

Is There Only One God? - Christians, Three Gods, and the Trinity (Part 1)

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Shortly before Jesus was crucified, He was arrested and tried by the Sanhedrin, Israel's Supreme Court. The Bible says, **"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward."** (Matthew 26:59,60) Even though the false witnesses accused Jesus of several crimes, He did not defend Himself.

Wishing to move quickly to a guilty verdict, **"The high priest [Caiaphas] stood up and said to Jesus, 'Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?'** But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, **'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of God.'** **'Yes, it is as you say,'** Jesus replied. **'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.'** Then [with a show of indignation and outrage] **the high priest tore his clothes** [something which God forbade the high priest to do, Leviticus 21:10] **and said, 'He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses [to condemn Him]? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy [with your own ears].'** " (Matthew 26:62-65, insertions mine)

Caiaphas had heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God on many occasions. Therefore, he reasoned that if he could get Jesus to declare Himself the Son of God, the Sanhedrin would hear this "blasphemy" and reach a unanimous verdict. When Jesus confirmed that He was the Christ, the Son of God, He insulted the most sacred doctrine within Judaism, a doctrine called "monotheism."

The Jewish version of monotheism teaches there is one God. His name is Jehovah and all other gods are false and imaginary. The Jews considered any challenge to this doctrine to be blasphemy, punishable by death. Jesus understood the trap before responding to Caiaphas. If He denied His identity, He would be a liar. If He spoke the truth, He would be killed for blasphemy.

Monotheism and Judaism

The basis for Jewish monotheism is described in the Old Testament. Consider the following three passages. One day, Moses saw a burning bush and as he approached, **" 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'** Then He said, **'I am *the* God of your father [Amram], the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'** [Notice the singular, "I am *the* God."] **At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.'** " (Exodus 3:5,6, italics and insertions mine)

Later, from Mount Sinai, God spoke the first commandment: **“I am the Lord [Jehovah] your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me** [Notice that “me” is singular.]” (Exodus 20:2,3) Shortly before Moses died, he made the declaration: **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Jehovah] our God, the Lord is one** [Notice that “one” is singular.]” (Deuteronomy 6:4) Finally, notice what God said about Himself: **“This is what the Lord [Jehovah] says -- Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord [Jehovah] Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God** [Notice that “me” is singular.]” (Isaiah 44:6)

These verses and many others in the Old Testament explain why Jewish monotheism teaches there is one God and His name is Jehovah (Eternal God). We need to understand Jewish monotheism because Jesus came to Earth to confront this doctrine and the Sanhedrin sentenced Him to death for it.

“Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.’ What do you think?” ‘He is worthy of death,’ they answered.” (Matthew 26:65,66) Because monotheism is the foundation of Judaism, the Jews in Christ’s day believed it was impossible for Jehovah to have a Son. Currently, orthodox Jews still anticipate the Messiah will come, but they insist He has to be an ordinary mortal because monotheism mandates that it is *impossible* for more than one God to exist.

Judaism’s View of Jesus

The high priest became livid when Jesus said that He was the Son of God. The problem was this: If Jehovah had a son, there had to be two Gods! If there were two Gods, monotheism was a false doctrine and Judaism was a false religion. This story in John 5 will help to illustrate the problem. One Sabbath day, Jesus came upon a crippled man lying beside a pool of water in Jerusalem and Jesus healed him. Later, when the man learned that Jesus had healed him, he told the priests. **“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted Him** [as a law breaker]. **Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at his work to this very [Sabbath] day, and I, too, am working** [within the boundaries of the Sabbath commandment – which the Jews had badly distorted].’ **For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath [they thought], but He was even calling God His own Father, *making Himself equal with God.*”** (John 5:16-18, insertions and italics mine)

The Jews understood a son was the equal of His father because this is the order of life. A watermelon produces a watermelon because the seed within the parent is identical to the seed within the offspring. A cow produces a cow because the seed within the parent is identical to the seed within the offspring, and the seed within the father is identical to the seed within his son. “Like begets like.” Therefore, when Jesus said that God was His Father, the Jews became furious because His use of language declared that He was equal with Jehovah. They screamed blasphemy! Stone Him!

