jesus proceeds from God, and it's unlikely that many people would believe it. My guess is that it would seem to most like we were diminishing Jesus' importance by saying so. Surely most churches have never taught it. On the contrary, most would respond to the doctrine "Jesus proceeds from God" in defense of Jesus saying: "No, he's not 'of God' but God himself!" But anyone who says that should be careful—they have crossed the line and are denying the Holy Scriptures.²⁹ Let's read some other pertinent texts:

No one has seen the Father except the one who is *from* God [Jesus said of himself]; only he has seen the Father (John 6:46).

[Jesus said of God] I know him because *I am from him* and he sent me (John 7:29).

Now we [the apostles] can see that you [speaking to Jesus] know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that *you came from God* (John 16:30).

» Does today's church believe that Jesus proceeded from God?

²⁹ Only the Father is called "God Himself" in the Bible (1 Thessalonians 3:11; 5:23; Revelation 21:3). This term should never be used for Jesus.

iv. We are also “of God”

» Both Jesus and the church are “of God.”

It’s not only Jesus but those who follow him who are of God, for the “one” in the following passage is, in fact, the one God. Read it carefully and you’ll see that both Jesus and *we ourselves* are said to belong to this “one.”

For both he who sanctifies [Jesus] and those who are being sanctified [us] are all *of one*, for which reason he [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them [us] brethren, saying: “I will declare Your [God’s] name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to you.” And again: “I will put my trust in him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom *God* has given me” (Hebrews 2:11-13; NKJV).

e. Jesus is begotten of God

We’re born of our mothers but *begotten* of our fathers. To “beget” is a male function; it is male procreation,³⁰ sort of like the verb “fathered” as in “I was *fathered* by a dairy farmer.” This would be synonymous with “I was *begotten* of a dairy farmer.”

» “Begotten” really works in the case of explaining Jesus’ relationship to God.

The word “beget” is really too outdated for most modern English usage. It’s just not appropriate to use “beget” in everyday conversation, *with the exception* of the case at hand: Explaining what we mean when we say that Jesus was from God. In the case where someone asks us “What do you mean when you say that Jesus is ‘from’ God?” the word *begotten* seems to work just fine: “Jesus was *begotten* of God” sounds even clearer than “He was *fathered* by God.” So “begotten” is a word that really works, in this case.

» No Bible passage says explicitly that Jesus was created by God.

i. Was Jesus created?

The Word of God does not explicitly state anywhere that Jesus was created. Some verses might seem to *imply* that he was created by God, but they don’t say it *explicitly*.

³⁰ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as “to procreate as the father” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/beget>).

What they say is that he was “brought forth” and “born” which are two things which do not by necessity imply creation. For example, the sun can “bring forth” its light—but that doesn’t mean that the light didn’t exist before morning. Likewise, a baby is “born,” but only when it already exists. It has to have existed for 9 months in its mother’s uterus for it to actually get to the point of being born.

We have listened to the teachers who question whether Christ is the “Wisdom” of which Proverbs 8:22-32 speaks. They say that the passage is just a metaphor for wisdom in general. Although obviously the passage is not, strictly speaking, a “literal” passage, the Wisdom described there must be Jesus. These teachers’ argument is not convincing to us because there’s nobody in the Universe who could fit the profile described in Proverbs 8 but Jesus. To see that, we’ll look at the passage here; but to prepare ourselves, it would help to first look at what it says about Jesus in the Epistle to the Colossians (it has a lot in common with Proverbs 8):

The Son is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn* over all Creation. For in him all things were created: things in the heavens and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17).

» Jesus is “the firstborn over all Creation.”

In addition, Jesus is clearly considered to be the “wisdom” (of those of us who are in the New Covenant), according to what it says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, where the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus “has become for us wisdom from God.”

» Jesus is “Wisdom from God” for us.

You can read the Proverbs 8 passage and yourself be the judge of whether it could be anybody else to whom the passage refers, but the Lord Jesus. Here’s some advice: Don’t let the words “Jehovah possessed me” throw you off—we already showed that Jesus belongs to God in sections II.4.b and III.6.d.i of this book.

Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the Earth was. When there were no depths, *I was brought forth*, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills *was I brought forth*; while as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the fields, nor the beginning of the dust of the world.

» “When he established the heavens, I was there.”

When he established the heavens, *I was there*: When he set a circle upon the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when the fountains of the deep became strong, when he gave to the sea its bound, that the waters should not transgress his commandment, when he marked out the foundations of the Earth; then I was *by him*, as a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always *before him*, rejoicing in his habitable Earth; and my delight was with the sons of men. Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me; for blessed are they that keep my ways (Proverbs 8:22-32; ASV).

As an added note: Don't the words “I was by him, as a master workman” (Proverbs 8:30) imply that the person speaking here was the one who did God's work in Creation? Don't the words “I was daily his delight” (Proverbs 8:30) show us that, as we have seen, Jesus was the object of God's love even before the Creation of the world? Those are fine and well, but the key truth that we want to highlight with this passage is that Jesus was “brought forth” or “begotten” of God before the Creation.

» Jesus was “brought forth” by God before the Creation.

As we have already seen, the Lord Jesus gets his life from God, which is the same thing as saying that he is *dependent on God* for life. So, God gives life to Jesus and Jesus gives life to us. In the same way that Jesus sustains our life, understand that God sustains the life of Jesus. You can really get the essence of this idea by reading the following passage:

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. *Just as* the living Father sent me and *I live because of the Father*, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me (John 6:56-57).

Although this is too dramatic a teaching for some people to handle (because it sounds to them like Jesus is being pictured as much less than what they may have been taught he was), it does *not*, by necessity, make Jesus a created being. Look at the context of his words and you'll see that when Jesus said "I live because of the Father" (John 6:57) he was talking about God's continual sustaining of Jesus' life by Jesus' dependence on the Father, not some initial point in time when he was created. (Read it closely and carefully to see that, please). So we do not have any Biblical evidence which proves what the Arians so vehemently taught: that Jesus did not exist before God brought him forth. There is no warrant for anyone to teach it, although it's incumbent upon all of us to research the possibility of it.

» Jesus lives because of God. He is continually sustained by the Father.

ii. "Not made"

If "through him [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3) and if "the world was made through him" (John 1:10), then Jesus should not be put on the same level as created things. If all things (that have been made) were made through him, then Jesus is *above Creation*. Jesus should not be considered to be on the same level as created things because the Bible just doesn't ever put him there. On the contrary, the Bible puts him on a completely distinct plane: that of a Creator.

» The Bible never puts Jesus on the same level as created things.

Could Jesus have been an angel before he was loved by God and was given deity—since he appears as the Angel of the LORD in the OT? Believing that Jesus had an angelic nature would not be demeaning him in any way, especially considering that he was willing to take on something much lower than an angelic nature: a fallen human nature. His flesh never stopped him from being holy or from deserving worship—so why would an angelic nature hinder him? Believing that Christ became human is not blasphemy, so imagining him with an angelic nature wouldn't be blasphemous either.

» Jesus' beginning is a mystery—we can't determine it (if there is one).

» Jesus was established from everlasting!

So, considering Christ to have been an angel before Creation *could* be a legitimate interpretation of the Bible. However, the difficulty is this: What *angel* gets the title “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 21:6) or, better yet, “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:13)? Those are titles that imply something very important about Jesus: *We can't determine his beginning or his end.* We can't pinpoint them because he's like God in that regard—and yes, Father God is the first one in the Bible to likewise be called the “Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 1:8).

This “alpha quality” of Jesus concurs with a little phrase in Proverbs 8:22 that may have gone unnoticed earlier when we looked it over in Proverbs 8. It says that Jesus (who we believe is “Wisdom”) “was set up *from everlasting*.”³¹ The term “from everlasting” is the equivalent of the “Alpha” in the “Alpha and Omega” title, isn't it? And what does “Alpha” mean? It's that indistinguishable infinity before the earliest point of historical reference. Jesus was established from everlasting! Jesus is the “Alpha”—but this book is not about Jesus, it's about *the one God*. Please note that it says in the Bible verse that Jesus was “established” (literally: “anointed”). Then, ask yourself *who* set him up; *who established Jesus?* There's only one who could possibly have done that: the one God and Father, of whom the Bible *never* refers to as one who was “established” by anyone.

For those who, at this point, continue to insist that Christ was *by nature*, not only in name, an angel before his was glorified by God (which means before the Creation of the world), what do they do when confronted with the fact that the Bible says that Jesus is not in the same category as the angels? Look closely and you'll see that God *never* said to any

³¹ Another passage which sounds similar is the NASB translation of Micah 5:2, “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of *eternity*.”

of the angels “You are my Son.” But of course, God *did* say this to Jesus! That would mean that Jesus was not by nature an angel before his incarnation. In name, yes, in the sense of a “messenger”—but Jesus was not an angel by nature, no.

For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”? (Hebrews 5:5, NKJV).

These rhetorical questions deserve the answer “none.” God never said “You are my Son” to any angel nor did he say “I have begotten you” to any angel—ever. So Jesus is not on the same level as created things (which we already saw) or of the same category as the angels.

If you have been following the argument and agree, congratulations! Together with the Nicene fathers we have drawn the conclusion that Jesus was “begotten and *not made*.” When Jesus was begotten as the Son of God in Mary’s womb, we know that he already existed. The Bible is clear on that point. There was no “making” being done when he came to us through Mary, just *a change of nature*: He switched from the *divine* form and took on our *human* form.

The well-known verse “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) is often misrepresented as saying that Jesus has always had a divine nature. To interpret it that way is to deny the incarnation (careful!). The entire context of Hebrews stresses the fact that Jesus came in the flesh (it does this to a greater degree than any other Bible book), so how could the author of Hebrews, in the end of his epistle, say something contradictory? The meaning is that in spite of having come to us in the human nature, how wonderful it is that Jesus *always remains* the holy, loving, forgiving, and just servant of God that he is! How is Jesus always the same? In that he’s *always* faithful to God! To say otherwise is to deny the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity: Jesus came in the flesh.

» God never said to any of the angels: “You are my Son.”

» Jesus is not on the same level as created things or angels.

» When Jesus came to us through Mary, there was a change of nature, but he was not made.

» Jesus is always the same in that he is always faithful to God!

» There is no confusion about who God's Anointed One is.

In conclusion, although there is uncertainty about what kind of nature Jesus had before God gave him equality and glory, there is no confusion about who the Messiah is. If you have consecrated your life to following Jesus in baptism, and you are now in the New Covenant through his Spirit, you have what you need to be saved. People searched for the answer to the mystery of the Christ for thousands of years, but God has now revealed to us that it's Jesus who is his Anointed One!

Who has gone up to Heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the Earth? What is his name, and *what is the name of his Son?* Surely you know! (Proverbs 30:4)

As we can see from the previous selection from Proverbs, there was a time when people were anxiously waiting for the revelation of *who* the Son of God was going to be. They longed and sought diligently to know who that person was. Just as the apostles were privileged to know the Son of God, so are we. Jesus let them know what a great opportunity they had in knowing him:

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that *many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it*" (Luke 10:22-24).

iii. The begotten Son

» We'll look at how "beget" and "Son" are used in the NT.

Isn't it wonderful that we now can be sure that it's *Jesus* who was born of God and that he's God's only begotten Son? The 2 key words for a solid interpretation of Christ as God's Son are "beget" and "Son;" so, in this section, we'll look at how they are used in the NT.

The “begetting” took place when Mary was found to be with child nine months before the first Christmas, a magnificent event because it was at that instant that the Son of God was inducted into our world. Magi came from faraway lands to welcome him, while the King of Israel, filled with jealousy because he knew that the Messiah was born to inherit the throne of Israel, attempted to kill the newborn.

The passages which name Jesus as God’s Son are too numerous to list, so we’ll present just a sample here, and then we’ll list some that declare Christ as the “begotten” of God. All of these passages are worthy of our deepest reflection and utmost regard because they demonstrate the essence of the relationship that exists between God and Jesus.

Passages that refer to Jesus as the Son of God include the following:

For God did not send *his Son* into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17).

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of *his Son*, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29).

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of *his Son* into our hearts... (Galatians 4:6).

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for *his Son* from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

And again, when God brings *his firstborn* into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him” (Hebrews 1:6).

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: *God is light*; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, *his Son*, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

... for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it

» This is the essence of the relationship that exists between God and Jesus: God begat Jesus, who is God's Son.

» Jesus is God's firstborn.

» Only a person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God will overcome!

» Jesus is “the one who was born of God.”

» Jesus is in the bosom of the Father.

» God is “him who begot” and Jesus is the “begotten.”

that overcomes the world? *Only* the one who believes that Jesus is *the Son of God* (1 John 5:4-5).

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in *his Son*. Whoever has *the Son* has life; whoever does not have *the Son of God* does not have life (1 John 5:11-12).

I write these things to you who believe in the name of *the Son of God* so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; *the one who was born of God* [that would be Jesus] keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them (1 John 5:18).

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, *the Father’s Son*, will be with us in truth and love (2 John 1:3).

Passages that present Jesus as God’s *begotten* include those you can read below:

I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son; This day have I *begotten* thee (Psalm 2:7; ASV).

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of *the only begotten from the Father*), full of grace and truth... No man hath seen God at any time; *the only begotten Son*, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:14,18; ASV).

For God so loved the world that He gave *His only begotten Son*, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life... He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of *the only begotten Son of God* (John 3:16,18; NKJV).

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent *His only begotten Son* into the world, that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9).

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot [God] also loves *him who is begotten of Him* (1 John 5:1; NKJV).

iv. The Son of God as God

It's crucial that we think Biblically (similar to the way the Jews of Jesus' time did) about *who* exactly the Son of God is. If we don't, we'll miss the point altogether about what Jesus meant when he declared himself the Son of God. The following passages demonstrate that Jesus' claim to be the Son of God also included a claim to deity:

For *this* reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even *calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God* (John 5:18).

Jesus' way of claiming deity is something most of today's Bible readers miss altogether, but surprisingly, it's what *most powerfully* caught the attention of the most learned Bible scholars of Jesus' day.

What was Jesus really saying when he encouraged people to believe in him as the Son of God? He was saying that he was *God*--not the One God, but *divine!*

If Jesus is God's Son, he would not only have been miraculously born of God (which he was), but it would also imply something much greater: that he was going to *inherit* his Father's estate (that is, not only the throne of Israel, but the worldwide Kingdom of God). It was in *this* sense that the Bible teachers of his day, in particular, the Pharisees, were offended by Jesus' making himself "equal to God." By calling God his Father, Jesus was saying that he was God's *heir*. This *kind* of equality (this is the *only* time anybody ever accused Jesus of asserting equality with God) greatly offended the religious leaders of the Jews. They hated him for the "sonship" he so confidently asserted.

A promise to David had yet to be fulfilled when Jesus walked the Earth, and that was that God would establish one of David's descendants as King of Israel. The Jews were very anxious to see that promise fulfilled in the Messiah.

» Incorporated in Jesus' claim to be the Son of God was his claim to deity.

» The kind of equality Jesus claimed to have with God was that which is by sonship.

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: “*One of your own descendants* I will place on your throne” (Psalm 132:11).

However, Jesus wanted people to understand that they should have expected much more than a “son of David,” a future king of Israel. Although Jesus was a descendant of David, he wanted his hearers to see that he was much more than a man who was part of a royal human bloodline. He was part of David’s dynasty, for sure, but he was a million times greater than David: He was *the Son of the One God*.

» Jesus wanted people to see that, as Messiah, he was also the Son of the one God.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think about *the Messiah*? Whose son is he?” “The son of David,” they replied. He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says, “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’” If then *David calls him ‘Lord,’* how can he be his son?” (Matthew 22:41-45).

f. Jesus receives worship

From the time he was a baby, Jesus was adored by those who knew the Scripture promise of the Son of God.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they *bowed down* and *worshiped him* (Matthew 2:11).

Let’s observe that Jesus accepted it when people worshipped him—keeping in mind that worship is something that *only Deity* would ever deserve. So Jesus cannot be simply another prophet; he couldn’t even be just an angel, because he allowed himself to be the object of worship, and angels, in fear of God, refuse worship. We conclude that Jesus must be divine.

» Jesus allowed himself to be the object of worship, so he must have been divine.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and *he worshiped him* (John 9:35-38).

God wouldn't allow for there to be worship of anyone who wasn't divine; but in Jesus' case, *God gave special orders* that there should be worship.

And again, when *God* brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels *worship him*" (Hebrews 1:6).

i. Jesus is a divine being

If Paul tells us that before Jesus took on human form, Jesus was "in very nature God" and he had "equality with God" (Philippians 2:6), than who was Jesus but a *divine being*? We don't dare say that he was the one God because he was "in nature" God. We couldn't possibly say that he was the one God because he had "equality with" God. To have God's nature and to have equality with God does not make someone that God. In fact, it demonstrates what Jesus is *not* to affirm these things: He was *not* the "one God" whose nature he received and with whom he was made equal.

ii. Jesus is the "I am"

But it's not just about what Paul wrote in Philippians—Jesus himself affirmed his deity. Even in his earthly life, Jesus was conscious of this divine preexistence, saying

"Very truly I tell you... before Abraham was born, *I am!*" (John 8:58-59).

This is a major (not to mention *bold*) declaration from Jesus, and it no doubt took those aback who heard it. What did he mean by it? Does it take away from our argument that there is one God and this one God is the Father? No.

The term "I am" is a reference to the one who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, a Scripture passage we share in its complete form in Appendix 4a.³² If you have already read the passage, did you know that it was *Jesus* who

» God Himself gave orders that Jesus should be worshipped by the angels.

» To have God's nature and to have equality with God demonstrates what Jesus was not: He was not the One God.

» Jesus knew that he was the "I am" who preceded Abraham.

» Jesus, as the "I am," was there at the burning bush with Moses.

³² I must say that I consider Exodus 3 to be one of the most challenging Bible passages for anyone to interpret. But I love challenges—and I hope that you do too!

was there at the burning bush? Most people would presume that it was God himself, but since God is invisible, it couldn't have been God, but had to have been a spokesman for God. That spokesman was the Angel of the LORD, the Word, the pre-incarnate Christ.

Jesus shared God's message with Moses and was physically present at the burning bush as God's mouthpiece. The passage is a wonderful challenge to interpret, but we're convinced that since Moses *saw* God there, and God is *invisible*, then it must have been Jesus (who had already been established as Deity at that time) who he saw.

Moses saw *Jesus*, God's representative—that is, "God" (as John 1:2 calls the Word; and "the angel" as Stephen called the Angel of the Lord [Jesus] in Acts 7:35,38). In other words, Moses saw the one God *in Jesus*.

It was enough for Moses to see Jesus, and it should be enough for us as well. The principle of *seeing God in Christ* was taught by Jesus in the Upper Room. It was there that he clarified the issue of *how* God is in him. God lives in Jesus, and Jesus (not acting or speaking on his own authority, but in total submission to the Father) is the exact representation of God. You can see all that you would see in God's holiness, character, and love, if you only look at Jesus (who has the Father living in him)—and that's the key to their unity: *God's Spirit lives in Jesus*. Notice: The Bible never says that the Spirit "lives" in God the Father. That is because he is the very Spirit of the Father. The Holy Spirit emanates from the Father, he does not "live in" him.

- » Jesus, the one God's representative is called "God," the "Word," or "the Angel" in the NT.
- » We can see the one God in Jesus.

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.* How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you *I do not speak on my own authority.* Rather, it is *the Father, living in me,* who is doing his work (John 14:8-10).

iii. Jesus is “a man” and also “God”

Moses’ meeting with Jesus, which was an encounter with Jesus *as God*, was nothing new. It is similar to what happened when Jacob fought with “a man” all night and declared in the morning that who he had actually fought with was God. Who could that man have been but *Jesus*? The logic of interpretation is simple: God is invisible, but Jacob saw God face to face. Jacob therefore must have seen Jesus, the only one who was “God” outside of God Himself.

So Jacob was left alone, and *a man* wrestled with him till daybreak. When *the man* saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with *the man*. Then *the man* said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” *The man* asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. Then *the man* said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,³³ because *you have struggled with God* and with humans and have overcome.” Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?”³⁴ Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel,³⁵ saying, “It is because *I saw God face to face,* and yet my life was spared” (Genesis 32:24-30).

» Jacob saw Jesus when he saw “God” face to face.

³³ Meaning: he struggles with God.

³⁴ What an intriguing and mysterious retort! What did this “man” not want to disclose to Jacob? His name, his meaning, his identity? But Jacob knew that it was God, that is, *God as man*, the Word. Interestingly, in Judges 13:2-23 we see that this person was the Angel of the LORD. Neither was he willing to disclose who he was to Samson’s father there in the Judges passage. He responded to Samson’s father’s request to disclose his name in a similar manner to the way he did with Jacob: “Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding” (Judges 13:18).

³⁵ Meaning: face of God.

iv. Jesus has God's name

A similar phenomenon of great interest is that the Angel of the LORD is also known by the name “the LORD” (that is, *Yahweh*) in the OT—but that’s supposed to be the one God’s particular name, right? How could another, the Angel of the Lord, be called by God’s personal name? We’re not going to review any of the cases of this naming of the Angel of the Lord here, as it would involve a very detailed study of the OT and our commitment is to stick to the NT, but there is a *key* to interpreting these passages. Would you like to know the key? It’s given to us in God’s exhortation to the Israelites in the Exodus wanderings:

» God says
of Jesus:
“My name is
in him.”

See, I am sending *an Angel* ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since *my name is in him* (Exodus 23:20-21).

» God
acts with a
particularly
strong love
towards
Jesus.

This name sharing that God did with his special Angel (Jesus) only reinforces what we have already established in our study on God: that God acts with a particularly strong *love* towards Jesus, honoring him and sharing his glory with Jesus. Think about it: If God could share equality with Jesus and give him the divine nature, why not also share his personal name (*Yahweh*) with him? Anyways, it’s totally natural—even on a human level—for a father to share his name with his oldest son. If a *human* father can give his son his name and share glory with his “Junior,” then why is it so difficult to believe that *God* would do it? Is Jesus not God’s “Junior”?

» There
can be no
confusion on
the issue of
there being
one God.

v. No confusion

The important thing is for us to be absolutely resolutely firm in maintaining that there can be *no confusion* on the issue of there being one God. There is only one true God, and it’s the Father. With this point we must be steadfast and sure. Now, his glory, his divine nature, and even his name are in Jesus

(halleluiah!), but the one God remains who he is regardless of how much he shares. Should his great love cause him to be *misunderstood*? Should his love cause us to forget him?

The one God becomes even more wonderful to us when we can see that he loves Jesus (and us) as much as he does. He's so selfless that he shares all he has and is! Indeed, he is *Love*. (Can't you see things clearer now)? Love is not selfish, it gives, shares all, and seeks what is best for others: that's God the Father.

If anybody says, "But how would God ever have expected us to figure all this out? Isn't it unfair for him to make knowing him so confusing as evidenced by passages like the ones we just read (i.e., Moses at the burning bush)?" For people who think that way, we have to say: The one God is no promoter of disarray. He is a God of order and peace. He is light, which means that there is no confusion emanating from him.

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people (1 Corinthians 14:33).

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: *God is light*; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

Now please realize that the only thing that has stumped you is not the "mystery" of God, but *the magnitude of his love*. You just didn't know that he loved Jesus *that* much. Well, now that you know, the confusion should be gone. There was never any "mystery," our confusion was only due to what we have not been able to comprehend regarding his love. Humans are not, by nature, nearly so loving as God is; so it's difficult for us to understand how his love operates. When we see it in action, it confuses us—until we become more experienced in loving. That's the price we have to pay to know God: We ourselves have to love more and our minds will open.

» Seeing his great love, should we misunderstand God?

