

THEISM

The One True God

(Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)

The Bible declares that there is but one God. “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me” (Isaiah 46:9; see also Malachi 2:10). The God of the Bible is the true God (2 Chronicles 15:3; Jeremiah 10:10). He is distinguished from “other gods” (Exodus 23:13; Judges 2:12; 1 Samuel 8:8; 1 Kings 9:9, etc.) or “foreign gods” (Genesis 35:2, 4; Deuteronomy 32:16; Joshua 24:20, 23; Judges 10:16; 1 Samuel 7:3; 2 Chronicles 14:3; 33:15; Jeremiah 5:19) by the fact that he created heaven and earth (Jeremiah 10:11; 1 Chronicles 16:25-26; Psalm 96:4-5). The true God has power, whereas other so called gods have none.

During early biblical times many people did not believe in nor serve the one true God. Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed in and served the creator God (Exodus 3:6; 15-16; 4:5; Matthew 22:32; Romans 4:3, 17; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23), neither his father Terah nor his brother Nahor believed in that God (Genesis 11:26; Joshua 24:2). During Jacob’s lifetime, some of his own family worshipped foreign gods (Genesis 31:30, 32; 35:2, 4). When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were commanded to have no other gods (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7; see also Exodus 34:13-14; Deuteronomy 11:16, etc.). God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Matthew 6:24). They were told many times that to worship and serve other gods would be catastrophic (Exodus 23:33; Deuteronomy 7:4; 8:19; 30:17-18; Joshua 23:16; 24:20). Even so, after Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the law from God, the Israelites clamored for gods (Exodus 32:1, 23). Aaron, Moses brother and also the Israelite high priest, molded a calf of gold and set a day for them to worship it (Exodus 32:2-6). Before coming into the Promised Land, Israel was charged not to worship or serve the gods of the land they would be conquering (Exodus 23:34; 34:12-17; Leviticus 19:4; Deuteronomy 6:14; 7:16; etc.) They were to destroy images to other gods (Numbers 33:51-52). Moses knew that after he died, Israel would turn away from God. He therefore composed a song for them to sing to remind them to be faithful to God (Deuteronomy 32:1-43). Before his death, Joshua challenged Israel not to serve other gods (Joshua 24:14-15). Although they promised to serve the one and only true God (Joshua 24:16), they did not keep their promise.

Throughout Old Testament history, the Israelites alternated between serving the one true God and serving many and various gods of the nations around them. During the days of Joshua and of all the elders who outlived Joshua, Israel served the true God (Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:7). However, for the next several hundred years, the Israelites vacillated between forsaking God, being forsaken by God, going into subjection to other nations, crying out to God, and being delivered by God when they returned to him (Judges 2:11-23; 10:6-16; 1 Samuel 8:7-9). During the initial period of monarchy, when Israel was ruled by Saul, David, and Solomon, Israel was mostly loyal to the one true God. However, during the latter half of the reign of King Solomon, the nation turned back into idolatry and worshipped other gods because Solomon built idols and temples to foreign gods to please his many wives (1 Kings 11:3-13; 26-39). Because Solomon led Israel into idolatry, God divided the kingdom into two sections. The northern section was dominated by idolatry, beginning with Jeroboam who erected two calves of gold for his people to worship (1 Kings 12:26-33). All Israelite kings of the northern kingdom who followed Jeroboam continued his idolatrous practice (1 Kings 14:16; 15:30; 16:31; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24; 28; 17:22). Most notable of these was Ahab, whose wife Jezebel sought to remove all worship of the true God from the land. That’s when Elijah though he was the only person faithful to God (1 Kings 19:14; Romans

11:3-4). Idolatry finally brought the northern kingdom into complete ruin when it was destroyed by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:5-23). The kings of the southern kingdom were highly influenced by idolatry. Kings like Asa (1 Kings 15:8-24), Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:42-43), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:2-7), and Josiah (2 Kings 23:25) served the Lord, but other kings like Ahaz (2 Kings 16:2-4) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:2-9) were very idolatrous. Throughout the period of Israelite monarchies, God called his servants the prophets (2 Kings 17:13; Jeremiah 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) to proclaim his word, but the prophets were persecuted and killed (1 Kings 18:13; 19:1; Luke 11:50; Acts 7:52). God therefore designated the Babylonians to destroy the southern kingdom and take its people into captivity. Only after Babylonian captivity, when God had restored Israel to its land, did the Jews take pains to serve only the one true God (Ezra 6:21), even to putting away their foreign wives (Ezra 10:3, 19), lest they be led by them again into idolatry.

By New Testament times, the concept of only one God was firmly held within Jewish culture (Mark 12:32), although idolatry existed abundantly among the Gentiles. New Testament writers also affirmed that there is but only one true God (John 17:3; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19).

A significant fact about the one true God of the Bible should be noted and underscored. Although there is but one true God, that one God consists of three personalities – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Collectively these three are called the “Godhead” (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). That there are not three true Gods of the Bible but only one may be demonstrated in several ways. First, a Hebrew name for God is “*Elohim*.” The word is plural but applied to both the one true God and to foreign gods. Whenever the term is used regarding foreign gods in the Bible, it uses plural verbs, but whenever used to describe the true God it always uses singular verbs, thereby indicating that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead. That the ancient Israelites saw no contradiction in the concept of the one God and the plural name *Elohim* to describe him may be illustrated by two passages. “Then God [*Elohim*] said, ‘Let us make man in our own image’” (Genesis 1:26). Also, “The Lord our God [*Elohim*] is one God [*Elohim*]” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Notice also that the term God is applied to the Father (Romans 1:7), the Son (Hebrews 1:8), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). Moreover, many divine attributes are equally ascribed to each person of the Godhead. Only a few examples can be given. The Father is all powerful (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 19:26), and so also is the Son (John 1:3) and the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4). The Father is everywhere (Jeremiah 23:23-24), and so also is the Son (Matthew 28:20) and the Holy Spirit (Psalm 139:7-10). The Father is all knowing (Psalm 139:1-6), and so also is the Son (Matthew 9:4-6; John 4:17-18) and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-12). The Father is everlasting (Psalm 90:2), and so also is the Son (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16) and the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

Finally, the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be observed by noting their unity on occasions when they achieved divine objectives together. Some of these were at the announcement of Jesus’ birth (Matthew 1:20-21), at Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 3:21-22), when Jesus taught about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:8-10), at Jesus’ commission to baptize (Matthew 28:19) etc.

Since there is but one true God, who is all powerful, all knowing, everywhere, and unchanging, and since he requires our allegiance, should we not obey and serve him (Matthew 7:24-27). To serve him results in receiving his blessings, but to disobey him is to reap his wrath.