Jesus Spoke the Words of the Father

When Jesus said that God was His Father, it was actually the Father that spoke through Jesus' lips. Jesus did not speak on His own. The Father wanted the Jews to know that Jesus was His equal, so the Father spoke words through the lips of Jesus that clearly conveyed this idea to them. The Jews were outraged and insulted by the Father's words, but Jesus was not the one speaking! Jesus said: "**For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me *what to say and how to say it.***" (John 12:49, italics mine) On another occasion, Jesus said: "**These words you hear *are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.***" (John 14:24, italics mine) Jesus said to His disciples, "**Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you *are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work.***" (John 14:10, italics mine) While praying for His disciples, Jesus said to the Father, "**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 17:8, italics mine)

This is a profound point to consider: The Father confronted the Jews through Jesus and He received their abuse. The Jews were insulted and highly offended because their religious beliefs did not align with the truth about God. This is how it will be during the Great Tribulation. Jesus will speak through the lips of the 144,000! His words will be insulting and inflammatory, and Satan's agents will punish and torture God's servants as if the 144,000 spoke on their own! We should not be surprised because the sinful nature is hostile toward God. (Romans 8:7) For a moment, put on the sandals of the Sanhedrin. How could a poor, homeless and homely looking man from Nazareth, about 33 years of age, be so insulting and brazen? How could He claim to be the Son of God? How could He be an equal of Jehovah?

The Father confirmed who Jesus was on several occasions: At His baptism, the Father spoke from Heaven. He said, "**This is my Son.**" (Matthew 3:17) On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father spoke from Heaven. He said, "**This is my Son.**" (Matthew 17:5, 2 Peter 1:16,17) Just before His crucifixion, Jesus was in the temple and He called upon His Father to speak from Heaven so that everyone present could know that He was the Son of God – and the Father did! (John 12:28-30) When Jesus died, the Father sent an angel to tear the temple curtain from top to bottom. This wool curtain, believed to be about 4 inches thick, separated the Holy place from the Most Holy place. Tearing it open indicated temple services were finished. The Jews killed "The Lamb of God" and His death terminated the Levitical system. (Mark 15:38, Colossians 2)

The apostle John describes another time the Father conveyed the fact to the Jews that Jesus was equal to Himself. One day, after healing the man beside the pool, "**The Jews gathered around Him [Jesus], saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ [the Messiah], tell us plainly.'** Jesus answered, '**I did tell you [that I am the Christ], but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I and the Father are one.'** Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, '**I have shown you many great miracles from the Father.**

For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, *claim to be God*’ ” (John 10:24-33)

When the Father said through Jesus, “I and the Father are one,” He did not want the Jews to understand that He and Jesus were the same person. Instead, the Father wanted the Jews to understand that He and Jesus were like identical twins. The Father wanted the Jews to learn this because they worshiped and embraced a “Jehovah” which was nothing like the “Father.” **“Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I [am exactly like the Father and I] came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own [I am not saying what I want to say or doing what I want to do]; but He sent me. . .’ ‘He who belongs to [the genuine] God hears what God [the Father] says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God [you belong to your god, the devil].’ ”** (John 8:42, 44, 47, insertions mine)

I hope you now understand how the Father’s testimony which Jesus spoke put the Jews and Judaism in a very difficult position. The Jews could either admit that monotheism was a false doctrine or kill a lowly looking homeless man for blasphemy. If the Jews admitted that Israel’s most sacred doctrine was false, their religion which dated back to Abraham, would be shaken. Truth is a doubled edged sword, isn’t it? (Hebrews 4:12) Have you had a cherished view about God crumble? Have you experienced a complete paradigm shift? Have you lost friends, family, church and job because of new light? If you have, you understand the bittersweet joy of truth and the pain of rejection.

Jesus and the Father are One

Jesus spoke the Father’s testimony which Jesus gave to the Jews. The Father made it perfectly clear that He and Jesus were equals, and the Jews correctly understood the Father’s testimony. This is proven by their responses to Jesus on several occasions. The Jews eventually killed Jesus for blasphemy. If you had been born and raised a Jew and could trace your religious culture and heritage all the way back to Abraham, and you heard the Father say through the lips of Jesus that Jesus was a God, how would you have reacted? What would you have thought if Jesus said to you: **“He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God?”** (John 8:47) Jesus said He did not come to Earth on His own. He *was sent* to Earth to confront many errors which the Jews embraced as truth. Jesus allowed the Father to speak through his lips and the result was very painful. Looking ahead, the 144,000 will endure the same hardship for 1,260 days. No one with a sinful nature could faithfully endure this. This is why the sealing is such a wonderful doctrine. Jesus will remove the sinful natures of the 144,000 before their work begins; otherwise, the sinful nature would retaliate and would ruin their ministry! They would not be a perfect reflection of Jesus! Retaliation is rooted within the sinful nature and it has to be rooted out! To be continued.

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