» The only thing that stumps us is not the "mystery" of God, but the magnitude of his love.

g. The one God shares his divine nature

Now, if you can accept the fact that God is willing to share his name with Jesus, than perhaps you'll grasp the fact that God shares his *nature* with Jesus. Again, this is something that God did in love. He doesn't need some external motivation to share anything with anybody because he *is* Love. Let's dig into the matter of *how* God could have given something so precious as his nature to Jesus...

Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, the Devil has wanted us to think that God is an egomaniac. We're about to read Satan's words from his first contact with mankind—pay close attention to the subtlety he uses. The first temptation mankind experienced, when the Devil spoke to Eve was not a simple invitation for her to bite some fruit, but a trick to lead her to *doubt God's love* for her:

» The Devil wants us to doubt God's love for us.

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?... *God knows* that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1,5).

What was implied in these diabolical words? Satan was suggesting that God would do all that he could to prevent Adam and Eve from becoming divine. According to the Devil, God didn't want to share divine power or authority with these two human creatures; but *nothing* could have been further from the truth! We repeat: There is *nothing* that could have been *further* from the truth!

» Satan's big lie: God does not want us to be divine, like him.

Should mankind judge God for not living up to our idea of love, or should we just *trust* that all that he does is a manifestation of love? Should we presume to know what is best and judge God as evil? That's what Adam and Eve did. God *is* Love (1 John 4:8,16).

This is love: not that we loved God, but *that he loved us* and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10).

Among all of God's creatures, Adam and Eve were the only ones created in God's likeness and image. Not even the angels were created with that honor. And why did *we* get such a privilege? Human beings are created in God's likeness and image specifically to be capable and worthy of doing what God does: ruling over Creation. In fact, some 4,000 years later, the very message that Jesus preached laid out the promises and established the covenant which God required so that God's love would *effectively* lift us up to a divine level. If we believe, that is, if we follow Jesus by carrying our crosses now, the promises (that we will reign on the Earth in the Kingdom of God, sitting on thrones, inheriting the land, and exercising authority over humanity with rods of iron, like *gods*) will be fulfilled!

» We were made to be capable of doing what God does: ruling over Creation.

The Devil tried to blot out all awareness of the glorious Gospel message from the start. He wanted humanity, from the very beginning, to lose faith in God's love. That love had *already been given* to Jesus, so it *was* real and tangible. It had *already* established the Word as Deity. God's love was real for the Word. It would have been real for Adam and Eve, but (because they were deceived) they stopped believing in God as a God of love. They fell from grace.

» The love God offered Adam and Eve was already real. It had already transformed the Word into Deity.

But now, through Christ, our eyes are opened to see what Adam and Eve didn't see: God is much more interested in lifting us up to his level than we could ever imagine! In fact, what we see in the life of Jesus is the primary example of *what God does to a person who believes* that he can, by the grace of God, be crowned with divine authority in the Kingdom—a person who is willing to pay the price (bear a cross) to obtain the eternal reward of glory. Jesus is the example of what it means to *believe in God's love* to the very end. He trusted God through the most difficult circumstances, knowing that all things, as disastrous as they may have seemed at the time, would all work together to fulfill the purposes of a loving God.

» Jesus is our model of what it means to believe in God's love to the very end.

He refused to believe the lies of the Devil. He trusted that God's will was best and that God loved him. When God resurrected Jesus, the Lord Jesus was vindicated. God *did* love him after all!

If we read John 10:33-36 (below), we'll see something mind-blowing; something that shows as clear as day that the Devil is nothing but a liar: God's promise "you are gods" cannot be broken. God has said that we are *gods*. This is an absolutely trustworthy statement from the mouth of the one God.

» God's promise "you are gods" cannot be broken.

But before you let your mind second guess you, and before we look at the passage more closely, it would strengthen all of us to remember a passage which shows how certain God's word is:

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever (Isaiah 40:8).

Do you believe God's word? Do you believe that we can be *gods*? Do you believe in the greatness of God's love for us? Jesus wants us to understand that just as much as being "God" applies to himself (by reason of him being God's Son), so does being "gods" apply to us to whom the Word of God comes. We are born children of God by the Word of God and have just as much an opportunity to be "gods" as Jesus had to be "God." That should be really really encouraging to us! Our flesh does not make us any less candidates for a divine nature because Jesus also came in the flesh—and he didn't let it stop him!

» We have just as much an opportunity to be "gods" as Jesus had to be "God."

If you have had the Word of God come into your life, then the promise of being a god is guaranteed. Don't doubt, but be certain that it's a promise that "cannot be set aside." And remember: If we can be "gods," than this all shows that the Devil is a liar. How does he lie, primarily? He makes people think that God doesn't want to share his divine nature with them. So who are you going to believe today—God or the

Devil? Here's the teaching of Jesus with regard to this matter:

“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said *you are gods*’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? (John 10:33-36).

» “He called them *gods*, to whom the word of God came.”

This passage is of great importance, not only because it contains such good news for us, but for another reason: because it shows us how the Jews imagined the Son of God would *be* when he came. These top Bible scholars who poured over the Scriptures every day of their lives knew that the Messiah would “claim to be God” as Jesus did.

The passage is also a key for us in knowing that Jesus never intended for his claim to deity to be interpreted as him being anything *more* than the Son of God. He never claimed to be the “one God” (which would have been blasphemy), but “the Son of God.” From the passage we just looked at, we can see that the terms *Son of God* and *God* were used interchangeably (but without confusion) among Biblical scholars in Christ’s day. So this is the *sense* in which Jesus is God. That’s the idea behind what we say when we call him “God”: He’s the Son of the one God.

» The terms “Son of God” and “God” were used interchangeably in Christ’s day.

Go ahead and feel free to call Jesus “God,” unless you know that you’re going to promote confusion among people with an already confused theology, like Trinitarianism or Oneness (Pentecostal United). Call Jesus “God” with understanding, not in an uncertain “wishy-washy” way. Please make sure that you have the *sense* of what you’re saying clear in your mind. It will save you from a lot of confusion, and you won’t be guilty of confusing others. Say it in a way that expresses our

» Call Jesus “God” with the sense of what you’re saying clear in your mind.

hope in also becoming divine. Say it so that the love of God is manifested to all! Say it so that the lies of the Devil are dissipated by the light!



Part IV.

Differences between God and Jesus

Ignoring the truth presented to us in the Bible about the most important relationship that exists in the Universe is not a good idea. For our own benefit, and out of love for those we teach, we should open our eyes to the differences that exist between the Father and the Son. It is often heard in Trinitarian teachings that they are “co-equal”—but what about the distinctions? Below we list some of the key differences that the Bible draws between God and Jesus. We hope that it will help you to be set free from any confusion you might have.

» What does “co-equal” mean? God and Jesus have major distinctions.

1. God is invisible, Jesus is seen

God has never been seen by anybody nor can he be seen by anybody. The Bible leaves no question as to the fact that Jesus was seen by many people. For example, in the Gospel accounts people saw, walked, and even ate with him day after day. In one case, speaking of Jesus as the Word, John tells us the following:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which *we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at* and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life (1 John 1:1).

On the other hand, there are numerous other passages that affirm that the one God *has never been seen*. A comparison of

» God has never been seen by anyone but Jesus.

the following passages should make the distinction between God and his Son quite obvious:

... [Jesus said] pray to your Father, who is *unseen* (Matthew 6:6).

No one has ever *seen* God (John 1:18).

[Jesus said] You have never heard his [the Father's] voice *nor seen his form* (John 5:37).

The Son is the image of *the invisible God* (Colossians 1:15).

» The *only* God is invisible.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, *invisible, the only God*, be honor and glory for ever and ever... *who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see* (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16).

[God is called] him who is *invisible* (Hebrews 11:27).

No one has *ever seen* God (1 John 4:12).

... whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love *God, whom they have not seen* (1 John 4:20).

2. God is immortal, Jesus died

» Immortality means that someone can never die.

The fact that God resurrected Jesus is based on one of God's singular characteristics: his *immortality*. Jesus, as we know, died on the cross, and was in Hades with the dead for three days.

[Jesus says] I am the Living One; *I was dead*, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! (Revelation 1:18).

» The only one in the Universe who is immortal is the one God.

But the one God, who is *the only one in the Universe who is immortal* (as it says in the following Bible verse), brought Jesus back from the dead and gave Jesus eternal life.

Now to the King eternal, *immortal, invisible... who alone is immortal...* To him be honor and might forever. Amen (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16).

3. God knows everything, Jesus has limitations

Only God knows the day and the hour of Christ's return. Nobody else, not even Jesus, has that knowledge, which means that, technically, the only one who should be considered to be "omniscient" or "all-knowing" is God the Father. This, of course, is not to ignore the fact that Jesus knows practically everything. We do not dare disregard Christ's great understanding; so, to give it the proper recognition, we'll recall that his apostles said the following:

Now we can see that you [Jesus] *know all things* and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions (John 16:30).

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know *all things*; you know that I love you." (John 20:17).

Jesus did not deny his disciples' affirmation of the greatness of his knowledge. He truly *did* know all things—relative to the apostles. But relative to the one God? With regard to the (ever so slight) lack of knowledge in Christ (this "lack" only exists when we compare what Jesus knows to God's perfect knowledge), we have the following texts:

But about that day or hour *no one knows*, not even the angels in Heaven, *nor* the Son, but *only the Father* (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know *the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority*" (Acts 1:6-7).

... the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which *God* will bring about in *his own time* (1 Timothy 6:14-15).

... God is greater than our hearts, and *he knows everything* (1 John 3:20).

» Only *one* is omniscient: God the Father.

» Jesus does not know the day or hour of his return in glory.

» Jesus learned what he knew from God.

In addition to Jesus' slight intellectual limitation, let's add another significant fact: He learned all of what he does know from God. Knowledge and wisdom weren't in him at birth, but he gradually gained them throughout his life based on what he picked up from God, *his Teacher*. Jesus was God's student, and he himself recognized this.

... they found him [the boy Jesus] in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, *listening* to them and *asking them questions*. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers... "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"... Jesus *grew* in wisdom and stature, and *in favor with God* and man (Luke 2:46-47,49,52).

I have called you friends, for *everything that I learned from my Father* I have made known to you (John 15:15).

4. God honors who he will in the Kingdom, Jesus cannot

» God determines the highest positions of authority in the Kingdom, not Jesus.

Jesus does not have the last word about who gets what in the Kingdom, God does. God is the one who will determine, for example, who sits at Jesus' side in the Kingdom. The honor that you receive in the Kingdom, if you get it, will come from God, the one who prepares all rewards.

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but *to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant*. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared *by my Father*" (Matthew 20:23).

5. God cannot be tempted, Jesus was tempted in all things

God is beyond temptation. On the contrary, Jesus was tempted in all things. Through Jesus' "overcomer" lifestyle, we can see what it takes to conquer sin. At the same time, this contrast shows us yet another distinguishing characteristic of the only true God: Evil can't touch him. While Jesus was a *victim* of evil, God has never been attacked by evil, simply because it can't get near him. This is quite a drastic difference between Jesus and the one God. Knowing Jesus as the tempted Son of Man is also an essential part of understanding how salvation works.

» Evil can't touch the One God.

Jesus... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was *tempted* by the Devil (Luke 4:1-12).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who *has been tempted in every way*, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15).

God *cannot* be tempted by evil (James 1:13).

6. God does not receive advice from anybody, Jesus does

God doesn't depend on anybody. He has no counselor. So, how does God work things out? He just does them the way his *will* determines—and he does *everything* that way! There's nobody who gives him recommendations or suggestions. Jesus, on the other hand, always depended on God to tell him all of what he should say and do. Pay close attention to what it says in the following passages, and ask yourself: "How does God make his plans?" The answer, you'll see, is that he gets counsel from *himself!*

» God does things according to his own counsel.

» Who
has ever
been God's
counselor?

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or *who has been his counselor?*” “*Who* [this rhetorical question deserves the reply “nobody”] has ever *given to God*, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:33-36).

... having made known to us the mystery of *His* [God's] *will*, according to His good pleasure which *He purposed in Himself* (Ephesians 1:9; NKJV).

... [God is] him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of *his will* (Ephesians 1:11).

7. God is spirit, Jesus is flesh

Jesus' teaching on the nature of God is simple and unequivocal: God is *spirit*. At the same time, Jesus highlighted that his nature was (and continues to be) that of a human man. Jesus is *not spirit*, but flesh. Jesus' coming in the flesh, what the apostles called the “doctrine of Christ,” is an essential and indispensable doctrine in which all believers are called to persevere; in other words, we can't stop professing it. (Unfortunately, most “Christians” haven't even *started* to profess it). If we continue in the doctrine of Christ, we'll have both the Father and the Son.

» We have
the Father
and the
Son if we
continue to
profess that
Jesus came
in the flesh.

Anyone who does not bring the doctrine of *Christ coming in the flesh* is to be denied entrance to your house. That person is a wolf in sheep's clothing, a false teacher, a “deceiver.” The contrast is made clear to us by the Scriptures: God is spirit and Jesus is flesh; so now *how* could we confuse one with the other?

[Jesus said] See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for *a spirit does not have flesh and bones* as you see that I have (Luke 24:39; NASB).

God is spirit (John 4:24).

... there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the *man* Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is from God (1 John 4:2).

... many deceivers, who do not acknowledge *Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist... Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in *the teaching of Christ* does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring *this teaching*, do not take them into your house or welcome them (2 John 7,9-10).³⁶

» After his resurrection, Jesus said that he was *not* a spirit, but “flesh and bones.”

8. God is an elder, Jesus is a young man

Jesus, when he comes before God, does it with all the respect that an elder deserves from a young man. This *seniority* is a really important aspect of the relationship that exists between God and his Son. The Father should be regarded as the elder and Jesus as the younger, even though it would be

» There is seniority in the relationship that exists between God and his Son.

³⁶ In addition to the topic being addressed, it should be stressed that we find an important matter presented here: “Anyone who runs ahead (literally: *goes too far*) and does not continue in the teaching (*doctrine*) of Christ, does not have God” (2 John 9). I would like to stress the fact that we are called to believe that Jesus came *in the flesh*, and we are not supposed to go *further* in our teachings about Jesus than the Scriptures permit us. This is so important: *We are not to exaggerate the Biblical doctrine of Jesus’ deity*. The Bible is insistent in that he came in the human nature, the flesh—with natural inclinations towards sin—and was just like us in every way, but without sin. To say, for example, that he was equal to God *at that time* is to deny that he himself willingly chose to *let go of such equality* and to take on the human nature (as it says in Philippians 2:6-7). That’s “going too far.” Going too far is coming to the point where you can’t distinguish God from Christ anymore. If you’ve gotten there, you have “run ahead” and you do not have God. You’ve believed the lie of the Antichrist (who’s getting the world ready for his big humanistic deception).

senseless to try to give them an age.

» God is the “Senior” and Jesus is the “Junior.” They actually have *no age* because both of them are “Alpha and Omega;” yet, in relation to each other, one is the “Senior” and the other is the “Junior.” In relation to each other, one is the elder, the “Ancient of Days,” while the other is the same as he was the day he was resurrected: young and ready to serve.

As I looked, thrones were set in place, and *the Ancient of Days* took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; *the hair of his head was white like wool...* In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was *one like a son of man* [that’s Jesus], coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached *the Ancient of Days* and *was led* into his presence (Daniel 7:9,13).

Now Jesus himself was about *thirty* years old when he began his ministry. [He died about 3 years later so he was a young man of about 33] (Luke 3:23).

9. God needs nothing, Jesus needs God

God has no need of anything or of anybody. He does not need Jesus, angels, or us to serve him.

» God “is not served by human hands as if he needed anything.”

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, *as if he needed anything*. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:24-25).

In contrast to that, Jesus is a man who has had numerous needs. God put the right people in Christ’s life to take care of those needs. God started caring for the human child Jesus through Mary who bore the Lord and nurtured him. God put other women in Jesus’ life later on, also with the objective of taking care of Jesus’ needs.

[Jesus says] I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, *I needed* clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me (Matthew 25:42-43).

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee *to care for his needs* (Matthew 27:55).

If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, '*The Lord needs it* and will send it back here shortly'" (Mark 11:2-3).

... Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him [Jesus] and *cared for his needs* (Mark 15:40-41).

» God put women in Jesus' life to help him with his needs.



Part V. God in the absolute sense

The “true God” to whom Jesus referred in his High-Priestly prayer (John 17:3) must be the same one mentioned by Paul and John in the other “true God” passages below—We hope that you’ll agree that there can be just *one* true God, and no more than one.

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and *true God*, and to wait for *his Son* from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know *him who is true*. And we are in *him who is true* by being in *his Son* Jesus Christ. *He is the true God* and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

God is the only one to be called the “true God” in the Scriptures. Are we clear about the implications of what it means for the Father of our Lord Jesus to be the *only one* in the Bible called the “true God”? For example, although the original Nicene Creed has the right meaning, we cannot agree with any contemporary translation which might say that Jesus is “true God from true God.” The first reason not to accept it is because it wasn’t what the Nicene fathers intended (the translation is a distortion of their intended meaning); but secondly, it wrongly teaches who Jesus is. It’s saying that he’s the “true God,” and he is not. *Never* in the Bible is this expression used to refer to Jesus.

So any erroneous translation of the Nicene Creed must be rejected if we are to stick to the Bible teaching that there is *one* true God. Are you going to stick to it? How dedicated are you to this teaching? Is monotheism a doctrine you’re willing

» There can be just one true God, and no more than one.

» It is wrong to say that Jesus is “true God.”

to fight for? If there are two “true Gods” than the whole notion of what it means to be the true God is made pointless. Furthermore, Jesus our Lord would be contradicting himself.

» “That they may know you, the only true God...”

This is eternal life, that they may know you, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3, NASB).

1. What do we mean by *absolute*?

» There is no passage in the Bible that gives the title “the one God” to any other but God the Father.

If you want to have a solid faith grounded on God’s Word, it is essential to recognize that only the Father is called the “one God” in the Bible. We won’t find a passage in the Bible that gives the title “the one God” to any other—no, not even to the Lord Jesus or the Holy Spirit—. For us, that means that the Father is God in the *absolute* sense. There is no relationship in the universe that exists in which his authority is not preminent³⁷ and predominant. On the other hand, Jesus is *not* God in the absolute sense, for there is *an exception* to his authority: his Father, who he calls “the one God.”

» There is is a clear exception to Jesus’ authority: God.

Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him [Jesus], it is clear that *this does not include God himself*, who put everything under Christ (1 Corinthians 15:27).

And with that thought, let’s note that although the Father is God in the absolute sense, he’s not God in the *exclusive* sense; that is, he doesn’t *exclude* Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or even

³⁷ We are aware of the fact that Colossians 1:18 says that Jesus was made the head of the church “that in all things He may have the *preeminence*,” but in the very next verse it explains *why* this was done: “For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to himself” (Colossians 1:19-20, KJV). By any means, it was *God* who gave Jesus the preeminence Jesus had, and such preeminence was to be exercised “in all things,” in other words, “in all matters,” but *not over God himself*, of course. The clear exception to Jesus’ preeminence (which should go without saying), is in Jesus’ relationship to God who gave Jesus the preeminence in the first place. Christ’s rule is not final, but the *means* God will use to bring all things under his *own* rule. By the end of the Millennium, Jesus will deliver all things over to God.

you and me from sharing in his divine nature. It can clearly be seen from the following verses that, in fact, God sincerely desires to share all that he has with others; in particular, he wants to share his divine nature with his children who are born through faith in Christ.

We add that the very Gospel of the Kingdom, the central message of Christianity, is that we will reign with Jesus and God forever on the Earth: *So the strongest evidence* that God is inclusive and not exclusive is actually the Gospel itself! A person who does not recognize God's inclusiveness does not understand *the Gospel*. Woe to him!

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods?' ... he called them *gods*, to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside (John 10:34-36).

... he has given us his very great and precious promises, *so that* through them *you may participate in the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4).

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, *I will give authority over the nations*—that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—*just as I have received authority from my Father* (Revelation 2:26-27).

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, *just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne* (Revelation 3:21).

I saw thrones on which were seated *those who had been given authority to judge*... They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years... they will be priests of God and of Christ and *will reign with him* for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

In the Bible, the Father is called the "only God." It goes without saying that the "only God" is never *ever* to be confused with Jesus. Not only God, but Jesus himself is offended by those who confuse them. Why so? Primarily because Jesus knows that the purpose for which he was sent was *to glorify God*. Can you imagine how bad Jesus must feel to see that people have misunderstood him, and that they're giving the

» God doesn't exclude Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or even us from participating in his divine nature.

» The Gospel is this: God wants to include you in his Kingdom rule by giving you a divine nature.

» Not just God, but Jesus is offended by those who confuse him with God.

» Jesus knows that the purpose for which he was sent was to glorify God.

glory to him which he *originally* intended for God to receive? If you were a Christian missionary to a newly discovered Amazonian tribe, and they misunderstood your message to mean that you were Jesus himself—How would *you* feel: happy or sad? Would you permit the misunderstanding to go on or would you correct them?

Do you want to glorify God through Christ? (We hope so). The way is *obeying* and *following* Jesus. Let's consider how this supremely important duty of *glorifying God through Jesus* is expressed in the NT. Consider the way “through” is used in the following passages:

» To the *only* wise God be glory forever *through* Jesus!

Now to *him who is able to establish you* in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ... to *the only* [yes, the “only”] *wise God* be glory forever *through* Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:25,27).

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to *the only God* our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, *through* Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen (Jude 24-25).

2. A word on the Holy Spirit

With such a heading for this section, I suspect that the question might arise in some hearts: “And why just a *word* on the Holy Spirit? Doesn't he deserve a greater part in the study of God?” We concede that such a concern is valid. The Holy Spirit deserves great honor and respect. Far be it from us to disregard him. However, this book is written to address the subject of the one God, who is the Father, and the Spirit never goes by the title “the one God,” so this book is not about the Holy Spirit. Number 2 in this series is “One Spirit,” a book we hope you'll study as well.

» The Spirit never goes by the title “the one God.”

a. Balanced doctrine

As you can see by our detailed analysis of passages that distinguish between the two, it's quite necessary to expound upon Jesus and God. Many Christian denominations are in sharp disagreement about the relationship between Jesus and God. But there does not appear to be much confusion as to whether the *Holy Spirit* might be the one God monotheistic believers hope in. Most people don't seem to struggle with the issue of whether the Spirit is the one God or not.

» Few people confuse the Holy Spirit with the one God.

b. Authority and subordination

Anyways, the Bible makes relatively few comparisons between the Holy Spirit and God, while those that compare Jesus and God are much more numerous. Our hope is that this book might simply be a reflection of *the balance seen in Scripture*, a balance which is much more (probably 20 times more, if I had to guess) *dualistic* (God-Jesus) than triune (God-Jesus-the Holy Spirit).

» The Scriptural balance is much more dualistic than triune.

Both the Son and the Spirit are submissive to the Father, which makes the issue of authority pretty black and white among the three. The Father is not subordinate in any way at all: not to Jesus, not to the Holy Spirit, and not to us. He is the absolute and uncontested authority. However, what about the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit? Who is the authority there? The submission of the Spirit to Jesus proves that the Spirit is subordinate to Christ.

A great number of Trinitarian Bible teachers outrightly deny Jesus' subordination to the Father. They purport that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are "co-equal." These pastors also refuse to recognize the subordination of the Spirit, although I've never heard their arguments explained from the Bible, just from "church tradition" and theology books. There is no Biblical argument to prove that the Spirit is equal to the one God and Father, in fact.

» The Spirit is subordinate to the one God and Father.

c. The Spirit's role

» God lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

So, should we even include the Holy Spirit in this book? There is a good reason to do so, and it's because he is closely related to the subject we're focusing on: the knowledge of the one God. It comes down to this: We can only know that God lives in us *through* the Spirit. That is, our relationship with God is dependent on the Holy Spirit's work. In fact, the Spirit's presence in us is the clearest evidence that the one God is really *our* God. The Holy Spirit's presence proves that we are in covenant with God, that we live in love, and that we keep God's commandments. Without the Spirit, all that we're saying about God is just *theory*, not reality.

The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and *he in them*. And *this* is how we know that *he lives in us*: We know it by *the Spirit* he gave us (1 John 3:24).

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and *God in them* (1 John 4:16).

He searches the deep things of God and is the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

d. God sent the Holy Spirit

» The Spirit is sent out from God, and is his Servant.

We also know that God actually dispatched (sent out) the Holy Spirit; that is, we know that the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from God. To be sure, he was sent under orders from Christ Jesus, but Jesus also made it clear that the Spirit "goes out" from the Father. This, of course, makes the Spirit subordinate to God. In the same way that Christ is sent from God, making him God's Servant (no one who is sent is greater than the one who sends him, according to John 13:16, seen below), the Spirit is God's Servant because of the fact that he was sent by God.

» The Spirit proceeds from the Father.

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, *nor is a messenger greater* than the one who sent him (John 13:16).

When the Advocate comes, *whom I will send* to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth *who goes out from the Father*—he will testify about me (John 15:26).

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, *whom the Father will send* in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:26).

e. Subordinate to Jesus

The Spirit speaks *only* what he hears. In this sense, again he is just like Jesus. The Spirit does not speak on his own initiative, but is a messenger. And the Holy Spirit is subordinate not only to God, but also to Jesus. This is because, as we just saw in John 15:26 (above), the Spirit is sent by Jesus.

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, *the Spirit of truth*, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. *He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears*, and he will tell you what is yet to come. *He will glorify me [Jesus] because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.* All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why *I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you* (John 16:12-15).³⁸

» The Spirit is subordinate to God and to Jesus.

f. Tri-unity

When we see the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit mentioned together in the Bible, that indicates that they are united. We believe that they are united, amen; but their unity is that Jesus and the Spirit do the will of the one God and Father. If that were what people meant by “trinity” (i.e., spelt with a lower-case “t” referring to the “unity of the three”), then we would be Trinitarian; but it’s *not* what they mean. There’s a big difference between God, Jesus, and the Spirit being *united*; and God, Jesus, and the Spirit together being (through an incomprehensible mystery) “one God”—a *very*

» We believe that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are united: Jesus and the Spirit do the will of the one God.

³⁸ I would really like to get deeper into the meaning of “that is why” in this passage. Let’s ask the question Jesus proposes: “Why did Jesus say that the Spirit would receive from him what the Spirit will make known to us?” Answer: Because all that belongs to the Father is Christ’s. Get it? The Spirit gets right into the *order* of things. He reveals what Jesus gives him *because* (that’s the reason) Jesus has gotten everything he has from *the Father*. The Spirit obeys Christ *because of Jesus’ God-given authority*. That’s smart. We should obey Jesus for the very same reason!

big difference—the difference between truth and lie. The difference between sound doctrine and heresy. The “one God” must continue to be *just* one if we are to uphold the truth of the Bible.

g. An order and a hierarchy

When the question is eventually raised: “What is the relationship between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?” then Trinitarians have little to say beyond “they are co-equal, co-eternal, and of one substance” (which sounds very philosophical, but normally doesn't foment much conversation or dialogue). On the other hand, a genuine student of the Scriptures should dare to probe deeper into whether there is an *order* or some sort of *hierarchy* among them. Once we affirm that God, Jesus, and the Spirit *do* interrelate in a certain order; then we begin to be free from from strict theological formulas about a supposed “Godhead.”

» God, Jesus, and the Spirit interrelate in a certain order, a hierarchy.

In order to understand the relationship that exists between the three, the soundest method would be to look at some more passages that mention the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together. Look at them closely and you'll see that they paint a pretty clear picture that the Father is pre-eminent. *God* is the one who gives the orders, raises the dead, gives the love, receives the offerings, foreknows, chooses; and he is the one who should be served. In the Bible (and only the Bible should be our rule of faith—not theologies), the one God, the Father, stands out distinctly as the greatest of the three.

» The Father stands out distinctly as the greatest of the three.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth *has been given to me*. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father* and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-19).

... *the one who sent me to baptize* with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain [that's Jesus] is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit’ (John 1:33).

And if the Spirit of *him who raised Jesus* from the dead is living in you, *he who raised Christ* from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you (Romans 8:11).

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who *serve God* by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh... (Philippians 3:3).

To them *God has chosen* to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you [that's the Holy Spirit], the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit *offered himself unblemished to God*... (Hebrews 9:14).

... [we were] chosen *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood (1 Peter 1:2).

h. Just don't leave out God

Although the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned together in the Bible, as evidenced by the passages listed above, you may have noticed that the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” formula is not as common in the Bible as many people might suppose it is. Here's an example:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of *God*, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Try to free yourself from robotic references to the three, and do not fear the criticism of people whose faith consists of a series of repetitive formulas.

We need not feel shy of just mentioning the Father and Son together, without including the Spirit in the prayer or teaching. Of course some people are insistent on always mentioning them together (perhaps in an overzealous attempt to avoid any shade of heresy or out of fear). It is startling for these folks to learn that just mentioning the Father and the Son is, by *far*, the most common way to teach about unity

» The “Father, Son, Holy Spirit” formula is not as common in the Bible as you may think.

» Just mentioning the Father and the Son is, by far, most Scriptural.

and deity in Scriptures. In fact, sometimes the apostles just mention the Father, the Son, and *angels* together, without any reference to the Holy Spirit.

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in *his glory* and *in the glory of the Father* and *of the holy angels* (Luke 9:26).

I charge you, in the sight of *God* and *Christ Jesus* and *the elect angels*, to keep these instructions without partiality (1 Timothy 5:21).

Getting back to our main theme: It's worth noting that God himself (the Father) is *never* left out of these formulas of prayer or blessing. In fact, he almost always comes *first*. This means that the one God is *indispensible* in prayer and blessing. Be sure not to leave him out.

» Mentioning the one God is indispensable in prayer and blessings.

3. Jesus' miracles point to God

Jesus made it clear that he depended on God. But he didn't just depend on God at certain times, he depended on God to do *all* that he did. For example, Jesus' supernatural power was not his own power, but power given to him from God. And why did God give Jesus such power? The answer is: In order to evidence God's backing.

» Jesus depended on God to do all that he did.

We encourage you to slowly read the following verses, and then to draw your own conclusions when you've taken them as an integral whole. Ask yourself whether Jesus' miracles were meant to direct us to God or not.

» Jesus is an example of how God gives authority to man.

So he [Jesus] said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." Then the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and *they praised God, who had given such authority to man* (Matthew 9:6-8).

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him,

but said, "Go home to your own people and *tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you*" (Mark 5:18-19).

And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and *the grace of God was on him* (Luke 2:40).

One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And *the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick* (Luke 5:17).

The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and *praised God*. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "*God has come to help his people*" (Luke 7:15-16).

Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all *amazed at the greatness of God* (Luke 9:42-43).

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, *praising God*. When all the people saw it, they also *praised God* (Luke 18:43).

[Jesus said] By *myself* I can do *nothing*... (John 5:30).

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that *I do nothing on my own* but speak just what the Father has taught me (John 8:28).

If I had not done among them the *works* no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me *and my Father* (John 15:24).

[The early church prayed to God this way] Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders *through* the name of your holy servant Jesus (Acts 4:30).

Why was Jesus able to do so much good? For one simple reason (according to the apostle Peter in his famous Pentecost message): *God was with Jesus! How was God with him? Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit*. There we have a summary of how the three work in unison. The Bible never says that together they are one God. What the Bible *does*

» Not his own power, but *God's* power was with Jesus to heal the sick.

» By himself, Jesus can do nothing.

» Jesus does nothing on his own.

» God was with Jesus to enable Jesus to do good.

» Can you see how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together?

show is *how they work together*. You can see their teamwork neatly described in the following passage:

... how *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit* and power, and how *he went around doing good* and healing all who were under the power of the Devil, *because God was with him* (Acts 10:38).

Furthermore, Jesus *wanted* people to give the glory to God, even though people didn't do as Jesus had instructed them. People tend to focus on the human, not the divine element at work in their lives (which is essentially a lack of faith).

Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and *tell how much God has done for you*." So the man went away and told all over town how much *Jesus* had done for him (Luke 8:38-39).

Every time Jesus performed a supernatural act, it was supposed to show that he was "accredited by God." What does that mean? It means that Jesus was *validated* by God. Through the miracles and supernatural power that accompanied Jesus' ministry, God's seal of approval was evident. And that was the *fundamental purpose* of Jesus' miracles—they were intended for people to recognize that *God* approved of him. That's how his disciples knew that what Jesus said was trustworthy.

» The purpose of Jesus' miracles was for people to recognize that God approved of him.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man *accredited by God* to you *by* miracles, wonders and signs, which *God did* among you *through* him, as you yourselves know (Acts 2:22).

I love those last words "as you yourselves know." Now, do *we* know the same thing that Peter supposed that all the people hearing him knew, or not? As the Jewish people watched Jesus perform miracles, they were certain that they were witnessing the power of God as a seal of approval on Jesus. Their confidence in Jesus was based on their faith that *God was backing him up*. This way of interpreting Jesus' miracles was concisely articulated in the words of Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher of the time:

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing *if God were not with him*” (John 3:2).

Practically any time I ask someone how was it that Jesus performed miracles, healings, deliverances, signs, or resurrections, the answer is the same: “Because he was God.” *That’s the wrong answer*, you know. Let’s not forget that the apostles also did these things (even walk on the water and resurrect the dead) and *they’re* not God. Then, when I ask why it was that Jesus could forgive sins, the typical reply is identical to the words of the Pharisees:

Who can forgive sins but God alone? (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21).

But that is also a *wrong* answer! Jesus did not forgive sins “because he is God.” If only God can forgive sins, then Jesus never would have authorized his apostles to do so; as he did:

If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven (John 20:23).

So, *why was it* that Jesus could do all these things? This is a wonderful question, and God strongly desires for us to ask it—He has an answer ready for us: “God authorized Jesus.” Moreover, God wants to give the power to do even *greater* things to *anyone* who believes! Why will God give believers even more power? Answer: Because Jesus will be with the Father. Jesus will ask God to send this power to us, being that Jesus won’t be with us until he comes in his Kingdom. God knows that we’ll need it.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, *because I am going to the Father* (John 14:12).

» The disciples’ confidence in Jesus was based on their faith that God was behind him.

» How could Jesus perform miracles?

» Why was it that Jesus could forgive sins?

» God authorized Jesus to do miracles and to forgive.



Part VI. Distinguishing between God and Jesus

Discernment is a spiritual gift which allows people to see things on a spiritual plane and to understand differences that otherwise would be hidden to a mind that has not been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. In the case of differentiating between God and Jesus, the gift of discernment is very important. This is not because the Bible doesn't make things clear, but because there are countless false teachings that blur the relationship between God and Jesus. Let's see how it's all spelt out for us in the Bible...

» The gift of discernment is very important if you want to know about the one God.

1. The Lord Jesus contrasted himself with God

Now, it's likely that someone reading this might feel uncomfortable with us making such a concise distinction between God and Jesus. They may consider it to be even blasphemy against the Lord Jesus; however, even Jesus distinguishes himself from God. He consistently demonstrated that there was a difference between God and himself. He never drew a foggy picture of his relationship with God, confusing one with the other, but even *contrasted* himself with God.

In this first passage, Jesus contrasts God, who “alone” is good (the “alone” means that *no other* is—just God) with himself. By saying this, Jesus made himself out to be someone who doesn't deserve the honor that belongs exclusively to God.

» Jesus would contrast himself with God.

» “No one is good—except God alone,” Jesus said.

“Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call *me* good?” Jesus answered. “*No one* is good—except *God alone* (Mark 10:17-18; cf. Luke 18:18-19).

In the next example from Scripture, Jesus encouraged people not to believe in what he said about himself, which would be untrue (not because of any dishonesty in him, but according to God’s rule of the double-witnesses testimony—in other words, one person’s testimony alone cannot be verified). He wanted people, instead, to investigate whether *God’s* testimony about him was favorable. Can you see who the “other” is in the passage?

» Jesus wants you to investigate whether God’s testimony about him is favorable.

[Jesus said] If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is *another* who testifies in my favor, and I know that *his testimony* about me is true (John 5:31-32).

» The “other” whose testimony about Jesus is true, is God.

The contrast in the next verse is that people have to be sensitive to God and learn from God if they are going to come to Jesus. Jesus is the second of our helps in a spiritual process, while God is the first. The *contrast* between Jesus and God (made by Jesus in each of the passages that follow), I hope will be evident to you.

It is written in the Prophets: “They will all *be taught by God.*” Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me (John 6:45).

My Father will honor the one who serves me (John 12:26).

» Let’s believe in God and also believe in Jesus.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe *also* in me (John 14:1).

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in *his glory* and *in the glory of the Father* and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26).

It’s clear in the Bible that Jesus’ intent was not just to draw us to himself, but to do something much greater: to bring us all the way to God the Father. Any supposed “Gospel” message that does not make it obvious that getting to God

the Father is our goal is missing the mark and falling short of what Jesus taught.

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one *comes to the Father* except through me” (John 14:6).

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, *to bring you to God* (1 Peter 3:18).

2. The apostles differentiated between Jesus and God

As would be expected, the apostles distinguish clearly between God and Christ in their writings. They consistently used language that differentiated between Jesus and God. The NT passages which follow are just a small handful compared to the total number of verses available on the matter. In each of them, it is abundantly clear that God is distinct from Jesus. There is no confusion, no “grey area” apparent in the minds of the apostles. Shouldn’t we also, like them, speak in black and white terms about God and his Son?

Please note that in Appendix 5 we have more Scripture passages that make it clear that God and Christ should be distinguished from each other. The passages included here are solely the ones that are found in the *introductions* to various epistles. Being from the ever-so-important introductions, we can be certain that the content of what is being said is of special importance to the apostles. Remember that an *introduction* sets the tone for an entire epistle. It establishes the basic ideas that are implicit throughout the epistle. It will contain only the most basic Christian doctrine. Reading them, you will notice that monotheism is basic to Christian faith throughout the entire NT.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:7).

» Let's use black and white terms when we refer to God and his Son.

» An epistle's introduction sets the tone for the entire letter and establishes basic ideas.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God... (1 Corinthians 1:1).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (Ephesians 1:1).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:2).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:2).

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (Colossians 1:1).

To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father (Colossians 1:2).

» We always
thank God,
the Father
of our Lord
Jesus Christ.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you (Colossians 1:3).

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you (1 Thessalonians 1:1).

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2).

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (1 Timothy 1:1-2).

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (2 Timothy 1:1-2).

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1).

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior (Titus 1:4).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Philemon 1:3).

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ... (James 1:1).

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love (2 John 1:3).

» Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus...

a. Jesus is God's Messiah

What does it mean for Jesus to be God's Messiah? It means that he is no less than the one who was *chosen by God* to save the world and to reign over it with all authority. He is also the one who was to receive the power of God's Spirit. There's not enough space here to get into the issue of all that the Messiah was destined to do; but it suffices to say that the one chosen to be the Messiah was chosen by *God!* The Bible emphasizes that God's choice should be enough of a convincing reason for any person to trust in Jesus.

... [Jesus is] the Lord's Messiah (Luke 2:26).

God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that *his Messiah* would suffer (Acts 3:18).

The kings of the Earth rise up, and the rulers band together against the Lord and against *his Anointed One* (Acts 4:26).

"The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of *his Messiah*, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

Now have come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of *his Messiah*... (Revelation 12:10).

This is no small issue—Jesus being God's Messiah—we'll have you know. When Peter's famous profession of faith was made, the one which earned for him great praise on behalf of

» The fact that God chose him should be enough of a reason for any person to trust in Jesus.

» What were Peter's words that earned him the title "the Rock"?

Jesus, *what were Peter's exact words?* First of all, let's get the context and look at the praise Jesus gave him:

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven" (Matthew 16:17-20).

Now that the context is established, let's give Peter's profession our attention. What was it that he said which earned him so much praise from our Lord Jesus?

"But what about you?" he [Jesus] asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "*God's Messiah*" (Luke 9:20).

» Very few people understand what it means for someone to be God's Messiah.

To recognize that Jesus was "God's Messiah" was a big deal back in those days—and it still is today! In fact, there are very few people who understand what it means. Show me someone who really understands what it means for a person to be God's Messiah, and I'll show you a true student of the Bible. For example, it means that Jesus was chosen of God, that Jesus is going to fulfill God's promises to humanity, and that he is going to reign forever in the Kingdom of God. Most of all, it means that *Jesus fulfills the prophecies* of the prophets

» Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Word of God.

which God gave to the human race.

The great revelation for which Peter was issued the keys of the Kingdom and for which he became "the Rock" upon which Christ built his church was this: Jesus is *the Chosen one of God*. God made his choice known to us in many ways. Is God's choice important to you? Are you interested in what he thinks of Jesus?

» Are you interested in what God thinks of Jesus?

b. Jesus was "raised up" by God

Another section of this book (Part VIII.1) is dedicated to looking at how God resurrected Jesus. Although that's another key to discerning between God and Jesus, it's not the

issue at hand. When we say “raised up” here, in the sense of the passage that follows, we mean that God gave Jesus the strength to do what Jesus did.

For Moses said, “The Lord your God will *raise up* for you a prophet like me from among your own people (Acts 3:22; 7:37).

When God *raised up* his servant [Jesus], he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways (Acts 3:26).

From these passages, we know that Jesus was *supported* by God. We know that God made sure that Jesus grew and matured to the point that he became the prophet that he eventually was. It was God who lifted Jesus up so that he would do, say, and come to be the man he became. Jesus’ strength was the Lord God.

c. God made the universe through Jesus

God is the Creator of all things. At his command, by fiat, all things were brought into being. He is the original source of all life. In Creation, Jesus was God’s worker—the one who *executed* the plan. This is something we can see if we notice the emphasis on the words “through him” in the NT passages that highlight Jesus’ role in Creation. Jesus did all according to what God said, carrying out the will of God with absolute diligence, and was instrumental in making all things. *That* is why the Bible tells us that Jesus made all things; because through Jesus, God’s great workman, God fulfilled his intention of making an inhabitable world, filled with water, air, land, fish, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, and, of course, human beings.

In Creation, the Father spoke to Jesus, saying “Let us make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness” (Genesis 1:26); and that’s what they did. It’s important to give recognition to the fact that the Spirit was present at Creation as well, as the Bible says, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”

» God gave Jesus the strength to do what Jesus did.

» Through Jesus, God’s great workman, *God* made an inhabitable world.

» We were made in the image of God and of Jesus.

» *God* was in charge of Creation.

» Notice the way "through" is used with Jesus in the Bible accounts of Creation.

(Genesis 1:2); but since we're not made in the Spirit's likeness and image, but that of God and Christ, God would not have been speaking to the Spirit in that passage.

With all due respect to the Holy Spirit, and to Jesus who did the work, it was the one God who was in charge, which is why the great majority of the Bible texts that make reference to the Creation rightly give the credit to *God*.

He [Jesus] was with God in the beginning. *Through him* all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made³⁹... He was in the world, and though the world was made *through him*, the world did not recognize him (John 1:2-3,10).

There is no God but one... for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom all things came* and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:4,6).

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For *in him* all things were created: things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones⁴⁰ or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created *through him* and *for him* (Colossians 1:15-17).

... in these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and *through whom* also he made the Universe (Hebrews 1:2).

Even God Himself recognizes Jesus (calling Jesus "Lord" here) as the Maker of the Universe:

In the beginning, Lord, *you laid the foundations of the earth,*

³⁹ This apparently insignificant phrase "...that has been made" becomes quite significant when we use it in the interpretation of the next passage presented (Hebrews 9:11) which talks about what is "not a part of this Creation." The throne of God and the Heavenly Temple (Tabernacle), being things *not* made by Jesus must *never* have been made because, as John teaches us, without Jesus "*nothing* was made *that has been made*." The word "nothing" means that there are no exceptions, of course. The throne and the Tabernacle have simply been part of God's eternal abode, his dwelling place, located outside of what the author of Hebrews calls "the Universe" (Hebrews 1:2)—outside of "this Creation" (Hebrews 9:11). *There was never a time at which God made the throne or the Tabernacle, then—they were just there as things which "have not been made."* Amazing! This all shows how *transcendental* the Tabernacle and the throne are!

⁴⁰ There is one exception to this truth: Jesus did not create God's throne, as we see in Hebrews 9:11.

and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same,⁴¹ and your years will never end (Hebrews 1:10-12).

i. What Jesus didn't make

Along with these passages, we'd like to include a Bible verse that deserves some reflection. It proves that there is *something beyond* this Creation, in that place where God's Tabernacle is found, and where God is seated on his throne. Here it is:

But when Christ came as High Priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is *not a part of this Creation* (Hebrews 9:11).

Now, Jesus was directly involved in making this Universe, as we've seen; but let's ask the thought-provoking question: *How was God's throne made?* Although Jesus certainly can take credit for other thrones and powers (see Colossians 1:15-17, above), according to the principle given to us in 1 Corinthians 15:27 (that Jesus' authority does not cover God), the Temple and throne of God must be at least *two exceptions* to Jesus' creative accomplishments. Otherwise, to say that Jesus made God's throne would be equivalent to saying that Jesus established God's authority—something which *should* be unimaginable to all of us. The "true Tabernacle" was "set up" by the Lord God. Jesus ministers there, but he did *not* make it. The Bible expressed the matter this way:

We do have such a High Priest [Jesus], who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven, and who

» What is beyond this Creation?

» How did God's throne come into being?

⁴¹ This phrase "You will remain *the same*," given as part of the introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews, is echoed again in the conclusion in the famous verse "Jesus Christ is *the same* yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). We can interpret the meaning of 13:8 by understanding what "the same" meant when God used the expression with Jesus. Its meaning is that "Although this world passes away, you will not pass away. You are dependable." It does *not* mean that Jesus never changed his nature. To say so would be a denial of the incarnation! Don't go there!

serves in the Sanctuary, the true Tabernacle *set up by the Lord*,⁴² *not by a mere human being* (Hebrews 8:2).

» God's throne is not part of what Jesus created.

Our insight in this matter is that the place of *God's throne*⁴³ was the place that God inhabited before "the Beginning." It is not part of what Jesus created, although Jesus made everything in this Universe. Before "the Beginning" there was no creating going on, just God "setting up" things.

» Jesus was God's ambassador, representing God.

d. Jesus represents God

However people treat Jesus, so do they treat the God who sent him. Jesus was God's ambassador when he walked among us. He was God's representative. Should his faithful representation of the Father cause us to mix them up? Is an actor the actual person he portrays, or does he faithfully "stand with" the person he is representing?

But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. *I stand with the Father*, who sent me (John 8:16).

Whoever hates me hates *my Father as well* (John 15:23).

» The Son is the exact representation of God's being.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and *the exact representation of his being*, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

3. What should we learn to do?

Knowing the difference between the Father and his Son has a direct effect on how we order our lives. It should orient our prayers and our lifestyle in general, particularly the relationships

⁴² If perhaps you think that the term "Lord" is referring to *Jesus* here, know that only 4 of the 15 uses of "Lord" in the Book of Hebrews refer to *Jesus*, and they are clear references to him when they are used. None of them are difficult to interpret. The other 9 uses, including 5 in Hebrews 8 alone (the chapter from which this verse is taken), *all refer* to God Almighty.

⁴³ If you're interested in knowing more about what God's throne is like, both Chapter VIII.3 and Appendix 4.d of this book show what an incredibly *exciting* place the Heavenly Temple is. Check them out—reading doesn't get any more thrilling than visions of God on his throne!

that exist between men and women. But the example of God and Christ should transform *all* of our relationships. Loving support, sharing, submission, encouragement, and obedience are just some of the many wonderful qualities we see in the relationship that exists between God and Jesus—our model for *all* human interaction. Let's now look briefly at three points of personal lifestyle which should be affected by the God-Jesus example: prayer, glorifying God, and the subordination of women.

» The example of God and Christ should transform all of our relationships.

a. We should pray to God in Jesus' name

As a rule, our prayers should be lifted up to the Father in the name of Jesus; in other words, they are heard through Jesus as the Mediator. If we trust in his blood and intercession (not in our own merit or goodness), we should be able to draw close to God. But it all depends on whether Jesus acts as our Priest or not. (He only *will* if we are established firmly in the New Covenant).

I know of no Biblical prayer directed to the Holy Spirit, and the one example of a prayer lifted up to Jesus, made by Stephen in Acts 7:54-60, gives full recognition to the fact that Jesus is located at the right hand of God.⁴⁴ (Ananias' vision in Acts 9:10-15 was not technically a prayer). Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are certainly capable of answering prayers (we're not doubting their power), but the only thing is that we should try to *follow Jesus' example*. He always prayed to the one God, his Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit. He intercedes for us now, as does the Holy Spirit.

» The one NT prayer lifted up to Jesus.

» We should direct our prayers to the one God. Jesus and the Holy Spirit will intercede for us before God.

... I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name *the Father* will give you (John 15:16).

Very truly I tell you, *my Father* will give you whatever you ask in my name (John 16:23).

⁴⁴ Using Jesus as a mediator is exactly what he meant when he said that we should pray to the Father *in his name*. He is the *means* (the "way") by which we can have access to God, but Jesus is not the objective—not the goal—of our prayers.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself *intercedes for us* through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts [that's God] knows the mind of the Spirit, because *the Spirit intercedes* for God's people in accordance with the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to *God the Father* through him (Colossians 3:17).

b. We should glorify God through Jesus

Our life should constantly be oriented towards glorifying God, but the only way to do that is *through* Jesus Christ. The following passage listed is quoted *frequently*, but rarely is it quoted *completely*. People tend to truncate the verse. I often hear people say “every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord...,” but they chop off the part that concludes it.⁴⁵

... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:11).

Why do we do what is right? Why do we love? We get the power to do what is right *through* Jesus, to be sure. But hopefully we do what is good *so that* God may be glorified! (If we don't do it for that reason, then we're missing the point).

» The point is that we are to glorify God.

... filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—*to the glory and praise of God* (Philippians 1:11).

c. Men should lead women

There is a practical point about the relationship men should have with women and vice-versa. Just as God is the head of Christ, so is man the head of woman. People who believe in this principle should reflect it in their physical appearance:

⁴⁵ Something similar often happens when religious people declare that “Jesus is the way.” They often leave it at that, and the Bible verse is cut in half. I have asked people who quote the Bible in that manner: “The way to *who*?” Of course the verse ends this way: “No one *comes to the Father* except through me” (John 14:6). So, the right thing for Christians to declare is “Jesus is the way *to the Father*.”

A man, for example, should have short hair. He should not cover his head when he is praying. This should be done out of a conviction that there is a *divine order* (the one that is modeled for us in the God–Jesus relationship). A man actively reflects faith in God’s order when he acts responsibly, assumes authority, and demonstrates love in his relationship to women.

A believing woman should humbly cover her head when she prays (this can be done either with her *hair*—given to her as a natural covering—a hat, kerchief, or shawl), to demonstrate that she is *the glory of man*, and that she was created to support him. Women should be careful not to offend angels (who hate to see people living outside of God’s established order) nor to draw the attention of demons, who would be happy to take advantage of a disjointed man–woman relationship. They easily get involved in marriages where the woman is rebellious, the man is irresponsible, or both.

Let’s remember that Satan first tempted of our race by craftily finding Eve alone, and by then leading her away from the counsel of Adam. In that case, as it is today, the man had gotten his counsel from God and was supposed to support his wife in her fulfillment of God’s will by leading her in love. Well, we know that things didn’t work out the way God intended with the first couple. We know that things don’t work out according to God’s will in most couples today either—but the solution is within anyone’s reach: It’s *living under God’s established order*.

When the early-church custom of head covering is followed, both men and women demonstrate that we believe that *“everything comes from God”* (1 Corinthians 11:12), which is the grand conclusion of the teaching in 1 Corinthians 11, where head covering for women is established as a Christian custom—an ancient tradition. Whether you follow the custom or not is up to you. Most people follow it unconsciously anyways—it’s natural for men to lead. It’s natural for

» Just as God is the head of Christ, so is man the head of woman.

» Demons take advantage of situations where people are not living under God’s established order.

» “Everything comes from God” including male authority.

women to grow long hair too. The important thing is what's in our hearts: We should all live as if we were under God's authority. Jesus continues to be an example of that for all Christians.

» "I want
you to
realize that...
the head
of Christ is
God."

I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and *the head of Christ is God*. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head. *A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.*

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. *But everything comes from God* (1 Corinthians 11:3-12).



Part VII.

Who is greater?

We've already seen how Jesus called his Father "God." What does that tell us? That God is above Christ. God is higher than Jesus. Along these same lines, Jesus didn't shy away from recognizing that the Father was *greater* than he. Here are two occasions in which he expressed that:

My Father, who has given them [my sheep] to me, *is greater than all...* (John 10:29).

If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for *the Father is greater than I* (John 14:28).

There was no lack of subordination in the way that Jesus defined his relationship to God. There was no lack of subordination in his actions either. In fact, he *only* did what God told him to do. This submissive attitude of Christ is based on their father-son relationship. Jesus imitated God just as a child imitates his father. Jesus is a "follower" of God in every sense of the word. Let's listen to Jesus' own words on the subject:

Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do *only* what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does... (John 5:19-20).

...*just* as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, *even so* the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it... (John 5:21).

I have come in my Father's name... (John 5:43).

» God is above Christ.

» Jesus said: "The Father is greater than I."

» Jesus is a follower of God.

» Jesus can do nothing by himself.

Logically, if there indeed is just one God, then he must be “over all” (sovereign). The God who is the One God (as the Muslims proclaim about “Allah”), *must* be sovereign. What most christians forget is that *even Jesus* is included under the “all” of God’s sovereign rule. God is above Jesus just as God is above all of us. The one God is above everything and everyone—yes, even Jesus.

» God is above Jesus just as God is above *all* of us. Jesus is part of the “all” of God’s sovereignty.

... one God and Father of *all*, who is over *all* and through *all* and in *all* (Ephesians 4:6).

1. Jesus only does what God wants

The Lord Jesus affirmed that his purpose was to do the will of God, not his own. The fact that God and his Son have *two distinct wills* supports even more strongly our doctrine that they should be distinguished one from the other.

And here is another vital fact that all people should know: That Jesus *even today* continues to “live [that’s the present tense] for God” (Romans 6:10). But what does it mean to “live for God”? In Jesus’ case, it means that he does not do things according to what *he* wants, but according to the will of God.

» Jesus does not do things according to what *he* wants, but according to what *God* wants.

... he [Jesus] fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet *not as I will*, but *as you will*... He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, *may your will be done*” (Matthew 26:39,42).

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to *do the will* of him who sent me and to finish *his* work” (John 4:34).

In his defense Jesus said to them, “*My Father* is always at his work to this very day, *and I too* am working” (John 5:17).

[Jesus said] By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for *I seek not to please myself* but him who sent me (John 5:30).

[Jesus said] All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from Heaven *not to do my will* but to do the will of him who sent me (John 6:37-38).

[Jesus, speaking of the Father, said] Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and *obey his word* (John 8:55).

... even Christ did not please himself (Romans 15:3).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, *according to the will of our God and Father* to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:3-5).

He [Jesus] *was faithful to the one* who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house (Hebrews 3:2).

Then I [Jesus] said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—*I have come to do your will, my God*' (Hebrews 10:7).

[Jesus said] Here I am, I have come to do your will (Hebrews 10:9).

And all of what Jesus did has not just become part of the history books; it has become the principal example for us to follow. We should also live to God.

The death he [Jesus] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. *In the same way*, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:10-11).

» Jesus did not seek to please himself, but God.

» Jesus came from Heaven not to do his will but God's.

» Jesus was faithful to God, who appointed him.

» Living for God's will has become Jesus' example to us.

2. Jesus imitates God

As a son, Jesus can only do what he sees his Father doing. Just like any human child, he is not “wired” to act on his own; instead, he takes his cues from his Abba Father. Such is the way “natural affection” works. It makes children become like their parents and causes parents to reflect all the more deeply on what they are modeling for their children. Like all children,

» John 14:7-11
John 10:30-38

» Jesus is an imitator.

Jesus is an imitator. He doesn't make up new things, but does exactly what he sees his Father doing.

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he *can do only* what he sees his Father doing, *because* whatever the Father does the Son also does (John 5:19).

3. Jesus is God's servant

What a strong term is the word "servant." It signifies one who is humble, submissive, and who lives at the beck and call of their master. It means that someone lives to do the will of another. Well, Christ was referred to by the first Christians as the "Servant" of God. What did they mean by that?

Were the NT believers right in calling Jesus *God's Servant* or did they have a "low view" of Christ, as some might call it? Maybe their theology wasn't as "highly developed" as ours is now? (I'm being facetious: Those are some human theories proud theologians put forth). The Bible makes it clear that the early Christians had an understanding of God's Word that was much deeper and purer than the doctrine that is being taught in churches today.

» To see Jesus as God's Servant is Biblical.

[Praying to God, the early church believers said] Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against *your holy servant Jesus*, whom you anointed (Acts 4:27).

[Praying to God, the early church believers said] Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of *your holy servant Jesus* (Acts 4:30).

The problem is not that the members of the first Christian congregation in history considered Jesus to be God's Servant, but that Christians now do *not!*

4. Jesus is God's messenger

Jesus' role as God's messenger means not only that he was the one who spoke what God wanted—it *does* mean that, but it goes much *further*. It is not just a matter of the message: his role as God's messenger is also a matter of us understanding that Jesus is *less* than the one God, who sent him. Jesus himself made this truth emphatically clear:

Very truly I tell you, *no servant* is greater than his master, *nor is a messenger* greater than the one who sent him (John 13:16).

» Jesus said that he is *less* than the God who sent him.

a. Jesus came from and went back to God

Our Lord Jesus is *from* God. As the Nicene Creed says, "He proceeds from the Father." He came from God, but he also went back to God—which makes him a round trip (back and forth) missionary for God. He moved when and where the Father willed for him to move. He did not go out or come back on his own volition, but has always moved in submission to the will of his Father.

» Jesus proceeds from the Father.

We have seen his [Jesus'] glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who *came from* the Father... (John 1:14).

[Jesus said] I have *come down* from Heaven (John 6:38).

[Jesus said] No one has seen the Father except the one who is *from* God (John 6:46).

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and *go to* the Father (John 13:1).

Jesus knew... that he had *come* from God and was *returning to* God (John 13:3).

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have *come here from* God. I *have not come* on my own; God sent me (John 8:42).

» Jesus did not come on his own initiative.

... [Jesus said] I am *going to* the Father (John 16:17).

[Jesus said] I *came from* the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and *going back to* the Father (John 16:28).

... [Jesus said] and I am coming to you. Holy Father... (John 17:11).

I [Jesus] am coming to you [God] now (John 17:13).

Are you interested in God loving you? Most people are, but do they know *why* God loves people? Why does God love people? In the sense in which “love” means “gives glory” as it does in the case of God’s love for Jesus (we hope that you’ve come to comprehend that use of the word “love”), so too there is a reason why God loves *any* of us, and Jesus told us the secret. For what reason does Jesus say that God loves us? You may be surprised, but the reason is that *we are certain of the fact that Jesus came from God*. That’s the key!

» We must be certain of the fact that Jesus came from God—in order for God, in turn, to love us.

... [Jesus said to his apostles] the Father himself loves you *because* you have loved me and have believed that I came from God (John 16:27).

But, don’t forget: We have to be *sure* about it!

[Jesus prayed to the Father] They knew *with certainty* that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me (John 17:8).

Are you sure that Jesus came from God? Do you believe that God sent him? If you do, then count on getting God’s eternal resurrection glory. *Count* on it that God loves you!

b. Jesus was sent by God

In this section, we are going to deal with an issue that receives great emphasis in the Bible: Our Lord Jesus was commissioned and sent by the one God. He didn’t come on his own, but was the representative of God. He was God’s ambassador and worked under God’s authority. Jesus’ sending from God is not just a lesson for *us*, but a very important dimension of Christ’s *self*-identity. In other words, it’s really important to *Jesus!* He frequently referred to God as the one who sent him, and he would share this truth with people in order to justify his mission.

» Being sent by God was important to Jesus himself.

Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. *I am not here on my own authority*, but *he who sent me* is true... (John 7:28).

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. *I have not come on my own*; God sent me (John 8:42).

His mission was from God; it was not authorized by himself. Jesus found meaning in fulfilling the purposes of his Heavenly Father. This justified all that he did. He was busy doing God's work, according to God's will, and doing it in God's power—and he did it all all because he was *sent!* Let's look at some of the numerous passages that prove these points. (Additional passages that demonstrate Jesus' sending from God can be seen in Appendix 6).

... now I am going to him who *sent* me (John 16:5).

I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that *you sent me* and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:23).

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they [the apostles] know that you have *sent* me... (John 17:25).

God *sent* his Son (Galatians 4:4).

This is not some "sub-point" of Christian doctrine, either. To know that Jesus was sent is to know God's love. The sending God gave to his Missionary, Jesus, is the way God showed us his own love and his own salvation.

This is how God showed his love among us: He *sent* his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him (1 John 4:9).

And we have seen and testify that the Father has *sent* his Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14)

Jesus wanted people to know that he was sent—literally so that they would believe in God, *not* so much in him. Jesus' desire was for people to *believe in the God who authorized him to do all that he did and said*. God was the one who was supposed to get the credit and the glory in Jesus' life.

» Jesus was not on Earth by his own authority.

» Jesus did God's work, according to God's will, in God's power all because he was *sent* by God.

» The apostles knew that God had sent Jesus.

» This sending is the primary demonstration of God's love!

» Jesus wanted people to believe *in God*, not so much in him.

» Jesus' teaching is not his own.

» A true Christian's faith is not ultimately in Jesus, but in the God who sent Jesus.

» We believe in Jesus because of the credibility of the God of whom it was to send us a Savior.

» Whoever believes God (who sent Jesus) has eternal life.

... whoever welcomes me does *not* welcome me but *the one who sent me* (Mark 9:37).

Jesus answered, "My teaching is *not my own*. It comes from *the one who sent me* (John 7:16).

Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of *the one who sent him* is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him (John 7:18).

In the sense given in the previous passages, a true Christian's faith is not ultimately in Jesus, but in the God who sent Jesus. Through Jesus we come to believe in God. Jesus is the one who represents the one God, who can give us eternal life. It's vitally important to believe in Jesus, of course—but again, the *reason* is simply because of the credibility of the God of *whom* it was to send a Savior. If we want salvation, our faith must be placed in God, not *only* in Jesus. That's not our own private teaching—it's what *Jesus* taught.

... that all may honor the Son *just as* they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, *who sent him*. "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and *believes him who sent me* has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life (John 5:23-24).

For I have come down from Heaven not to do my will but to do the will of *him who sent me* (John 6:38).

Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me *does not believe in me only*, but in *the one who sent me*. The one who looks at me is seeing *the one who sent me* (John 12:44-45).

These words you hear are *not my own*; they belong to the Father *who sent me* (John 14:24).

If we can't grasp the fact that it was *God* who sent Jesus; if we don't understand how that was *done*—under authority and with a clear mission from *on High*—how can we pretend to be sent by Jesus? There are a lot of missionaries who have gone out in the name of Jesus, but without ever really understanding how Jesus himself went out.

Is he not our immediate authority and the one under whom we are sent? If we can't understand how the great cosmic hierarchy functions, something *fundamental* to plug into if we're going to serve Christ, then how will we serve at *all*? If we are sent, we are sent just as Christ was sent.

Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes *the one who sent me* (Matthew 10:40; Luke 9:48).

Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects *him who sent me* (Luke 10:16).

Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts *the one who sent me* (John 13:20).

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (John 20:21).

In fact, it's not just a question of being sent like Jesus was sent by God—it goes beyond that: It's about *living* in Christ just as he lived through the Father. It's a complete *lifestyle* of devotion and dependence that Jesus invites us to have, according to the model he gave us while here on Earth. Are you following that model?

Just as the living Father sent me and I *live* because of the Father, *so* the one who feeds on me will *live* because of me (John 6:57).

c. Jesus did God's miracles

Even the miracles and other supernatural wonders that Jesus performed were designed to show that God sent Jesus. The idea was for people to see the miracles and to say: "That's not something that anybody could ever do *unless* God was with him!" Jesus did his best to help people to draw that conclusion so that they would know that it was *God* who was speaking to them through him. He even directed people to the testimony of God much *more* than to his own testimony. But, just like today, *unbelieving people* wanted to think that

» Do you understand how Jesus was sent out?

» Our lifestyle must be one of dependence on our immediate authority.

» Jesus directed people to the testimony of God much more than to his own testimony.

» "God's testimony is greater."

» Jesus was God's missionary.

» Jesus needed God to reveal things to him.

it was Jesus' *own* power. They were wrong *then* and they're wrong *now*... read John 5:19,30.

... the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that *the Father* has sent me (John 5:36).

... the Father who sent me *has himself testified* concerning me (John 5:37).

We accept human testimony, but *God's testimony is greater* because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son (1 John 5:9).

Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed *the testimony God has given* about his Son (1 John 5:10).

Jesus wants us to know that he was sent by God. He gave this fact a high degree of emphasis in his work and teachings. He wanted it to be abundantly clear *who* he was representing and he always made a major effort so that people would learn to hear God. When all is said and done, we must recognize that Jesus was was God's missionary, or we will demonstrate that we have never really understood Christ in the first place.

d. Jesus spoke on behalf of God

Jesus often stressed the fact that he did not speak on his own authority. In fact, he *needed* God to reveal things to him in order to relate them to us.

The revelation from Jesus Christ, which *God gave him* to show his servants what must soon take place... (Revelation 1:1).

Jesus was God's spokesman. When one asks: "What did it mean to Jesus himself to have been *sent*? What was implicit in his words every time he called himself *sent*?" The answer should be: "It meant that he would speak the exact words of the one who sent him." It meant that he would be a faithful messenger.

For the one whom God has sent *speaks* the words of God (John 3:34).

It is only people who are able to hear from God who listen to Jesus because Jesus only speaks the words of God. Jesus was not someone we should consider to be an innovative teacher, but a true prophet through and through; someone who was faithful to share that which was revealed to him by God. Jesus was "a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19). He made nothing up, and did not aim for *originality* but faithfulness to the one who sent him: the one God. The following words were all from Jesus' own mouth:

Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them *the words you gave me* and they accepted them (John 17:7-8).

Jesus answered, "My teaching is *not* my own. It comes from the one who sent me (John 7:16).

Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether *my teaching comes from God* or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17).

Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him (John 7:18).

I have given them your [God the Father's] word (John 17:14).

"... he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have *heard from him* I tell the world." They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father (John 8:26-27).

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own *but speak just what the Father has taught me* (John 8:28).

For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So *whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say* (John 12:49-50).

» Only people who can hear from God listen to Jesus.

» Jesus was a true prophet.

» Jesus spoke only what the Father taught him, nothing else.

5. Jesus will always be under God's authority

We know that Jesus will rule over the Earth when he comes in the Kingdom of God. At that time, he will have all authority over all peoples. His power will be universal, but it will have *one limitation*: God. Since Jesus' authority *comes* from God in Heaven, he can't be allowed to have authority over the very same God that authorized him. It's just like Joseph in Egypt. Do you remember what the Pharaoh said when he chose Joseph to reign with him?

» The limitation to Jesus' universal authority.

"You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; *only in the throne I will be greater than you.*" Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "*Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt*" (Genesis 41:40-44).

Eventually, just like Joseph did, Jesus will hand all things over to his Sovereign. He will give it all back to the one who initially gave him authority and power; and the culmination of Jesus' work will be accomplished when God is made "all in all," that is, when *the one God* gets the honor that he is due on Earth in his Kingdom. God has given all things to Jesus because he trusts Jesus to accomplish this.⁴⁶

» The one God will eventually be made "all in all."

For he [God] "has put everything under his [Jesus'] feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that *this does not include God himself*, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be

⁴⁶ I hope that this point is clear: God trusts Jesus to bring him glory among all the nations of the Earth. God confides in him to fulfill such a delicate task.

made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:27-28).

Yes, we're directly affected by God's plans as well, so what exactly will our role be in the Kingdom? Well, the Bible says that it's something that, just like what Jesus does in the Kingdom, will be *for the glory of God*. Jesus will establish us as priests on the Earth, and in that capacity we will *serve his God*. The following excerpt from Revelation proves this point:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be *a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father*—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:5-6).

Jesus himself was sure that his authority came from God. He tried to help the chief priests and the elders understand that, but to no avail.

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By *what authority* are you doing these things?" they asked. "And *who gave you this authority?*" Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it *from Heaven*, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From Heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things (Matthew 21:23-27; Luke 20:4,8).

» Everything is put under Jesus' feet, but this does not include God himself.

» We will *also* serve the one God in the Kingdom.

» Jesus' authority was from God in Heaven.



Part VIII.

What God does for Jesus

The magnificent thing about the subject of what God does for Jesus is that if we can really comprehend the magnitude of what it is God does for Jesus, we will more precisely understand what God can do for *us*. Knowing about what God does in Jesus is the basis of our own hope! For example, there *is* no resurrection hope for the person who doesn't believe that God resurrected Jesus.

There's no honor, glory, or rewards for a person who doesn't believe that God honors and glorifies Jesus. God's reward for Jesus is the driving force—the grace—that motivates us to pursue eternal glory. Jesus was given to us not only to be our Savior, but to be our *example*. We'll be ready to take up our cross only if we know that there's a purpose beyond it; and the glory God guarantees is a proven reality for those who believe in the grace that God lavished on Jesus.

In addition, let's not forget that such glory was conditioned by Jesus' being faithful to follow God's will to the end. The reason why we should remember this is because our glory is *also* conditional. Resurrection glory is only for those who finish the race.

1. It was God who resurrected Jesus from the dead

It was God who resurrected Jesus. This is according to the *unanimous* testimony of Scriptures which reflect not only the deep faith that Jesus had in God, but the depth of faith that

» Knowing what God does for Jesus gives us hope for our own lives.

» Jesus' glory was conditional upon his being faithful to follow God's will to the end.

» Jesus hoped in the God who raises the dead, and so must we.

» It was impossible for Jesus to resurrect himself.

we too must place in God if he's going to bring us back to life after *we* die. Just as Jesus put his hope in God who raises the dead, so must we face death by putting our confidence in God.

Sadly, if you speak with pastors and Christians, you'll notice that very few know that it was God who resurrected Jesus. Most think that Jesus resurrected himself, which is something which actually would be *impossible* since at the time of his resurrection he was dead. It's really quite pathetic that there is so much uncertainty on an issue as fundamental as Jesus' resurrection—it's the very *centerpiece* of the Christian hope, since only by being resurrected will anyone enter into the Kingdom of God. The following passage proves that the resurrection is a foundation of Christian doctrine:

... let us move beyond *the elementary teachings* about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again *the foundation* of... *the resurrection* of the dead (Hebrews 6:1-2).

The numerous passages we're about to share with you are presented here in order to confirm one thing: That *God resurrected Jesus*. We hope that by reading through each one carefully, your faith in God might become stronger. Let's heed the testimony of Scriptures about what happened in Christ's resurrection:

» "God has raised this Jesus to life."

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it (Acts 2:32).

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, *the God of our fathers*, has glorified his servant *Jesus*. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the Author of Life, but *God raised him from the dead* (Acts 3:13-15).

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but *whom God raised from the dead*, that this man stands before you healed (Acts 4:10).

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross (Acts 5:30).

They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but *God raised him from the dead* on the third day and caused him to be seen (Acts 10:39–40).

When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But *God raised him from the dead...* (Acts 13:29–30).

What *God* promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, *by raising up Jesus*. As it is written in the second Psalm: “You are my son; today I have become your father.’ *God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay*. As *God has said*, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ So it is also stated elsewhere: “You will not let your holy one see decay.’ Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. But *the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay* (Acts 13:32–37).

In the past *God* overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by *the man he has appointed*. He has given proof of this to everyone by *raising him from the dead* (Acts 17:30–31).

Why should any of you consider it incredible that *God raises the dead*? “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of *Jesus* of Nazareth... that the Messiah would suffer and, as *the first to rise from the dead*, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:8–9,23).

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as *Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father*, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:4).

“Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.”

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and *God the Father, who raised him from the dead* (Galatians 1:1).

» Jesus is
“the man
God has
appointed.”

... we have testified about *God* that *he raised Christ* from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:15).

» Jesus lives
by God's
power.

For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet *he lives by God's power* (2 Corinthians 13:4).

I keep asking that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father*, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength *he* exerted when *he raised Christ from the dead* and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:17-20).

» God's
power for
us is the
same as that
which he
exerted when
he raised
Christ from
the dead.

... your *faith in God* has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve *the living and true God*, and to wait for *his Son* from Heaven, *whom he raised from the dead*—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

» God is the
one who
could save
Jesus from
death.

During the days of Jesus' life on Earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to *the one who could save him from death*, and he was heard because of his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).

Now may the *God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus*, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will (Hebrews 13:20-21, ESV).

» It is a core
belief that
God raised
Jesus from
the dead.

As can be clearly seen from the abundance of passages on the matter (there are no less than 17 above), the doctrine that God raised Jesus from the dead is not an obscure, secondary, or insignificant teaching. Rather, it is *a core belief* that every person needs to cling to in order to be saved. Do you believe it?

a. Why did God do it?

One thing is to know that God resurrected Jesus; another thing is for us to discover *why* God did it. What was God saying by resurrecting Jesus from the dead? What was he trying to communicate to us? One essential thing is that it indicates that Jesus was *chosen* by God: Jesus was appointed to be the Son of God at the moment God resurrected him. Through the resurrection, we can be sure that Jesus *really* is God's heir—the one who is going to inherit the Earth and to reign over all of its inhabitants.

... through the Spirit of Holiness *was appointed the Son of God* in power *by his resurrection* from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:4).

» God wanted to prove that Jesus is the Heir of the Kingdom.

b. Why do we need to believe this?

Let's now consider: Why is it necessary to believe that God raised Christ from the dead? Answer: Because it's that *particular* kind of faith, the kind that fixes its hope on the one and only *God*, that saves us. It's what shows that we're really following Jesus whose example it was to put his entire life in the hands of God his Savior.⁴⁷ Notice in the following passages *who* is being described as the one who gives a new birth. *Who* is the one who saves in the following passages? It's God!

God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that *by God* (Philippians 1:28).

Praise be to *the God* and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy *he has given us new birth* into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

This is how *God* showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world *that we might live* through him (1 John 4:9).

» The kind of faith that fixes its hope on the one and only God is the faith that saves us.

» We will be saved by God.

⁴⁷ It's also the hope that each of us must manifest publically in baptism and in a change of life from sin to holiness. These actions, the fruit of faith, are required of those who are going to be given entrance into the Kingdom of God someday.

c. It's a big deal

Also please notice that this is no secret issue, but that it's found in very well-known "salvation" texts, as we'll see further on in this section. For example, the whole issue of to whom God will credit righteousness (which is the same doctrine of *salvation by faith* that ignited the entire 16th century Protestant Reformation) is, in essence, the very same topic of this book: *faith in God*. This is what Paul called "the message concerning faith that we proclaim" (Romans 10:8; second Bible quote below).

» Belief in God is the *same* theological issue of salvation by faith.

» God will credit righteousness to us only if we believe in him.

» Believe in the God who resurrected Jesus to be saved.

» Heb. 6:1-2

We invite you to read the following verses slowly and to focus on *what it is* that one must believe in order to be saved:

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, *to whom God will credit righteousness*—for us who believe in *him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead* (Romans 4:23-24).

"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, *the message concerning faith* that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that *God raised him from the dead*, you will be saved (Romans 10:8-9).

... be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is *through faith* in Christ—the righteousness that comes *from God* on the basis of *faith* (Philippians 3:9).

God's raising of Jesus from the dead is the essence of the message the apostles preached, for it is only because God resurrects those who are "in Christ"⁴⁸ that we will someday possess eternal life in the Kingdom of God. So *faith in God* is an essential part of the Gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached. In addition, as we can see from the following Bible verse, if you don't have God's Spirit *now*, God will not resurrect you later on.

⁴⁸ In the NT, to be "in Christ" means that you are baptized, established in the New Covenant, participating in the Lord's Supper with a clear conscience, and walking in love.

You need to have the Holy Spirit living in you if you want to be resurrected unto eternal life:

And *if* the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead [that's God] will *also* give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you (Romans 8:11).

By his power *God raised* the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us *also* (1 Corinthians 6:14).

... we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead [that's God] will *also* raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself (2 Corinthians 4:14).

i. Our problem is with God

What was God doing when he raised Christ from the dead? He was not fixing any problems that humanity had with *Jesus*, but fixing the problems that humanity had with *himself*. The Bible says that God was “reconciling all things *to himself*.” He was taking care of the business that had for many centuries been left undone. The human race’s problem is essentially with *God*, not with Jesus. Jesus is the *solution* to our problem with God. That’s why the Scriptures say that he is our *peace*—we have peace with God through him.

... For *God* was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to *reconcile to himself all things*, whether things on Earth or things in Heaven, by *making peace* through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19-20).

d. Are you sure about this?

Just one more note for this very important section: When the Bible speaks of Jesus’ resurrection, it sometimes does not mention the Father. All of the cases where the Father is not mentioned which are known to us are listed below; and we’ll look at them carefully in a moment, but be advised: Many Bible readers have drawn the hasty conclusion that because the Father is sometimes not mentioned with reference to Jesus’

» Faith in God is an essential element of the Gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached.

» God will raise us also, if we believe.

» God reconciled all things to himself.

» Jesus is the solution to our problem with God.

resurrection, that Jesus resurrected *himself*. That would be an unwarranted conclusion because it would be like ignoring all of the previously-mentioned passages that so clearly affirm that it was *God* who resurrected Jesus.

So, we invite you to look closely at the passages that are silent about the role of the Father, but be sure to observe that they *never* say “Jesus resurrected himself.” There is never a reflexive pronoun (i.e., “himself”) used in any passage that speaks of Jesus’ resurrection.

» The Bible never says or implies that “Jesus resurrected himself.”

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until *the Son of Man had risen from the dead*. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant (Mark 9:9-10).

... will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later *he will rise* (Mark 10:34).

... they will flog him and kill him. On the third day *he will rise again* (Luke 18:33).

They still did not understand from Scripture that *Jesus had to rise from the dead* (Jn. 20:9).

... the Messiah had to suffer and *rise from the dead* (Acts 17:3).

It’s of supreme importance to read these texts closely and to see how Jesus himself uses the expression “rise” and “be raised” interchangeably (see Luke 24:7,46; below). What does this “interchangeability” mean? Well, since the phrase “be raised” is the passive voice (which means that an action was performed *on* Jesus, not *by* Jesus), he was passive and the resurrection *happened to* him. If “be raised” is used in the same breath with “rise,” than we can deduce that when he says that he would “rise” it certainly could *not* mean that he would rise from the dead *on his own*. He already made it clear that *reflexive action is not the idea* since the passive voice, being used in the same context, makes the meaning clear: Jesus was raised by someone else.

» The resurrection happened to Jesus.

“The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day *be raised again*”... He told them,

“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and *rise* from the dead on the third day (Luke 24:7,46).

Even Paul speaks of Jesus as being “raised from the dead,” and that’s also the *passive* voice. What does it mean? It simply means that Jesus did *not* perform the action of resurrecting, but he *received* that action: He was *resurrected*. We know who it was he received that action *from* since the overwhelming testimony of other Scripture passages says that it was God. Someone might wonder, however: “So why didn’t Paul mention God there?” The surprising answer is: It was *a given* that God resurrected Jesus. It wasn’t necessary to say so—at least in Paul’s day.

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who *was raised* to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

Remember Jesus Christ, *raised* from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal (2 Timothy 2:8-9).

And let’s notice that when Jesus’ resurrection is mentioned, the Scriptures point us towards *faith in God*. Why is faith in the resurrection all about trusting God? It is simply because the resurrection of Christ is a gigantic lesson for us about the power of God. Now, because of the gift of faith, we too are able to trust in God to give us that same resurrection power.

For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and *so* we believe that *God* will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

A very important argument, which anybody who wants to defend the truth of God’s role in Jesus’ resurrection should know, is that the same kind of language that Christ used for himself (e.g., “Three days later he *will rise*” [Mark 10:34]) is also used for people *in general*; people like you and me. Compare the following verse (it appears in the Bible only

» In Paul's day, it was a given that God resurrected Jesus.

» Let's be ready to defend God's role in Jesus' resurrection.

two verses after one just shared above which says that “Jesus rose”) to the ones that might seem to say that Jesus resurrected himself:

... the dead in Christ *will rise* first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Now, *if* because the Bible says that Jesus “will rise” from the dead means that he “resurrected himself,” then the 1 Thessalonians 4:16 passage will also have to be interpreted to mean that the dead in Christ “resurrect themselves.” But it *doesn’t* mean that and neither do the passages that do not speak of God being the instrument of Jesus’ resurrection prove that Jesus resurrected himself. On the contrary, (again) they don’t mention God simply because it was *such common knowledge* to the members of the church—it was unnecessary to even say it. For them, our entire argument, presented here so meticulously, was a *given*.

» It was unnecessary to even mention to the early church that Jesus was raised by the Father.

Finally, we recognize the particular difficulty in interpreting what Jesus meant when he said “I will raise this temple” (referring to his body in the resurrection). It is the passage that is probably the most challenging for people to interpret on this issue of who raised Jesus from the dead. What did he mean when he said “I will raise it”? Does this prove that he did, in fact, resurrect himself? It sounds like it does, but let’s first read the passage and analyze it:

» What did Jesus mean when he said “I will raise this temple”?

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and *I will raise it* again in three days.” They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he *was raised* from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken (John 2:18-22).

First, let’s recognize the obvious: In the past many people have misinterpreted the “I will raise this temple” saying, so it’s not strange that people would misinterpret it today.

Then let's avoid the same error that was already committed, that of interpreting it to mean that Jesus was asserting his power over the Temple. That's the erroneous interpretation of Christ's words made by many of the Jews of his day.

... many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days'" (Matthew 26:60).

Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save yourself!" (Matthew 7:39-40).

No, Jesus was not trying to assert his authority as King when he said that he would "raise the temple again" in three days. The way to understand the passage is to look closely at what the Bible says is the correct interpretation: that of the *apostles*. If you can see it from their retrospective, Spirit-inspired writings, you'll see that it's a passage that proves what we have been arguing all along: That Jesus was resurrected *by God*. The John 2 passage says that the apostles finally understood what Jesus meant—but only when he was "raised." Yes, you got it, the word "raised" is the *passive* voice. The word "raised" is the key to interpreting the passage then: It indicates that Jesus did *not* resurrect himself, but he was "raised" by another. We know by the rest of the Bible who that "other" must have been... God.

The way to understand what Jesus meant by "I will raise it" then, in the light of all that has been said, is that Jesus was warning others that he was going to pray to God from the grave. In that sense (and *only* in that sense) was he active in his resurrection: He pleaded to God for it, crying out from among the dead. And God would answer that prayer! Let's not forget that Jesus was in the throes of the underworld for three days, but with his prayer he actually *did* "raise the temple on the third day." What David expressed in Psalm 16:8-11 was that Jesus cried out to God from Hades.

» How did the apostles interpret this saying of Christ?

» Jesus cried out to God from the realm of the dead. And his prayer was heard!

This was such an important experience for Jesus that Peter tried to highlight for us in his momentous message preached on the very day of Pentecost.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him [Jesus]: “*I saw the Lord [God] always before me.* Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because *you will not abandon me* to the realm of the dead, *you will not let your holy one see decay.* *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence*” (Acts 2:24-28).

2. God honors Jesus by giving him... everything!

» "Prince"
and "Savior"
(Acts 5:31)

» Jesus has
twice been
glorified by
God.

God has given numerous honors to Jesus. God has given Jesus the titles of “Lord,” “Messiah,” and “Judge of the Living and the Dead.” God also designated Jesus as “High Priest” over his people. In fact, God has given *all* things to Jesus. It’s important that we clarify that not only did God give great honor to Jesus before the Creation of the Earth, but he did it *again* after Jesus had humbled himself on the cross. In other words, *Jesus has been twice glorified by God.* After Jesus finished his period of testing and was found to be faithful to God, he again received the glory that he had before the world was created.

Here are two verses to get us started on this topic—they show that God glorifies Jesus by giving him everything:

All things have been committed to me [Jesus said] by my Father (Matthew 11:27).

God placed *all things* under his feet and appointed him to be head *over everything* for the church (Ephesians 1:22).

Before the Creation of the world, and before the incarnation, God honored Jesus by giving him so much—he even included his own *fullness!* Wow! He gave Jesus all that he had, and (get this!) he even made Jesus *equal to himself*. All this God did for Jesus! Why did God do it? Because he *wanted* to! (Excuse all my exclamation marks, but this is really exciting).

... and he (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...* (Colossians 1:18-19).

[Jesus]... existed in the form of God (Philippians 2:6; NASB).

[Jesus had]... equality with God (Philippians 2:6; NASB).

» God made Jesus equal to himself... and he did it because he wanted to.

a. God gives Jesus titles

Part of the way that God exalts Jesus is by giving him honorific titles. These titles have been earned by the devotion, piety, and faithfulness that Jesus has shown to God. Some of the titles we've already mentioned include: Lord, Messiah, and High Priest. Did you know that another is “the Son of God”?

... through the Spirit of Holiness *was appointed the Son of God* in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:4).

Now, “God” as a title for Jesus is quite unique. Some things should be said about it. Number one, the fact that Jesus is called “God” is due to the divine nature God granted him. The Father did this twice: once, before the Creation of the world and, the other time, when he resurrected Christ Jesus. So we see that Jesus was called “God” when he was “the Word,” which was before the Creation of the world; and then later, upon being resurrected he was also called “God.” Correspondingly, there were two periods of time when he was *not* called “God”: before “the Beginning” that is, before God

» Jesus was appointed the Son of God.

» The fact that Jesus is called “God” is due to the divine nature God granted him.

“loved him” (in that special way) and gave him glory; then again during his time in the flesh, when he divested himself of divine glory—nobody called him “God” then. Joseph was careful to call Jesus by the name “Jesus” and not by the name “Emmanuel,” for example. Jesus was “God with us” in Spirit, in prophetic fulfillment, but *not in name*.

Careful students of the Bible will notice that Jesus was only called “God” by one person during his earthly life. It was only the apostle Thomas who said it, and he called Jesus “God” *after* Jesus was resurrected. Previous to that moment, nobody, not even his 12 apostles had ever referred to him as “God.”

» The one occasion when somebody called Jesus “God” to his face.

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and *my God!*” (John 20:28).

After the resurrection, the title “God” was used more frequently, albeit sparingly, and *always* within contexts that couldn’t possibly mislead anyone into confusing Christ with the “one God.” The entire Bible, we believe, is written with great care so as to avoid any possibility that someone might confuse Jesus with the one God.

» Jesus clarifies: He is God’s *Son*.

In the next passage, for instance, when the accusation was made that Jesus was making himself out to be “God,” observe the clarification Jesus makes: He lets them know that his teaching is that he is God’s *Son*. He leaves no room for misinterpretation:

“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Jesus answered them,... “Why then *do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son?’*” (John 10:33-36).

A very significant fact is that Jesus *never* directly calls himself “God” in the NT—and it’s a much more important phenomenon that it appears to be at first sight. Let’s notice that during his time “in the flesh” (in that approximately 33-year window of his existence we read about in the four Gospels) Jesus didn’t even *accept* the title “God” if someone used it for him, without clarifying that it was only permitted

to be understood as him being the *Son* of God. What we're saying is that Jesus our Lord, although divine, doesn't leave room for any confusion about who the "one God" is; and he always steers clear of the appearance of blasphemy,⁴⁹ never disregarding the preeminent place that God has in the Universe.

Some additional passages that show that God has given Jesus titles of great honor include these:

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: *God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah* (Acts 2:36).

God exalted him [Jesus] to his own right hand as *Prince and Savior* (Acts 5:31).

... and, once made perfect, he [Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was *designated by God to be High Priest* in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:9-10).

Jesus was given a name, the greatest name that anyone could have, and it was given to Jesus not for himself, but *so that glory would go to God the Father*. In other words, the idea is for all people to recognize that what Jesus has become was *only* made possible by the grace of God. God should *always* get the credit for who Jesus has become.

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:9,11).

As an additional reflection on Jesus' titles, let's observe that upon fulfilling God's will in his life, Jesus did not get the title of "Angel." Why not? Jesus did, after all, serve God as the "Angel of the Lord" in the OT. It's only natural that he might be called "Angel" again—but that is *not* the case.

Jesus is closely related to angels in the Bible. We know that after he served God as "Angel of the Lord" for a time, he

⁴⁹ It's apparent how, in John 10:33-36, cited above, Jesus proves to the Pharisees that he is not blaspheming—that he has no intention of causing people to think that he is the one God.

» Jesus never left room for confusion about who the one God is.

» "God has made this Jesus... both Lord and Messiah."

» What Jesus has become was *only* made possible by the grace of God.

» Jesus did not get the title of "Angel."

was then humbled to a position even *lower* than the angels. However, after the resurrection, he was lifted up *beyond* the angelic level to become much *greater* than angels. Again, this moving from one level of glory to another is all tied in with “the name” (the titles) that God gave Jesus: Now that he is so far above them (they are only “ministering spirits” while he is the “Son of God”), Jesus couldn’t possibly be given a name that implied any *similarity* to them. We suggest that more research be done on the issue of Jesus’ relationship to the angels.

... he became as much superior to the angels as *the name he has inherited* is superior to theirs (Hebrews 1:4).

For *to which of the angels* did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father”?... *To which of the angels* did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? Are not *all angels* ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:5,13-14).

... we do see *Jesus*, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, *now crowned with glory and honor* because he suffered death (Hebrews 2:9).

b. God gives Jesus authority

Jesus’ authority has been granted to him. It doesn’t have its origins in himself, but comes from somebody greater than he, since authority is always transmitted from someone greater than the one who receives it. In our case, for example, *our* authority will be delegated to us from Jesus. But in Jesus’ case, it was *the one God* who delegated authority.

» Authority always comes from someone greater than the one who receives it.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All *authority* in Heaven and on Earth *has been given to me*” (Matthew 28:18).

[Jesus said] I confer on you a kingdom, *just as* my Father conferred one on me (Luke 22:29).

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is *the one whom God appointed* as judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).

... in these last days *he* [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom *he appointed Heir of all things* (Hebrews 1:2).

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’—*just as I have received authority from my Father* (Revelation 2:26-27).

c. God gives Jesus the judgment

The fact that Jesus is going to judge humanity is not something that was originally in him to do. Rather, it is a privilege that God has given him. God has entrusted the judging that normally would correspond to himself, to his Son Jesus. Judging is a special duty that Jesus has earned as the Messiah, and it’s related to the fact that he was in our shoes, having experienced the fallen human nature; and he will judge because he himself was able to withstand all temptations.

With Jesus as Judge, nobody will be able to make the excuse: “But, God made me this way. I couldn’t help it. I’m just an imperfect human being!” Jesus will gently but firmly respond to those who make such excuses: “God made *me* that way too: A human being with all the same weaknesses—the same nature as you. But God gave you the *same* opportunity to be lifted up by grace as he gave me, and you *didn’t* take advantage of it.” God designated Jesus to be the Judge in order to close all mouths and to silence all complaints.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but *has entrusted all judgment* to the Son... (John 5:22).

For as the Father has life in himself, so *he has granted* the Son also to have life in himself. And *he has given* him *authority* to judge because he is the Son of Man... (John 5:26-27).

» God is wise to give Jesus the judgment.

» God wants all mouths to be silenced in judgment.

d. God gives Jesus glory

Jesus knew that the glory he had was from God and taught others that it was *not* his own. He explained this truth to such a degree that he said that if he glorified himself, his

» The only thing that mattered to Jesus was what God thought of him.

glory would mean *nothing*. Literally, for Jesus, the only thing that mattered was what God thought of him. He didn't care about much more than that.

Jesus replied, "If I glorify *myself*, my glory means *nothing*. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is *the one who glorifies me* (John 8:54).

And now, *Father, glorify me* in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began (John 17:5).

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, *the glory you have given me* because you loved me before the creation of the world (John 17:24).

The apostles also affirmed that Christ's glory was from the Father. This conviction was one of their greatest reasons for believing in Jesus: They knew that Jesus was *approved by the Father*.

» The apostles believed in Jesus because of the approval God gave him.

... Jesus had not yet *been glorified* (John 7:39).

... we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, *now crowned with glory and honor* because he suffered death (Hebrews 2:9).

... we were eyewitnesses of his [Jesus'] majesty. *He received honor and glory from God the Father* when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from Heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain (2 Peter 1:16-18).

According to the apostle Peter's interpretation of the voice from Heaven as God giving honor and glory to Jesus (you can see Peter's interpretation in the last passage cited), we should include the following passages as well. Please notice that God went to great lengths for us to get the message that *he* honors Jesus:

» God went to great lengths for us to get the message that he honors Jesus.

Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And *a voice came from Heaven*: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:10-11).

Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and *a voice came from the cloud*: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus (Mark 9:7-8).

But beyond the powerful truth that God gives glory to Jesus, there is an *experience* that will transform you and me: This *same* glory that God gave Jesus is the glory that Jesus has given to *all of us* who believe in him. It’s the glory of the Holy Spirit, the glory of the resurrection, the glory of the Kingdom of God—and it’s ours for the taking!

[Jesus prayed to God this way] I have given them [that’s us] the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one (John 17:22).

» Jesus has given the same glory that he got from God, to Christians.

e. God gave us to Jesus

People, more exactly, those who God considers to be members of his church, are another gift that God has given Jesus. This is not slavery, but the giving of a nation of well-trained and faithful people prepared to support their King, Jesus Christ.

I have revealed your name to *those whom you gave me* out of the world. *They were yours; you gave them to me* and they have obeyed your word (John 17:6).

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for *those you have given me*, for *they are yours* (John 17:9).

Father, I want *those you have given me* to be with me where I am, and to see my glory... (John 17:24).

I have not lost one of *those you gave me* (John 18:9).

» God has given Jesus a church of faithful supporters.

3. Jesus has been given a place of great honor

Jesus has received the most honorable position in existence: the spot that’s located right next to God. Could you imagine

» What's the most honorable spot in existence?

any place anywhere that might be *more* special? Remember: It's not even a part of this Creation. It's beyond the Universe! Let's analyze the situation in Heaven a little and first see that God is, in fact, on a throne. Then we'll see where that throne is located, and demonstrate substantially through Scriptures that Jesus is seated there with God, the Lord Jesus being at God's right hand.

a. God is on a throne

Due to the emphasis it gets in Scriptures, it's apparent that the greatest honor Jesus has received is that of God seating him at his right hand. With reference to that, first of all it's important that we demonstrate that God is actually seated on a throne, which is what we can see from the following passages. (Don't forget that we're only listing the NT passages on the matter. There are some mind-blowing Old Testament passages you can also look up which give a vision of God's throne, which we have included in Appendix 4d). Please also look at Appendix 4d to read a rather long passage from Revelation chapter 4 which will surely revolutionize your thoughts about God.

» Check out the OT passages about God's throne as well, please.

But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by Heaven, for it is *God's throne...* (Matthew 5:34).

And anyone who swears by Heaven swears by *God's throne* and by *the one who sits on it* (Matthew 23:22).

They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of *him who sits on the throne* and from the wrath of the Lamb! (Revelation 6:16).

» The throne is surrounded by angels who fall down and worship God.

And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to *our God, who sits on the throne*, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around *the throne* and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before *the throne* and *worshiped God*, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to *our God* for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:10-12).

And they sang a new song before *the throne* and before the four living creatures and the elders (Revelation 14:3).

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures *fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne*. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!" Then a voice came from *the throne*, saying: "Praise *our God*, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!" Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For *our Lord God Almighty* reigns (Revelation 19:4-6).

Then I saw *a great white throne and him who was seated on it*. The Earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before *the throne*, and books were opened (Revelation 20:11-12).

He who was seated on *the throne* said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5).

» The throne is great and white.

b. God is in the Heavenly Temple

God is in a Temple, the true Temple, in Heaven—of which the earthly Temple was just a replica. That is the place where he abides, where he is worshipped, and where his throne is located. It is also the place into which Jesus entered about 2,000 years ago with his blood to present his sacrifice before God.

» God abides in the Heavenly Temple or "Tabernacle."

They [the priests] serve at a sanctuary that is a *copy and shadow of what is in Heaven*. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the Tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain" (Hebrews 8:5).

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through *the greater and more perfect Tabernacle* that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this Creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but *he entered the Most Holy Place* once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit *offered himself unblem-*

» Christ offered himself unblemished to God.

ished to God... did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter Heaven to offer himself again and again... he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:11-12,14,24-25,26).

[Speaking of those who came out of the Great Tribulation] Therefore, "they are before *the throne of God* and serve him day and night *in his Temple*; and *he who sits on the throne* will shelter them with his presence (Revelation 7:15).

» The Temple is the place where God's covenant is preserved.

Then *God's Temple in Heaven* was opened, and within *his Temple* was seen the ark of his covenant (Revelation 11:19).

I saw in Heaven *the Temple—that is, the Tabernacle of the covenant law*—and it was opened. Out of *the Temple* came the seven angels with the seven plagues... And *the Temple* was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter *the Temple* until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed (Revelation 15:5-6,8).

» Sometimes smoke fills the Temple.

Then I heard a loud voice *from the Temple* saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the Earth" (Revelation 16:1).

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and *out of the Temple* came a loud voice from *the throne*, saying, "It is done!" (Revelation 16:17).

The previous verses are clear enough, but this next one deserves considerable meditation. *Could* it be that the Temple is *such a special place* that it's the maximum reward for someone to be established there forever? Could it be that the greatest blessing someone could earn would be for them to *never leave* the Temple?

» What is the greatest blessing you could ever get?

[Jesus says] The one who is victorious I will make a pillar *in the Temple of my God*. Never again will they *leave it...* (Revelation 3:12).

Why do we have such a hard time conceiving of the reward described in this verse? It's because we haven't fathomed how precious the glory of God is—nor do we comprehend the magnificence of his Majesty. We would prefer to do other things like look at the mountains and ocean that he has created—but God's glory is the greatest thing a person could ever experience. Moses, who requested of God “Now show me your glory” (Exodus 33:18), knew that.

c. Jesus is seated at God's right hand

Once it is made clear that God is seated on his throne in the true Tabernacle (Temple) in Heaven, we can then establish that Jesus *also* has a throne, and that this throne of Jesus is located at God's right hand. What does all this mean? Along with everything else we have proven, it affirms that *the primary authority in the Universe is God*. But it also means that he has delegated authority to Jesus who has earned the privilege of being God's appointed ruler in the Kingdom: both in Heaven and on Earth.

By the way, asserting that God was going to give him the privilege of being seated at God's right hand is what eventually got Jesus crucified! So, for somebody to claim this honor was a *big deal* to those who studied the Bible back in Jesus' day. Is it *now*? It should be, but it will only be significant for people who understand how absolutely powerful God is in majesty and authority.

[Jesus said] “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man *sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One* and coming on the clouds of Heaven” (Matthew 26:64).

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into Heaven and *he sat at the right hand of God* (Mark 16:19).

... from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of *the Mighty God* (Luke 22:69).

God exalted him [Jesus] to *his own right hand* as Prince and Savior (Acts 5:31).

» God's glory is the greatest thing a person could ever experience.

» The primary authority in the universe is God, but he has delegated his authority to Jesus.

» Is it a big deal for you if someone claims that he will sit at God's right hand?

» God exalted Jesus as "Prince."

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to Heaven and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God*. “Look,” he said, “I see Heaven open and *the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*” (Acts 7:55-56).

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—*is at the right hand of God* and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

» God seated Christ at his right hand.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And *God* placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church (Ephesians 1:19-22).

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, *seated at the right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1).

» God is called "the Majesty."

After he [Jesus] had provided purification for sins, he sat down *at the right hand of the Majesty* in Heaven (Hebrews 1:3).

To which of the angels did God ever say, “*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*”? (Hebrews 1:13)

But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of God* (Hebrews 10:12).

... he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down *at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2).

... [Jesus Christ] has gone into Heaven and is *at God's right hand*—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (1 Peter 3:21-22).

» The two thrones will eventually be one.

The following four examples are a little different from the former ones. These next ones demonstrate that the two thrones are so *close* that they will eventually, when the Eternal Kingdom is established on the Earth, be considered just *one*. Jesus actually sits with God on God's throne, something which is shocking, but which shouldn't be too surprising to us because Jesus wants us to sit on his own throne with him

as well. Will you strive to get the privilege from him that he got from God?

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and *sat down with my Father on his throne* (Revelation 3:21).

Then I saw in the right hand of *him who sat on the throne* a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” But no one in Heaven or on Earth or under the Earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, *standing at the center of the throne*, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the Earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of *him who sat on the throne...* Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To *him who sits on the throne* and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Revelation 5:1-7,13).

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up *to God and to his throne* (Revelation 12:5).

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing *from the throne of God and of the Lamb...* *The throne of God and of the Lamb* will be in the city, and his servants will serve him (Revelation 22:1,3).

In case it has not already been made abundantly clear, please recognize the fact that this is no minor point of Scripture. It’s *major*; and that’s not because *we* say so, but because God’s Word says so:

» Jesus stood at the center of the throne of God.

» This is a
theological
point of
major
importance.

Now the *main point* of what we are saying is this: We do have
such a High Priest, *who sat down at the right hand of the throne of
the Majesty in Heaven...* (Hebrews 8:1).



Part IX. Jesus as our High Priest before God

The role of Jesus as our intercessor and High Priest before God is not just another interesting dimension of his current ministry—something just for theologians to discuss—it’s completely *practical*. It affects us every single day of our Christian lives, and our eternal salvation depends upon it. Were it not for his intercession and mediation, even the most righteous person among us—the purest and most loving—would fall out of grace with God. Even for that person, there would be no hope of eternal life. It is a most certain fact that we still have sin; and it’s *just as certain* that sin will *only* be forgiven if Jesus intercedes for us. If Jesus does not intercede for us, God does not forgive. Without God’s forgiveness, we are condemned.

» Jesus' role as intercessor affects us every day. By it we can be forgiven our sins.

1. Jesus intercedes for us before God

The following verses will make us aware of what Jesus is doing for us right now as our High Priest before God. Read them carefully please, and may they inspire you to confess your sins while the opportunity for mercy is still available:

In him [Christ Jesus our Lord] and through faith in him *we may approach God* with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

For there is one God and *one mediator between God and mankind*, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

» Through faith in Jesus we may approach God.

» There is one
God, and one
Mediator.

It [our hope] enters *the inner sanctuary* behind the curtain, where our forerunner, *Jesus*, has entered on our behalf. He has become a *High Priest* forever, in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:19-20).

» Jesus serves
in the true
Tabernacle.

We do have such a *High Priest*, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of *the Majesty* in Heaven, and *who serves in the Sanctuary, the true Tabernacle* set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being (Hebrews 8:2).

... [we are] a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God *through Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 2:5).

... if anybody does sin, we have *an advocate with the Father*—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:1).



Part X. Knowing God

I remember how terribly disappointing it was for me back in 2008 to have picked up a book called *Knowing God*, a supposed “classic” of Christian literature, and to find that it had no clear teaching on monotheism. I was spiritually hungry to find an exact teaching about the one God, but came up empty-handed.

Many are those who profess to know God and pretend to be teachers to others, explaining who he is *their way*, but who miss the mark. In fact, there are entire denominations (with elaborate theologies and impressive seminaries) built upon false interpretations of who God is—and they are sure to emphasize to others how they are the ones who have the truth. One of these denominations is the United Pentecostal Church which maintains that there is only one God, Jesus. For them, there is no one greater than Jesus.

» My disappointment in searching for God.

1. What does it mean to “know God”?

Knowing God is basically reflected in a life of love and holiness. People who are involved in idolatry do not know him at all. Furthermore, *only those who diligently search for him will find him*. We demonstrate our knowledge of God with something much more powerful than sound doctrine; we show it with our *lives*. The doctrine is a beginning (and an important one at that, for we act according to how we *think*—our *thoughts* guide our actions), but it’s *just* a beginning. There’s so much more to knowing God than doctrine.

- » Doctrine is just a beginning. We show that we know God by our actions.
- » Everyone who loves knows God.

Jesus knew God, mature believers know God, and anyone who *loves* is giving the best possible evidence that they know God.

[Jesus said] *I know him* because I am from him and he sent me (John 7:29).

I write to you, dear children, because *you know the Father* (1 John 2:14).

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and *knows God* (1 John 4:7).

a. It's eternal life

- » We have to know God on his own terms.
- How important is it to know God? Jesus said that it is “eternal life” to know God (John 17:3). That means that we won’t experience eternal life unless we get well-acquainted with the one God. We have to get to really know him, for he is the source of all salvation. But, we have to come to know him on his *own* terms (i.e., we should learn about God through his *Word*). Furthermore, we have to know him as the “one God” that this entire book affirms he is. We have to be freed from philosophical explanations of who God is—and gaining such freedom is normally a lot of work. It’s much harder to *unlearn* the old than it is to *learn* the new; but in this case, we have no other choice. This is a matter of life or death: Our eternity depends on it.

For you granted him [Jesus prayed, speaking of himself] authority over all people that he might give *eternal life* to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they *know you, the only true* God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:2-3).

- » Jesus came to give eternal life, and eternal life is knowing God.

Notice that if Jesus said that “eternal life” is what he came to give, and if knowing God is eternal life, then (if we follow the stream of logic) we can deduce that *Jesus came to give us the knowledge of God!* That's the very purpose for which Jesus came: To teach us about God.

b. It's not what you think it is

Let's observe some things about what it means to know God. First of all, this is not the same subject we looked at in the first chapter of the book, which is about the knowledge that there *is* one God. You'll remember that even the demons know that. No, here we are talking about something *personal*. We're talking about being *close* to God.

Secondly, let's notice that knowing God in a personal way begins with a revelation that only Jesus can give you. Jesus has to make God known to you. He has to sort of "introduce" you to God. Or, better yet, Jesus has to "disclose" God to you. The reason why he is the only one who can do this is because he's the only one who has ever seen God—yes, the *only one*.⁵⁰

... *no one* knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom *the Son* chooses to *reveal him* (Luke 10:22).

No one has ever seen God, but *the one and only Son*, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, *has made him known* (John 1:18).

Thirdly, we should observe that Jesus confronted people on their ignorance of God. (Don't be offended if he does the same with you—he does it with practically everybody). Take note that he did this not just with the everyday religious folk, but with the most intellectually advanced Bible teachers of his day. He let all of them know that they were not as spiritual as they thought they were. He was sure of his own knowledge of God, and that people could come to him to get that knowledge; but he didn't let people think they were as spiritual as they wanted to imagine.

And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. *You have never heard his voice nor seen his form* nor does

» Knowing God is being close to God.

» Jesus has to disclose God to you.

» Jesus confronts people about their ignorance of God.

⁵⁰ But, what would this say to us about *the Holy Spirit*? We can accept the fact that the *angels* have never seen God (in Isaiah 6 it says that they cover their eyes with their wings when they enter into his presence), but could it be that the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10), has *never* seen God? This matter should be researched further.

his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent (John 5:37-38).

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but *he who sent me is true. You do not know him...* (John 7:28).

"*You do not know me or my Father,*" Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (John 8:19).

Though *you do not know him*, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be *a liar* like you, but I do know him and obey his word (John 8:55).

Jesus said to them, "*If God were your Father, you would love me*, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me (John 8:42).

Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that *you do not belong to God* (John 8:47).

If you really know me, you *will know my Father* as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him (John 14:7).

Let's remember that Jesus is speaking to strict monotheists here. These were people with orthodox doctrine, but they were devoid of the love that characterizes a person who knows God. We should try to have the same wisdom as Christ in discerning who the sincere searchers are, *who* really knows God, and *who* is just trying to appear religious. We have to judge the tree by its fruits. Multitudes of those who name God with their lips, do not have him in their heart.

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him (Titus 1:16).

Whoever does not love *does not know God*, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

If we know that we are from God, we can tell who is also from God by the fact that they *listen* to us. Those who are not from God do not listen to us because they do not have the Holy Spirit inspiring them. If they do not love their brothers and sisters, how can they pretend to love God?

» People
knew Jesus
superficially,
but they
didn't know
God.

» Jesus
would call
people "liars"
who said
that they
knew God
but really
didn't.

» If we really
know Jesus,
then we will
know his
Father as
well.

» Multitudes
claim to
know God,
but do not
have him in
their hearts.

We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but *whoever is not from God does not listen to us*. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (1 John 4:6).

Somebody who fakes their knowledge of God, acting as if he's their close friend, when they are really living a life of sin, cannot be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. They are hypocrites. Their sins remain on them. They don't really have fellowship with anybody in Christ. What they need to do is to repent of their charade, and humbly start to seek God with all their heart. Knowing God is something that goes much beyond church membership and sound doctrine.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: *God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth*. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

c. Who doesn't know God

We know God, but there was a time when we didn't know him. Now we know him and he knows us in a personal way.

Formerly, *when you did not know God*, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But *now that you know God*—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? (Galatians 4:8-9).

A Christian knows God, but who is it that does *not* know him? The “world” does not know him. People who do not heed the Gospel do not know him. Precisely, a characteristic of people from the world is that they *do not know God*. Since not knowing God is the same thing as being lost, those who do not know him are going to be punished when Jesus comes back.

Righteous Father, though *the world does not know you*, I know you, and they [Jesus' disciples] know that you have sent me (John 17:25).

» If someone knows God, he will at *least* listen to us.

» Hypocrites need to repent and humbly seek God with all their hearts.

» There was a time when we didn't know God.

» The world does not know God.

... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish *those who do not know God* and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

People who are of the world act sinfully, reflecting that they have never really known God. We should not follow their example.

They will do such things because *they have not known the Father* or me (John 16:3).

... each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, *who do not know God* (1 Thessalonians 4:4-5).

» Pagans do not know God.

» Let's grow in the knowledge of God.

d. Challenges ahead

We have to make it our ambition to *grow* in our knowledge of God so that we can bear more fruit, have grace, peace, and live a more godly life.

... so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, *growing in the knowledge of God* (Colossians 1:10).

Grace and peace be yours in abundance *through the knowledge of God* and of Jesus our Lord. His [Jesus'] divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life *through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness* (2 Peter 1:2-3).

» We have everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of God.

The Antichrist attacks everything related to God, confusing the thoughts of people about God, and taking the glory from God. Let's be careful to not be deceived on matters related to the identity of God, because the final and greatest deception that all humanity will face will be when the Antichrist makes everyone believe that he is God (and he'll get away with it)! Obviously, it is those who do not really know God who will fall into his trap—but that will be the great majority of people on Earth!

» Those who do not know God will fall into the trap of the Antichrist.

He *will oppose* and will *exalt himself over everything that is called God* or is worshiped, so that *he sets himself up in God's Temple, proclaiming himself to be God* (2 Thessalonians 1:2:4).

The Antichrist's deception normally begins in someone's life when they forget that Jesus came in the human nature (what the Bible refers to as the "flesh"). If he can get people to be confused about Jesus' humanity, then he can easily obscure the deity of the one God. You may have noticed that he has already been quite successful in this regard.

Every spirit that *acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is from God, but every spirit that *does not* acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is *the spirit of the Antichrist*, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world (1 John 4:2-3).

... many *deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and *the antichrist*. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who *runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ* does not have God; whoever *continues in the teaching* has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring *this teaching*, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work (2 John 7-11).

e. How Jesus knows God

We would like to pose one last question in this section: "In what *way* did Jesus know God?" (Some people really get confused here). Did he know God as his *equal*? Did Jesus know God because he himself was that *same* God? Those would both be wrong answers. The answer lies in the following verse, which reveals to us that the relationship that Jesus had to God was one of a sheep to his shepherd:

I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—*just as* the Father knows me and I know the Father (John 10:14-15).

Jesus depended on his God and his God cared for him. God gave Jesus his loving-kindness and Jesus followed the Father, doing just as God wanted, with simple trust and complete

» To have God, you have to continue in the doctrine of Christ.

» In what way did Jesus know God?

» The relationship of Jesus to God is this: God is Jesus' Pastor. Jesus is his sheep.

confidence. That is the way in which Jesus knew God: in the same way that we have to know Jesus—as a Pastor.

2. What does it mean to “have God”?

To “have God” is to have a hold on him, to have attained a good degree of familiarity with him. It includes having his love in your heart, having your prayers heard, and... (yes, you guessed it, it also means) having *sound doctrine*. We sincerely hope that this book has helped you to see the Biblical doctrine on God in a way you might not have seen it previously.

» To have God includes having sound doctrine.

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not *have God*; whoever continues in the teaching *has both the Father and the Son* (2 John 1:9).

» We cannot deny Jesus and have God at the same time. We must acknowledge the Son.

One more thing: For someone to “have the Father,” he has to first understand who *Jesus* is. This is equivalent to saying that Jesus is the *way* to the Father. If we disregard who Jesus is, we lose the possibility of having God.

No one who denies the Son *has the Father*; whoever acknowledges the Son *has the Father* also (1 John 2:23).

3. All Jesus has is from God

Jesus made it clear to his disciples that he came to reveal someone to them—the one who sent him. His disciples learned much from Jesus, and they finally came to the point of understanding something great: that everything Jesus has comes from God. To understand it, you have to first be clear about who the one God is—are you clear about it?

» Everything that Jesus has comes from God.

[Jesus prayed to God] I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me

and they have obeyed your word. Now *they know that everything you have given me comes from you*. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me... (John 17:6-8).

a. Through Jesus we can believe in God

If we don't come to the knowledge of God, we will have failed Jesus. We will have lost the great opportunity this life affords: to say "yes" to the high calling God gives us as people made in his likeness and image, accepting the challenge of living in covenant with him, and eventually obtaining the resurrection. Jesus, who came for the express purpose of revealing the Father to us, is waiting for us to accept this challenge.

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know *him who is true*. And we are in *him who is true* by being in *his* Son Jesus Christ. *He is the true God* and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

He [Jesus] says, "*I will declare your [God's] name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises*" (Hebrews 2:12).

Jesus said that he would tell us "plainly" about God the Father. Whether you hear him today or tomorrow, the important thing for now is just to be certain about what Jesus wants for you: *He wants you to know his Father, the one God*. Jesus intends to teach us about his Father in the *simplest* of terms—and he doesn't want us to be confused by anything. He doesn't want us to get caught up in metaphorical interpretations.

Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but *will tell you plainly about my Father* (John 16:25).

Has that time come for *you* yet? Jesus wants all of us to be at the point at which we know his Father.

» Who is the true God? Who is his Son?

» Jesus will teach us about his Father in plain terms.

b. Through Jesus we can love God

At this point in our study, I hope that you'll be able to affirm that there's no doubt at all that Jesus came so that we could know God. Fine, but what if I told you that Jesus actually wants much *more* than that? Well, he does: Jesus wants us to *love* the Father; and to love him with *all* of our being!

» Jesus wants us to go beyond knowing God. He wants us to love him!

Please notice that in his teaching of the Great Commandment, Jesus praised a man who interpreted "God is one" to mean "there is *no other* but him." So that's exactly what "God is one" means (according to the interpretation given it by Jesus himself—but also notice that by his own interpretation, *Jesus is excluded* from being the "one God"—and so is the Holy Spirit—Jesus said, "there is *no other*").

But this, Jesus' greatest teaching, is basically a *positive* one—it affirms something much more demanding than it denies. What was the Lord Jesus *affirming* as he taught "God is one"?—that you and I owe all of our deepest love and affection, passion and fervor, to the one God.

» We owe all of our deepest love and devotion to the one God.

"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is *one*. 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 said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is *one* and *there is no other but him*"... When Jesus saw that *he had answered wisely*, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark 12:29-30,32,34).

» There is no other God but the Lord our God.

[Jesus said] *Love* the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your strength and with *all* your mind (Luke 10:27).

i. Why Jesus reveals God to us

Jesus reveals God to us for a specific reason: so that we'll have God's love *in* us. But it's not just any love, it's "the love that God has for Jesus," that special *glorifying-deifying* love

» Do you want God's special love in you?

that Jesus is teaching us about. In other words, you can't really love until you've known God. (This makes sense, of course, being that "God *is* Love"). To know God is to know love. To have God is to have love.

[Jesus said] I have *made you* [God] *known* to them, and will continue to make you known *in order that* the love you have for me *may be in them* and that I myself may be in them (John 17:26).

ii. How to love God

And how do we love God, exactly? It's by obeying him. Loving God is not a matter of emotions. It's not about feelings, but about *actions*. If you fulfill his commandments (all of them are summed up in this one: "Love your neighbor as yourself"), then you love God. It's as simple as that.

This is love for God: to keep his commands (1 John 5:3).

If you love God, then you must also love Jesus. There's nobody who truly loves God who would ever reject Jesus.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves *him who begot* [that would be God] also loves him who is begotten of him [that would be Jesus] (1 John 5:1; NKJV).

iii. Satan only helped

Have you ever wondered why God ever allowed the Devil to do all the terrible things he did to Jesus? For example, it was the Devil that put it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. It was Satan who brought the religious leaders to such a degree of envy and jealousy that they decided to kill the Lord. Well, Jesus says that it was all permitted so that, through his horrible ordeal of facing a cruel death at Calvary, *all people would witness the great love that he has for God!*

... the Prince of this World is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes *so that* the world may learn that I love the

» We love God by obeying him.

» In the cross, all people learn about Jesus' love for God.

Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me (John 14:30-31).

» The cross says: Jesus loves God!

Jesus *only does what God wants*. That's what the world is supposed to see when they look at the crucifixion: That Jesus is *totally* obedient to the Father, even unto death! Is that what you contemplate when you think of his nail-pierced hands and feet? Jesus wants everybody to know that he loves God. So the cross is the greatest PDA⁵¹ the world has ever seen—and it's the PDA that showcases the obedience that characterizes the most exemplary relationship that exists in the Universe: the relationship that the Son of God has with his Father.

Let's rejoice in this fact: Jesus loves God! He obeys God in all things. So, now that we know how God loves Jesus and how Jesus loves God, we know exactly how *we* can love Jesus and how *we* should love others! We should love Jesus *as he loves God* (being obedient to his commandments), and we should love others *as God loves Jesus* (selflessly giving them the best). But we'll only be able to love as we should if we adopt the model given to us.

» To love, we have to adopt the model that God and Jesus give us.

c. Christian unity is like Jesus' unity with God

The basic premise of Christian unity is that the unity Jesus has with his Father *can* be and *should* be reproduced in us. In fact, it *must* be reproduced in us if we're going to fulfill the will of our Lord Jesus.

» "Protect them... so that they may be one as we are one."

... and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, *so that* they may be one *as* we are one (John 17:11).

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they *in God* (1 John 4:15).

The intention of God and Jesus is that we be unified in the same way that they are unified. This plainly means that the

⁵¹ Public display of affection

“oneness” the Father has with his Son Jesus is *not something mysterious*. On the contrary, it is something that we have to actually *imitate*. It would be totally unfair of Jesus to pray for us to do something that we weren’t even capable of understanding. It would even be *cruel* of him to give us such a hope—if perfect unity is impossible—but that’s not the case because the unity of God and Jesus *is* possible to understand and to emulate.

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that *I am in the Father*, and that *the Father is in me*? The words I say to you *I do not speak on my own authority*. Rather, it is *the Father, living in me*, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that *I am in the Father* and *the Father is in me*; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves (John 14:9-11).

God is in Christ and *Christ is in God*. What does that mean? Well, it’s totally comprehensible because it means that they are united in the *exact same way* that we are united to Christ (according to John 17:20-23; below). That is, God is “in Christ” through the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is “in God” by saying and doing just what God desires. In the same way, we’re in Christ if we live in love, and he’s in us through the Holy Spirit.⁵²

Jesus is in God because he’s in God’s will; God is in Jesus (“living in” him) by means of the Holy Spirit. These two points are extremely important to meditate upon and to grasp because they will free our minds from blurry theology. When we hear the phrase “living in,” we should use our brains, just as we do the rest of the Bible: It requires analysis to comprehend it! Teachings like these were not intended to be converted into “mysteries,” but, on the contrary, their

» The unity of God and Jesus is possible to understand and emulate.

» God is in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

⁵² Let’s just make sure that each of us has received the Holy Spirit or we have no right to suppose that Jesus is in us! Were you baptized in the Holy Spirit? What are the spiritual gifts you got when you were born of the Spirit?

» We are instructed by the unity of God and Jesus.

purpose is to be *instructive*. They are supposed to *instruct* us by presenting an example for us to follow! That's their design.

The great majority of Christians are tempted to read these passages as if the words were hiding some sort of deep, incomprehensible, cosmic reality. For those who want to be free from this temptation, there's a question that we believe will open their minds. If you can answer it, you'll experience the true blessing that exists in understanding the unity of Jesus and God. Here it is:

How can it be that Jesus prays for us to have with him
the same unity that he has with the Father
if such unity is incomprehensible?

Wouldn't it be unjust for Jesus to expect us (and the Bible says in John 17:20 that it's for "all" of us, not just for "some" of us) to obtain unity with him, God, and one another *without* even being able to understand such unity clearly? But Jesus is *not* unfair, so this challenge must be comprehensible and it must be within our reach to actually carry it out!

» Jesus is not unfair.

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that *all* of them *may be one*, Father, *just as* you are in me and I am in you. May they *also* be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, *that* they may be one *as* we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to *complete unity* (John 17:20-23).

» The salvation of the world depends upon our ability to unify.

We're not done with this subject yet—so hold on! The salvation of the world depends upon it! Christian unity is also vitally necessary for *evangelism*. If unbelievers are ever going to trust in Jesus we have to first obtain unity among believers. The Lord's plan is that unbelievers will (seeing the supernatural unity that we live in) repent and be converted.

So, again, we observe that the unity of Jesus with God *couldn't possibly* be something mysterious. How could it be a mystery if the salvation of the world depends on our faithful imitation of it? In fact, we have to understand it perfectly

and even live it out if the world will even have a chance of being saved!

... that all of them may be one, Father, *just as* you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us *so that* the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21).

I in them and you in me—*so that* they may be brought to complete unity. *Then* the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:23).

i. A crucial doctrine

Pay really close attention here because we have arrived at a crucial teaching: The way Christian unity is attained is by *Jesus giving us the same glory that God gave him*. What is that glory that God gave to Jesus, then? It's the promise of eternal life, reigning in the Kingdom in a resurrection body! It's authority, power, and wisdom! It's *deity!*

This next verse is so important that I would like for every Christian believer to look it over seven times. If you can unlock its power in your life you will have found the secret to true Christian unity. If we can put it into practice, we will be victorious in this life and will be the church triumphant!

We won't obtain unity by attending the same meetings or by belonging to the same denomination. Christian unity is all about where we're *going*, not about where we're *from*. Are we headed in the same direction? Do we have the same vision? (That's what matters). Anyone who is seeking first the Kingdom is my brother or sister in Christ. Anyone who has the glory the Holy Spirit gives us (the down payment for a divine nature) is on their way to obtaining perfect unity with the rest of Jesus' followers.

I have given them the glory that you gave me, *that* they may be one as we are one (John 17:22).

In case there is any doubt at this point, the glory of which Jesus speaks in the previous passage is the glory he got from God when God loved him before the Creation of the world.

» The world will only be convinced that we are loved of God when we have complete unity.

» The glory of having a divine nature is what Jesus has already offered us (in part) with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It's deity, a divine nature, that glory that the Word received from God before man was ever created. You can see that if you read just two verses later:

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see *my glory*, the glory you have given me *because you loved me* before the Creation of the world (John 17:24).

d. Chain-link relationships from God to us

We can be comforted by knowing that in the same way that Jesus was loved by the Father, so are we loved by Jesus. It's no ordinary love Jesus gives us; this is the love that is able to lift us up above temptation and sin, and into eternal glory; but this love Jesus gives us, just like God's love for Jesus, needs to be tended to. It's *conditional* and needs conservation. We need to love Jesus if he's going to continue to love us; and we need to love him by obeying him, just like he did with God. It will be very difficult for us to constantly obey our Lord Jesus, but if he could do it with the Father, then we know that it's possible.

» As Jesus had to do with God, so must we do with Jesus: conserve the love.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love (John 15:10).

There is a chain-link relationship here which starts with God, continues with Jesus, and ends with us.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you (John 15:9).

Have we come to realize that through Jesus we are united with God through the Spirit of Jesus—if the Spirit is in us? If you haven't realized it yet, may today be the day you do.

On that day *you will realize* that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you (John 14:20).

The Holy Spirit is the one who builds this spiritual unity, but we have to do our part by following Jesus in all that he

commands us to do, which includes forgiving, hoping, being patient, and especially *suffering for doing what is good*.

We also have to be willing to go when he says “Go.” He was sent by God; are you willing to be sent by Jesus wherever he may lead you? The conditions for being sent by Jesus are the same that he had when he was sent by God: We have to say and do only as we are told.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! *As* the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

» As Jesus was sent by God, so must we go when Jesus sends us.



Part XI. How important is this really?

It's possible that a person who is reading this book might think that this whole issue of "who God is" is really not such a big deal. One may naïvely reason that "as long as we all believe in Jesus, then things will all work out in the end." However, being that Jesus came with the express purpose of revealing the Father to us, that logic doesn't quite hold water.

We really *must* come to believe in the one who sent Jesus—and not *only* in Jesus. We really *must* come to have sound doctrine—not just emotional worship. There is no other way for the truth to work effectively in our lives so that we'll be empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk worthy of God and the Gospel, unless we come to the position of knowing that there's *only one God*, and then, subsequently, seek to know him more and more throughout our lives. We cannot disregard the one and only God, and we condemn ourselves if we ignore basic Christian doctrine.

» It's not enough just to believe in Jesus, if you don't *know God*.

1. Knowing God is the key for interpreting the Bible

Knowing God is the main key for interpreting the Bible because God is the greatest of all, and is the maximum object of all worship; all things and *beings* have their origin in Him,⁵³ even the Gospel. It is very possible to think that the

⁵³ Not all "beings" have their origin in Jesus, because that would include God. According to the Bible, in Jesus, all "things" have their being. We suggest that this

Gospel is the key for interpreting the Bible (and it certainly is its central theme), but we have to remember that even such a wonderful message *originated in the heart of God*. Therefore the knowledge of God is more important than the Gospel.

» The knowledge of God is even more important than the Gospel itself.

Knowing God is particularly essential for the interpretation of the more difficult Bible doctrines. For example, we can explain the nature of the Holy Spirit only if we begin with a correct understanding of the Father's nature. Another example of a challenging doctrine which can only be understood in the light of a solid faith is the intercession of our High Priest, explained in Hebrews 7–9. How can anyone understand how Jesus' intercession works without first understanding who the one God is? How can we conceive of an intercessor if we don't understand the higher being before whom the intercessor must mediate?

» God has life in himself. He's his own source of life.

We haven't even begun to research the vastness of God's magnificence; however, consider the following sweeping NT statements about the one God, and you might get an idea of how broad and wide the greatness of God really is:

» We should live for God.

... all live to him (Luke 20:38; NASB).

... the Father has life in himself (John 5:26).⁵⁴

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, *do it all for the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

» Someday God will gather all things together in one.

... I died to the law so that I might *live for God* (Galatians 2:19).

... in the dispensation of the fullness of the times *he* [God] *might gather together in one all things* in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth—in him (Ephesians 1:9-10; NKJV).

... the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *from whom the whole family in Heaven and Earth is named* (Ephesians 3:14-15; NKJV).

matter be a subject of further study.

⁵⁴ Let's keep in mind the fact that *only God* has *always* had life in himself. Jesus got that "life in himself" from God after the Lord Jesus was resurrected; but the one God got it from no one.

... *always* giving thanks to God the Father *for everything*, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20).

God is the builder of *everything* (Hebrews 3:4).

... human beings, who have been *made in God's likeness* (James 3:9).

... *like* the Holy One who called you, *be holy yourselves* also in *all* your behavior (1 Peter 1:15; NASB).

If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that *in all things God may be praised* through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:11).

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, *they may* because of your good deeds, as they observe them, *glorify God* in the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12; NASB).

And here's another:

...*from* him and *through* him and *for* him are *all things* (Romans 11:36).

The only thing about Romans 11:36 is that when you interpret it, you would do well to notice the implication of the first word: "from." About Jesus, the Bible says something subtly but nonetheless *dramatically* different from this declaration that all things are "from" God. About Jesus it says:

For *in* him [Jesus] all things were created... all things have been created *through* him and *for* him (Colossians 1:16).

Notice the small but extremely significant difference here: The Bible says that all things were made "in," "through," and "for" Jesus. Amen. That sounds similar to Romans 11:36, the passage about the Father, but it's *not* the same. There is a major difference to be observed, and it's this: All things are "from" God, they are not "from" anybody else.

When the Bible speaks about the Creation, the preposition "from" is used *exclusively* with reference to God. The Bible authors were careful not to say the same thing about Jesus. Why not? It is because *only God* is the original source of all

» The whole family of created beings gets its meaning from God.

» All humans were made in God's likeness.

» God should be praised in *all things* through Jesus Christ.

» Only God is the original source of all things.

» God is the "first cause" of all things.

things. Indeed, he channels them "through" Jesus, and gives them *to* Jesus as well. But only with reference to God is the preposition "from" used in these Creation passages. "From" is the preposition that indicates *source*, and God is that original source, the "first cause" of all things: the Father of all. Here's another passage that proves the same point:

There is no God but one... for us there is but one God, the Father, *from* whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:4,6).

So it's an unmistakable teaching of the Bible that all things and beings have their origins in the one God—only in him, and in *no other*—not even in Jesus.

a. The starting point

If we can't start with the doctrine that there is one God and Father, then where should we start? If "*everything* comes from God" (1 Corinthians 11:12), and if "God is the builder of *everything*" (Hebrews 3:4), then *what* does not have its origins in him? *Who* does not have their beginning in him? What or who is *independent* of God? The answers to these questions is "nothing and nobody."

In terms of Creation, God is the one...

... who made the heavens and the Earth and the sea and *everything* in them (Acts 14:15)

... who made the world and *everything* in it (Acts 17:24)

... from whom *all* things came and for whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:6)

... who created *all* things (Ephesians 3:9)

... who gives life to *everything* (1 Timothy 6:13)

... for whom and through whom *everything* exists (Hebrews 2:10)

... who created the heavens and *all* that is in them, the Earth and *all* that is in it, and the sea and *all* that is in it (Revelation 10:6)

... who made the heavens, the Earth, the sea and the springs of water (Revelation 14:7)

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that God, in his love, is the one...

... [who] is kind to the ungrateful and wicked (Luke 6:35)

... who gives endurance and encouragement (Romans 15:5)

... who is able to do *immeasurably more* than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20)

... who called you to live in the grace of Christ (Galatians 1:6)

... who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9)

... who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:2-3)

All these superlatives are astonishing and incomparable, of course. But there's more! In his sovereign power, God is the one...

... who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not (Romans 4:17)

... who works out *everything* in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11)

... who fills *everything* in *every way* (Ephesians 1:23)

... who is, and who was, and who is to come (Revelation 1:4,8; 4:8; 11:17)

... who sits on the throne (Revelation 4:9-10; 5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 7:15)

... who lives *for ever and ever* (Revelation 4:9; 10:6)

Finally, with reference to his authority in judgment, God is the one...

... who can destroy both soul and body in Hell (Matthew 10:28)

... to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13)

... who is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5).

Halleluiah! (I hope that you're extremely excited about who God is, and that you're willing to love him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, just as we are).

Here's just one more superlative for you to reflect upon. It comes in the form of a question: According to Jesus' teaching on prayer, whose "is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever"? (Matthew 6:13)

b. You must ultimately place your faith in God

The faith of the Christian has to ultimately be placed in God because it is only God's power that can resurrect us to eternal life. Jesus constantly directed Godward the faith of those who listened to his teachings; and that is one of the highest goals we have aimed for in putting together this book: to inspire you to put your faith in God. Even if you know about Jesus, you've misunderstood everything he taught if you've not come to a precise understanding of the one God.

» This book was written to inspire you to put your faith in God.

» Why should we seek Jesus? because God has approved of him.

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. *For* on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval (John 6:27).

May *the God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace *as you trust in him*, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:13).

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that *your faith might not rest* on human wisdom, but *on God's power* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

... *your faith in God* has become known *everywhere*. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Christ... was chosen before the Creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. *Through him you believe in God*, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and *so your faith and hope are in God* (1 Peter 1:19-21).



Part XII. Why is this so difficult?

Is monotheism so difficult to comprehend? Perhaps there's another explanation of who God is. If there is, we're willing to listen to it—but may it be simple. We can't sacrifice the simple truth that there's one God for some theologically complex “mystery” which will entangle our thoughts.

Also, may our faith in God be from the Bible. The last time I heard a Trinitarian pastor try to explain his concept of God, he began by quoting C.S. Lewis. What we need is not Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Loyola, or Lewis... We need to listen to the Bible! What does *God* have to say about himself? That's what interests me.

Monotheism is foundational, but at this point in history, with what has become an “overdevelopment” of theology, monotheism goes very much “against the grain” of teachings heard in churches everywhere. Monotheism is disregarded and outrightly *contradicted* in pulpits around the world—even in what have traditionally been considered to be the most “orthodox” churches.

To believe that the one God is the Father started to become unorthodox around 500 AD. Here we are, 1,500 years later, but the truth is not in chains! It cannot be concealed in a box—at least not a truth *this* big! There is still only one God, that one God is still the Father, and he's still on the throne. Are you willing to contend for this truth, or will you remain silent? Who will take a stand for God? Surely, God will reward such a person for their bravery. Muslims are willing to

» We will not sacrifice the simple truth that there's one God.

» Monotheism is “against the grain” of popular preaching.

» God is still on the throne.

» 1 Cor. 8:5
and 10:20-21

give their lives for God. What will we be willing to do to show God that we love him? We can *at least* begin by “loving him with all our minds” and by studying to see if what is presented in this book is true.

1. The current confusion is apostasy

Although nothing and nobody is outside of God’s sovereign rule, and all things come from him—the one and only God, the Creator of all things, *is not understood*. What a paradox! What irony! Such an ignorance of God is a characteristic of what the Bible calls the *Apostasy*. The Apostasy⁵⁵ is the time when the Christian church will turn away from the apostolic doctrines. At that final point in history, before the “Last Days,” only little traces of what the apostles taught can still be found in the Church. It’s when she’s just a glimmer of what she once was.

» What
will happen
during the
Apostasy?

As we’ve seen, it doesn’t take any special revelation to know that there’s but one God. If things are this dark in the Church, what must be the cause? Just as Israel forgot her God numerous times in the OT, the Church is in apostasy now.

» This has
already
happened to
Israel many
times.

My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge* (Hosea 4:6; NASB).

I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in *the knowledge of God* rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6; NASB).

We’re at that final point in history that anticipates the appearance of the Antichrist. These are times when people *think* that

⁵⁵ The term can be seen here: “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless *the Apostasy* comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; NASB); and here: “But the Spirit speaks expressly, that in latter times some shall *apostatise* from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1; Darby Translation).

they know God, but they really don't. They *say* that they love God, but they really don't.

[Jesus spoke to the Pharisees] You are doing the works of your own father [the Devil]." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is *God himself*" (John 8:41).

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against *the knowledge of God* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

[Paul, speaking of people in the church says] But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of *God* (2 Timothy 3:1-2,4).

Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the Antichrist—*denying the Father and the Son* (1 John 2:22).

Whoever *claims to love God yet hates* a brother or sister is a *liar*. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot *love God*, whom they have not seen (1 John 4:20).

» We destroy arguments and the pride that rises up against the knowledge of God.

» The Antichrist denies the Father and the Son.

a. Weak Christians

It's a sad fact, but it's a reality that some brothers and sisters in Christ are ignorant of God.

Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are *ignorant of God*—I say this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:34).

Apparently, even weak Christians may imagine that there are other gods, like "Allah," one of the many gods of the Hindus, or a god of the Native Americans. It's not that these Christians don't believe in God as the one true God (they know that the gods of other religions can't compete with him), it's just that they think that there might be other "gods" out there. They treat them like they're real. Paul recognized that such weakness existed within the fellowship of the Christians of his day, and excused it as such: a *weakness*, not heresy. Heresy would be to say that the "one God" is not the

» Even Christians may be confused about God, thinking that he is one of many others.

» Heresy would be to say that the “one God” is not the Father, but some other.

Father, but some other. But these were church members who acted as if there was some sort of credence to the idolatry that surrounded them and this weakness affected even the way they thought about the food they bought for consumption.

... for us there is but *one God*, the Father... but *not everyone possesses this knowledge*. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god... (1 Corinthians 8:6-7).

b. Persecuted for God

» Ignorance of God produces extreme sinfulness.

Ignorance of God is going to bring people to an extreme degree of sinfulness. It’s amazing, but the fundamental reason why people will eventually persecute Christians is because these persecutors *do not know God*. It will all come down to this: Who *knows* God and who *doesn’t*. In fact, these hypocrites are going to be imagining that they are actually serving God as they seek to destroy sincere believers.

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, *for they do not know the one who sent me* (John 15:18-21).

They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will *think* they are offering a service to God. They will do such things *because they have not known the Father or me* (John 16:2-3).

» People will think that they’re serving God when the reality is that they haven’t ever known him.

c. Ambiguous worship

Let’s also remind ourselves that right worship, the one that Jesus instructed us to lift up, is to worship who we *know*, not to worship who we don’t know. We can’t help but notice

how worship has become so ambiguous in churches (and in the Christian music industry in general) these days. In many songs it seems like all reason is put aside and the most irrational mixing of lyrics about the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God passes for spiritual worship. This is not healthy for the hearts or the minds of Christians. Most of us have strong feelings about what we believe *not* based on what we study, but upon what we sing. That is okay, but it makes worship leaders and Christian music artists accountable before God for transmitting truth through their music—are they acting responsibly?

Do we *know* the one who we worship? Is he really a “mystery” or has God revealed himself as the one God and Father? In Acts 17 (Appendix 4c), Paul argued that it’s a necessary part of worship that we *know* the one whom we worship. He wasn’t the first to have said that, of course, but the teaching that we should know the one we worship was already established by Jesus himself.

You Samaritans do not really know whom you worship; but *we Jews know whom we worship...* (John 4:22; Good News Translation).

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the *true worshippers* will *worship the Father* in the Spirit and *in truth*, for they are the kind of worshippers *the Father seeks*. God is spirit, and *his worshippers* must worship in the Spirit and *in truth* (John 4:23-24).

» Right worship is worshipping who we *know*.

» The Father is seeking worshippers in Spirit and in truth.

2. God is the Great Judge and to be feared

Why is all of this important? Well, it’s certainly not just for a person to show off his understanding of theology. (That would defeat the purpose of giving God the glory—we would be taking it *away* from him). On the contrary, we

» We share the message about God with humility, not with pride.

proclaim the one God in a spirit of humility—we can't deny the truth of Biblical revelation, even when such a revelation goes against trends in Christian churches. Even if fear causes us to tremble, we must speak with boldness; we must speak what is true.

a. The fear of the fear of God

There are psychological reasons why people reject the knowledge of God. To really know God is to fear him—and people are not too motivated to know someone who punishes sin and who can condemn them to an eternity in Hell. However, such a fear *is* justifiable, and is actually quite *healthy* for us. Precisely, the way to overcome our distaste for the fear of the Lord is by simply *trusting* that it is good for us. Would the Bible say so if it weren't?

» We have to believe that the fear of God is good for us.

We have to believe that the fear of God is beneficial to us. The Bible says that it sharpens our conscience and keeps us from getting out of hand with sin. It protects us from temptation. Knowing God as the Judge of all, we come to grips with our need for repentance and we learn to hate the sins we have committed. If people hate cancer because of its destructive effects, they then will take the steps necessary to remove a malignant tumor. Their hate of cancer saves them. Their fear of death brings them health. So it is with those who learn to hate sin in the fear of God. Health is on the horizon. Forgiveness is around the corner... for those who know, trust, and fear the one God.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).

Wisdom's instruction is *to fear the LORD* (Proverbs 15:33).

... a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; *the fear of the LORD* is the key to this treasure (Isaiah 33:6).

Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and *to fear your name is wisdom*—"Heed the rod and the One who appointed it (Micah 6:9).

[Jesus said] But I will show you *whom* you should fear: *Fear him* who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. *Yes, I tell you, fear him* (Luke 12:5).

... *we will all stand before God's judgment seat*. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will *acknowledge God*." So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves *to God* (Romans 14:10-12).

It is *a dreadful thing* to fall into the hands of *the living God* (Hebrews 10:31).

... we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and *we respected them* for it. How much more should we submit to *the Father of spirits* and live! (Hebrews 12:9).

... *our God* is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Hebrews 13:4).

There is *only one* Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save *and destroy* (James 4:12).

Fear God (1 Peter 2:17).

Slaves, *in reverent fear of God* submit yourselves to your masters (1 Peter 2:18).



Appendices

This book is long enough, but appendices became necessary during the writing of it as we noticed that many concepts needed to be explored beyond the space allotted to each chapter. In some cases, Bible passages that deserved to complement a teaching were too long to insert in the main text—those are included here.

We encourage you to research other challenging passages and to share them with us so that we might incorporate them into future editions of this book. Questions, doubts, suggestions, and all correspondence should be directed to our e-mail: tomfinken@yahoo.com. Any comments that will help us in future editions will be appreciated. May God bless you.

Appendix 1. Questions for healthy discussion

- Is there only one God? Who is he?
- What does “Godhead” mean? Is it a Biblical term or did man invent it?
 - What do people mean by “Trinity”? Is the term found in the Bible? Where?
 - Who are we to pray to?
 - Who are we to worship?
 - Is worship supposed to be ambiguous, or should we be clear about who we are worshipping?
 - Was Jesus created at some point in time? If so, when was it? What Bible passage proves it?
- Is Jesus God? In what sense is he God?

- Is the Holy Spirit God? In what sense is he God?
- Is anyone else divine? Can anyone else *become* divine?

Appendix 2. Historical Overview

It was only during the late fifth century AD, more than 450 years after Christ's first coming, that official Christian doctrine began to manifest a lack of clarity about the oneness of God. That was when certain theologians who promoted the creed that bore the name of Athanasius (to clarify, it is unlikely that Athanasius himself, who died in 373 AD, about a century beforehand, ever wrote it) declared that God was "one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."⁵⁶ The fundamental presumption of many Christians from that time up until the present, as this Trinitarian formula for explaining the one God became more and more popular, is that the one God was *no longer* the Father.

Since the time the Trinitarian formula became predominant in Christianity, it gradually ceased being popular to hold to the older Nicene Creed (penned in 325 AD, around 150 years earlier than the Athanasian Creed), which begins with these words: "We believe in *one God*, the Father Almighty."⁵⁷ The Nicene terminology is clear on the issue of who the one God is. It states that the one God is *the Father*, *not* the Son *or* the Holy Spirit; but in spite of its clarity and the fact that most denominations still affirm that it represents orthodoxy, it seems to have become terribly misunderstood. It does *not* affirm Trinitarianism, as most people think!

Many people throughout the centuries have been led astray by elaborate teachings about who God is, but we take the simple Nicene position of defining the one God as the Father. This is not because of any preference for a particular creed, but because the Nicene Creed agrees with the Scriptures. Not only does it reflect the doctrine of the apostles, but

⁵⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed#The_original_Nicene_Creed_of_325

» The Nicene terminology clearly states that the one God is the Father.

it's the creed that comes to us from the time period closest to their day: the Ante-Nicene period when the apostolic fathers governed the churches. No Trinitarian creed comes down to us from the time of the apostles or the period that followed them. Trinitarianism only evolved after the Roman Empire took control of the church under the Emperor Constantine. It is a dogma of Roman Catholicism.

The Roman Catholic interpretation of "one God" which Protestantism (16th c.) and later, the Evangelical church (18th c.) adopted as well, which is the Trinitarian position, has been summed up in the now widespread declaration of faith: "We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons."⁵⁸ This is the definition of the one God which pervades most Christian confessions of faith today; however, it *has no basis whatsoever in the Holy Bible*.

The Bible clearly affirms that the one God is the Father, Yahweh God. Using the expression "one God" to refer to any other being is (at best) a misrepresentation of the Scriptures, and (at worst) a *grave heresy*. At best, naïve believers are sincerely confused; at worst, the blind are leading the blind on the most fundamental reality in the Universe: there is one God.

I suspect that most churches and Christian organizations use the expression "one God in three persons" more to sound "orthodox" than out of any Bible-based conviction that it's true. If you use it, you'll be accepted by the great majority of Christian groups, although it's highly unlikely that anybody will ever discuss the "Trinity" with you. People, even the most highly-trained pastors, are generally afraid of discussing an issue that has become (because of human teachings) so shrouded in mystery. Monotheism, a very basic truth, has

» No Trinitarian creeds have come down to us from the time of the apostles or even from the period after them.

» At best, mistaking the "one God" for another is a misrepresentation; at worst, it's a grave heresy.

⁵⁸ For just a few examples of this definition you can go to Evangelical sources such as Bible Gateway's statement of faith (<http://www.biblegateway.com/about/faith.php>), the statement of faith of Liberty University (<http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=6907>), and the World Evangelical Alliance (<http://www.worldevangelicals.org/aboutwea/statementoffaith.htm>), which all use the same formula to describe the one God.

been *choked out* by the weeds of difficult theological vocabulary. It has become *obscured* by a tangle of human doctrines.

Appendix 3. The Nicene Creed

The original 325 AD Nicene Creed is presented here so that you can get a feel for the intention of the authors. As I shared previously, the only part that one should be careful with is the mistranslations which say that Jesus is “true God from true God” instead of, as it correctly says in the Wikipedia example presented here, “*very* God of *very* God.”

We believe in *one God, the Father Almighty*, Maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, *very God of very God, begotten, not made*, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made [both in Heaven and on Earth]; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into Heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and in the Holy Ghost. [But those who say: ‘There was a time when he was not;’ and ‘He was not before he was made;’ and ‘He was made out of nothing,’ or ‘He is of another substance’ or ‘essence,’ or ‘The Son of God is created,’ or ‘changeable,’ or ‘alterable’—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]⁵⁹

Appendix 4. Longer Passages

Here we have some passages that might have otherwise distracted readers from the main ideas developed in this book; that is, if they had been included in the principle text. We thought that a better place for them would be at the end of the material to avoid anyone from getting bogged down. The first is the famous “Burning Bush” passage.

a. Moses meets God

Here, I would like to do more than share the passage; I

⁵⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed

would like us to see how God presented his personal name to Moses. At the burning bush (Exodus 3), the God of the Bible revealed himself to Moses by means of a name which is often translated as *Yahweh*. (Another valid translation often employed is *Jehovah*). From the name *Yahweh* we get the well known exclamation of worship “Halleluiah,” which means “praise be to Yah” (*Yah* being the short form of *Yahweh*). This name is understood to be God’s personal name. The reason why a Christian should believe that *Yahweh* is, in fact, the one God’s personal name, should be clear from the message of the Exodus 3 passage presented here.

And Moses said unto God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, ‘The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;’ and they shall say to me, ‘*What is his name?*’ What shall I say unto them?”

And God said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM.” And he said, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, ‘I AM hath sent me unto you.’”

And God said moreover unto Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *Jehovah*, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this is my name forever*, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exodus 3:13-15; ASV).

The third commandment says

Thou shalt not take *the name* of Jehovah thy God in vain: for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh *his name* in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11; ASV)

and in the Lord’s Prayer, we are taught to say

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be *your name* (Matthew 6:9), so out of reverence for the name of God, neither Christ Jesus nor the apostles ever pronounce the personal name “Yahweh,” at least as far as what we see recorded in the Scriptures. Perhaps they whispered it in prayer at one point or another, but no Bible writer ever heard them clearly enough to quote

» How did God present his personal name to Moses?

them. Instead, as was the common practice of their time, they would replace God's name *Yahweh* with the title "LORD." This is also the custom of the majority of English Bible translations today.

With few exceptions, English translations of the Bible replace the personal name *Yahweh* with the title "LORD." But this exaggerated piety⁶⁰ has robbed generations of English-language Bible readers of a consciousness of God's name that would otherwise have benefitted them. The most-read version of the Spanish Bible (the Reina-Valera) however, *does* use the name *Jehová* in all places where "Yahweh" appears in the original Hebrew text. The only English version to use "Jehovah" is the American Standard Version (ASV), which we think is commendable.

If for no other reason than to respond positively to the Jehovah's Witnesses, who rightly point out that the name of God has been erased from the consciousness of Christianity, we should feel free to use God's personal name, unless that freedom causes someone with a weak conscience to sin. That is, if for someone it is "taking his name in vain" to pronounce it, then I won't pronounce it so that the person will not be tempted to do what his or her conscience forbids. I think that this is the reason why we don't see Jesus or the apostles ever using it: They were being careful not to put a stumbling block before the weaker brother.

b. Humanity turns from God

The following passage from Romans chapter 1 is a summary of how humanity has turned from God and denied him the worship and service that is due him. We shared parts of it in Chapter I.2.a, but here we'll print it out for you completely.

⁶⁰ I say "exaggerated" because nowhere in the Bible is it prohibited to pronounce the holy name of God. We're just warned not to take it *in vain*; that is, not to use it in a senseless way. To use the name of God in a *meaningful* way, on the other hand, is something that could certainly enrich our lives spiritually. At any rate, Moses and the prophets used it frequently so it can't possibly be wrong to pronounce it.

It shows how the human race slipped into spiritual ignorance by turning from its original knowledge of its Creator. It's an accurate portrait of what has brought us to the point we are at now: a point in history when God is disregarded by entire ethnic groups, regions of the world, or nations which otherwise would have known him.

The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since *what may be known about God is plain to them*, because *God has made it plain to them*. For since the creation of the world *God's invisible qualities*—his eternal power and divine nature—*have been clearly seen*, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although *they knew God*, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and *exchanged the glory of the immortal God* for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. *They exchanged the truth about God for a lie*, and worshiped and served created things rather than *the Creator—who is forever praised*. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as *they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God*, so *God gave them over to a depraved mind*, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, *God-haters*, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. *Although they know God's righteous decree* that those who do such things deserve death,

they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:18-32).

c. Paul in Athens

Paul the apostle spoke in Athens, Greece, the epicenter of the philosophical activity of his age. What did he have to say to the men and women responsible for the most prestigious and esteemed philosophical tradition the world has ever beheld? He basically told them: “You’re spiritually ignorant. You don’t know the very God who made you, the one who resurrected the Messiah.” He said it in a gentle and kind way, of course, but the great apostle confronted them with their lack of knowledge of *the one God*.

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So *you are ignorant of the very thing you worship*—and *this* is what I am going to proclaim to you.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole Earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that *the divine being* is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such *ignorance*, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by *the man he has appointed*. He has given proof of this to everyone by *raising him from the dead*” (Acts 17:22-31).

Question: When the passage says “he himself gives *everyone* life and breath and everything else,” does that “everyone” also include *Jesus*, referred to as “the man” that God has appointed?

Another question: When it says “he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him,” doesn’t that mean that *every little detail* in our lives is orchestrated so that we would try to know God? Doesn’t that mean that all elements of our life (including our country of birth, language, ethnicity, religion, and the generation we were born into) are predetermined by God for one reason: so that we would know him, the one God? If so, then knowing God is the greatest lesson life has for us! That would make this book pretty important, wouldn’t it?

d. God’s throne as seen by Ezekiel, Daniel, and John

What does God’s throne look like, exactly? The best thing we can do is to just read the Bible accounts that give us the wonderful details. Brace yourself and read until the end, please. You’ll be enthralled by what you read. Here’s the account from Ezekiel’s vision given to him at the Kebar River, of *that place* which existed before things were created through Jesus; *the place* which is *not* of this Creation:

I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures.

In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also

had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body. Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.

As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around. When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome. Under the vault their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

Then there came *a voice* from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the vault over their heads was what looked like *a throne of lapis lazuli*, and high above *on the throne* was *a figure like that of a man*. I saw that from what appeared to be *his waist up* he looked *like glowing metal, as if full of fire*, and that from there down *he looked like fire*; and brilliant

light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was *the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD*. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking (Ezekiel 1:4-28).

Good thing to do when you see God: fall facedown on the ground. I hope you would do the same. Next, we have the vision of the prophet Daniel. It gives even more details about the appearance of God. Notice, when Jesus appears, how he behaves in the presence of the Almighty.

“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened...

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (Daniel 7:9-10,13-14).

Daniel’s vision gives me goosebumps, but to have seen what John saw—to catch a glimpse of the true God—must have been just as enthralling; and it still *is* if we read the Bible with the eyes of faith. Here’s the Apocalyptic vision of God’s throne according to John:

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was *a throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it*. And *the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby*. A rainbow that shone like an emerald *encircled the throne*. Surrounding *the throne* were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From *the throne* came flashes of lightning, rum-

blings and peals of thunder.

In front of *the throne*, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of *the throne* there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, *around the throne*, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,*’ who was, and is, and is to come.”

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to *him who sits on the throne* and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before *him who sits on the throne* and worship him *who lives for ever and ever*. They lay their crowns before *the throne* and say: “You are worthy, *our Lord and God*, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Revelation 4:2-11).

Appendix 5. The Apostles differentiate between God and Jesus

Here we would like you to observe how common it was for the apostles to use the language of distinction as they made reference to God and to Jesus in the same breath. They were not confused over who was who, but *frequently and effortlessly* demonstrated that the two are *distinct*. What a difference from the pastors of today who use ambiguous language week after week. The kind of language that appears below is much too concise for the great majority of today’s preachers.

Again, please pay attention to the *duality* that apostolic thought reflects; that is, they don’t use the Trinitarian “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” formula anywhere *near* as often as they emphasize the dual unity of Jesus with God. May our speech and communication be similar to theirs—which is, after all, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We have come to believe and to know that *you* [Jesus] are the

Holy One of *God* (John 6:69).

From this man's descendants *God* has brought to Israel the Savior *Jesus*, as he promised (Acts 13:23).

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to *God* in repentance and have faith in *our Lord Jesus* (Acts 20:21).

But *God* demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, *Christ* died for us (Romans 5:8).

... the gift of *God* is eternal life in *Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23).

Accept one another, then, just as *Christ* accepted you, in order to bring praise to *God* (Romans 15:7).

God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with *his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:9).

But thanks be to *God!* He gives us the victory through *our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Now it is *God* who makes both us and you stand firm in *Christ* (2 Corinthians 1:21).

... in *Christ* we speak before *God* with sincerity, as those sent from *God* (2 Corinthians 2:17).

Such confidence we have through *Christ* before *God* (2 Corinthians 3:4).

But when *God*, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal *his Son* in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being (Galatians 1:15-16).

For we are *God's* handiwork, created in *Christ Jesus* to do good works, which *God* prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in *Christ God* forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of *Christ* and of *God* (Ephesians 5:5).

Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from *God*

the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:23).

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of *Christ Jesus* (Philippians 1:8).

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which *God* has called me heavenward in *Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:14).

And the peace of *God*, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in *Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:7).

And *my God* will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in *Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19).

For you died, and your life is now hidden with *Christ* in *God* (Colossians 3:3).

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of *Christ Jesus*, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of *God*, mature and fully assured (Colossians 4:12).

For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of *God's* churches in Judea, which are in *Christ Jesus* (1 Thessalonians 2:14).

... the Jews who killed *the Lord Jesus* and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease *God*... (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15).

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in *God's* service in spreading the Gospel of *Christ* (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

Now may *our God and Father himself* and *our Lord Jesus* clear the way for us to come to you... May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of *our God and Father* when *our Lord Jesus* comes with all his holy ones (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13).

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please *God*, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in *the Lord Jesus* to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of *the Lord Jesus*. It is *God's* will that you should be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:1-3).

... we believe that *Jesus* died and rose again, and so we believe that *God* will bring with *Jesus* those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

For *God* did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through *our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

... give thanks in all circumstances; for this is *God's* will for you in *Christ Jesus* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

May *God himself, the God of peace*, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of *our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

He will punish those who do not know *God* and do not obey the gospel of *our Lord Jesus* (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

We pray this so that the name of *our Lord Jesus* may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of *our God* and *the Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Thessalonians 1:12).

May *our Lord Jesus Christ himself* and *God our Father*, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope... (2 Thessalonians 1:16).

May *the Lord* direct your hearts into *God's* love and *Christ's* perseverance (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

In the sight of *God*, who gives life to everything, and of *Christ Jesus*, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you... (1 Timothy 6:13).

In the presence of *God* and of *Christ Jesus*, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge... (2 Timothy 4:1).

And *the God of all grace*, who called you to his eternal glory in *Christ*, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast (1 Peter 5:10).

And our fellowship is with *the Father* and with *his Son, Jesus Christ* (1 John 1:3).

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: *God* is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of *Jesus, his Son*, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before *God* and receive from him anything we ask, because

we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of *his Son, Jesus Christ*, and to love one another as he commanded us (1 John 3:21-23).

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep *God's* commands and hold fast their testimony about *Jesus* (Revelation 12:17).

They were purchased from among mankind and offered as first-fruits *to God* and *the Lamb* (Revelation 14:4).

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of *God* who keep his commands and remain faithful to *Jesus*... (Revelation 14:12).

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about *Jesus* and because of the word of *God*... they will be priests *of God* and *of Christ* and will reign with him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4,6).

I did not see a temple in the city, because *the Lord God Almighty* and *the Lamb* are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of *God* gives it light, and *the Lamb* is its lamp (Revelation 21:22-23).

Appendix 6. Jesus was sent by God

In this book, there is already a rather lengthy section in which we describe the importance of Jesus having been *sent by God*. Some additional passages that confirm this great truth are listed below:

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who *sent* me and to finish his work (John 4:34).

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes *him who sent me* has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has *sent*” (John 6:29).

... this is the will of him who *sent* me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me (John 6:39).

No one can come to me unless the Father who *sent* me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day (John 6:44).

Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who *sent* me (John 7:33).

I know him because I am from him and he *sent* me (John 7:29).

I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who *sent* me (John 8:18).

I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who *sent* me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world (John 8:26-27).

The one who *sent* me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him (John 8:29).

As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who *sent* me (John 9:4).

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you *sent* me (John 11:42).

... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have *sent* me (John 17:21).

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and *sent* his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10).

Appendix 7. Names used exclusively for the one God

May all of us know God better and better. If you already know him, than accept the challenge to know him *more!* As you conclude your reading of this book, know that our prayer for you is the same one that Paul expressed in his letter to the Ephesians:

... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that *you may know him better* (Ephesians 1:17).

Along with this prayer, as a tool for reflection, we include

a list of Biblical names—these names are used *exclusively* for the one true God (at least when you see them in the Bible. Modern worship music differs considerably from the Bible). These names of God are not shared with anybody, not even with Christ Jesus, and can be seen below written in bold print with certain Bible references included. These are just *some* of the special names that are used exclusively with reference to the “one God”—the list is not exhaustive. As you go reading the Bible, see how many more you can add to it, and please let us know what you find so that we can include more names in further editions of this book.

- ☪ **(El Elyon) God Most High** (Gen. 14:18-22; Ps. 7:10; 57:2)
- ☪ **God Most High** (Heb. 7:1)
- ☪ **the Most High** (Lk. 1:76; 6:35; Acts 7:48)
- ☪ **the Most High God** (Acts 16:17)
- ☪ **the Mighty One** (Ps. 50:1; Lk. 1:49)
- ☪ **the LORD (Yahweh) Almighty** (Zech. 2:8-9,11;3:7,9-10)
- ☪ **the Lord God Almighty** (Rev. 11:17; 19:6,15; 21:22)
- ☪ **God Almighty** (Rev. 16:14; 19:15)
- ☪ **the Great God** (Deut. 10:17)
- ☪ **Sovereign Lord** (Acts 4:24)
- ☪ **the Everlasting God** (Isa. 40:28)
- ☪ **the Immortal God** (Ro. 1:23)
- ☪ **the Eternal God** (Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Ro. 16:26)
- ☪ **the Creator—who is forever praised** (Ro. 1:25)
- ☪ **Faithful Creator** (1 Pet. 4:19)
- ☪ **the God of Glory** (Acts 7:2)
- ☪ **the Blessed One** (Mk. 14:61)
- ☪ **the Holy One** (1 Jn. 2:20)
- ☪ **God of Gods** (Deut. 10:17; Dan. 2:47)
- ☪ **the Majesty** (Heb. 1:3; 8:1)
- ☪ **the God of the Living** (Lk. 20:38)

- ☩ **the Living God** (1 Sam. 17:26; Dan. 6:20; Ps. 42:2; Jer. 10:10; Mt. 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; 2 Cor. 3:3; 1 Thes. 1:9; 1 Tim. 4:10; 6:17; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2)
- ☩ **the Lord God** (Lk. 1:32; Rev. 18:8; 22:5)
- ☩ **the Lord their God** (Lk. 1:16)
- ☩ **Him who is, and who was, and who is to come** (Rev. 1:4,8;4:8)
- ☩ **the One who is and who was** (Rev. 11:17)
- ☩ **the Ancient of Days** (Dan. 7:9,13)
- ☩ **God the Father**⁶¹ (Jn. 6:27; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:24; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 5:20; 6:23; Philip. 2:11; Col. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:17; 2 Jn. 1:3; Jude 1:1)
- ☩ **Abba Father** (Mk. 14:36; Ro. 8:15; Gal. 4:6)
- ☩ **God our Father** (Ro. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Philip. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 2:16; Phil. 1:3; Ja. 1:27)
- ☩ **our God and Father himself** (1 Thes. 3:11)
- ☩ **our God and Father** (1 Thes. 3:13)
- ☩ **Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth** (Luke 10:21)
- ☩ **your Father in Heaven** (Luke 11:13)
- ☩ **Living Father** (Jn. 6:57)
- ☩ **the Father of Heavenly Lights** (Ja. 1:17)
- ☩ **Lord of Heaven and Earth** (Mt. 11:25)
- ☩ **the Lord of the Earth** (Rev. 11:4)
- ☩ **the God of Heaven** (Rev. 11:3; 16:11)
- ☩ **the God of all Grace** (1 Pet. 5:10)
- ☩ **the God who inspires the prophets** (Rev. 22:6)
- ☩ **the God** (Jn. 1:1-2 and Ephesians _____ which use τὸν θεόν to refer to God in the Greek)

⁶¹ Please note that the Bible *never* uses the terms “God the Son” or “God the Holy Spirit.” These terms are expressions of human theology, not of Biblical truth.

- ☩ **God Himself** (1 Thes. 3:11; Rev. 21:3)
- ☩ **God Himself, the God of Peace** (1 Thes. 5:23)
- ☩ **the True God** (2 Chron. 5:13; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 10:10; Jn. 17:3; 1 Thes. 1:9; 1 Jn. 5:20)
- ☩ **the Only Wise God** (Ro. 16:27)
- ☩ **the God of Peace** (Ro. 15:33; 16:20; Philip. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20)
- ☩ **Love** (1 Jn. 4:8,16)
- ☩ **the God of Love and Peace** (2 Cor. 13:11)
- ☩ **the God of Hope** (Ro. 15:13)
- ☩ **God my Savior** (Lk. 1:47)
- ☩ **God our Savior** (Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4)
- ☩ **God, the Judge of all** (Heb. 12:23)
- ☩ **the God of Israel** (Mt. 15:31)
- ☩ **the God of the people of Israel** (Acts 13:17)
- ☩ **the Lord, the God of Israel** (Lk. 1:68)

- ☩ **the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** (Acts 7:32)
- ☩ **the God of Jacob** (Acts 7:46)
- ☩ **the One God** (_____)
- ☩ **the Great King** (Matthew 5:35)

“So let us know,
let us press on to know the LORD.”
(Hosea 6:3)

“Let him who boasts boast of this,
that he understands and knows me.”
(Jeremiah 9:6)

“Now this is eternal life:
that they know you,
the only true God...”
(John 17:3)



The Unity Series

Based on the seven realities which together constitute the “unity of the spirit,” the objective of this series is to lay the groundwork for true Christian unity. We want you to be able to safeguard and even defend each reality, so each book offers a Biblical explanation for one in particular.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. There is *one body* and *one Spirit*, just as you were called to *one hope* when you were called; *one Lord*, *one faith*, *one baptism*; *one God* and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Welcome to a study that won't leave you disappointed. Get a copy of each book in the series and pray with Jesus for unity to be ours! It's not far from those who are willing to strive for it.

ONE
GOD

ONE
BODY

ONE
SPIRIT

ONE
BAPTISM

ONE
HOPE

ONE
FAITH

ONE
LORD