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WAS JESUS CREATED?

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On occasion, I have inserted italics and brackets in Scripture quotations to enhance understanding, not to change the meaning.

There are six questions in this booklet which I hope you will answer. The author's answers are listed at the end. May God bless you as you study this fascinating topic!

Larry Wilson

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Was Jesus Created?

This may sound strange, but the title, Antichrist, is not found in the book of Revelation or in any Bible prophecy! The word *antichrist* is mentioned four times in the Bible and all references were made by the apostle John. Jesus perhaps warned His disciples about the devil's appearance before He ascended because it seems in 1 John, early Christians anticipated the Antichrist would appear before Jesus returned.

John lived into his nineties and at the turn of the first century A.D., he was the last survivor of the original twelve disciples. It is believed that nine of the twelve suffered a martyr's death. Jerusalem had been in ruins for about thirty years and the apostle Paul had been dead about thirty-five years. John found Christianity in alarming disarray when he was released from prison on the island of Patmos. Roman persecution had decimated and scattered the flock. There was no organization. Conflicts, divisions, and all kinds of heresies abounded. The implosion of Christianity just sixty-five years after Jesus ascended explains why He spoke so forcefully to the seven churches in Asia Minor while John was on Patmos. Shortly after John was granted freedom, Bible scholars believe he wrote the gospel of John and three short epistles which also bear his name. Consider John's words:

“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They [many self-proclaimed experts speaking about Jesus] went out from us, but they did not really [represent Jesus or] belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us [in spirit and in truth]; but their going showed that [they are anti-Christ and] none of them belonged to us. But you have an anointing [from the Holy Spirit and] from the Holy One [a title used for Jesus throughout the Bible to indicate His divinity – see Psalm 22:3; 89:18; Isaiah 1:4], and all of you know the truth [about the deity of Jesus]. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? [The anti-christs or me?] It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ [the Holy One sent from the Father]. Such a person is the antichrist [the anti-Christ] – denying the [the testimony of the] Father and the Son. No one who denies the [divinity of the] Son has the [approval of the] Father; whoever acknowledges the Son [is also a God] has [the approval of] the Father also.” (1 John 2:18-23, insertions mine)

Question 1: Early Christians anticipated the _____ would appear at a _____.

To appreciate John's remarks about the Antichrist, you need to understand why he calls those **“who went out from us,”** “anti-Christ.” A thorny issue existed among Christians at the turn of the First Century. The controversy had to do with whether or not Jesus is a separate, distinct, self-existing God who lived with the Father in the beginning. Regardless of the position early Christians took, each position had serious repercussions.

Many of the early Christians were converts from Judaism. Judaism was strictly monotheistic (believing there is only one God), therefore, many Jewish converts refused to accept that Jesus was a separate, self-existing God. If He were, there would be more than one God – and this is problematic within the paradigm of monotheism. On the other hand, if early Christians believed Jesus was a separate, distinct, self-existing God who lived with the Father in the beginning, this made Christians polytheistic (believing there is more than one God) and this was unacceptable for monotheists.

Question 2: Judaism believed in one God because of the paradigm of _____.

One consequence of this debate centered around worship: If Jesus is a separate, distinct, self-existing God, early Gentile converts reasoned that worshiping Him

would not be blasphemous (John 20:28; Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:52). However, Christian monotheists refused to worship Jesus as a self-existing, stand-alone God, because worshiping any other God than Jehovah was forbidden by the first commandment. The Apostle Paul tried to clarify this matter when he wrote the book of Hebrews. He said the Father required the angels to worship Jesus and the Father even calls Jesus “God,” (Hebrews 1:6-13), but his words had little effect on Hebrew believers.

Of course, the devil saw to it that the debate over the nature of Jesus was both theologically inflammatory and socially divisive. Over time, Christian groups fragmented as anti-Christ, (as John calls them) misled believers. The conflict between Jewish and Gentile converts dragged on for two centuries and as Christianity grew, so did their differences and conflicts. Finally, at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, a solution was announced and made into a creed (nonnegotiable statement of belief).

Roman Unity

The Roman emperor, Constantine, called for the council. He wanted the schism over the deity of Jesus to end because it was affecting his political goal, and he wanted to unify a fragmented empire. Constantine was

as shrewd as he was pragmatic. He grew up in a culture that worshiped hundreds of gods; there was a separate god for everything. He knew Christianity was growing as it had become widespread throughout the region, and centralized around the worship of one or two Gods (the Father and/or Jesus). Given the superstitions and confusion that hundreds of gods posed, Constantine realized fewer gods were better than constantly trying to appease many gods. Moreover, he found Christian leaders in Rome wanted order and unity in the faith in the same way he wanted order and unity in his empire. Eventually, he concluded “one God and one Emperor” was the best way forward; therefore, he called for a council to end the conflict among Christians as to whether there was one God or two. He summoned theologians from distant locations, especially those who were antagonizing church leaders in Rome. When the council convened, Constantine gave the clergy from Rome preference because they shared his goal, as well.

Question 3: Constantine called for a _____
to resolve the disagreement whether there was
one God or two.

One cannot discuss the nature of Jesus and avoid the polarizing issues of monotheism and polythe-

ism. After a few months (yes, months) debating the relationship between the Father and Jesus, and the nature of Jesus, a solution was reached. The clergy from Rome won. Monotheism was orthodox (within boundaries), polytheism was unorthodox (violating boundaries).

I conclude, from a study of early church history, early Christians in Rome were heavily influenced toward preserving monotheism because of their Jewish heritage and Mithraism. Mithraism was an Indo-Iranian religion that moved into the Roman Empire around 45 B.C. It was well received in polytheistic Roman culture because Mithra was the god of friendship and order. About 120 years later, when Jewish converts to Christianity arrived in Rome, they found that Mithraism paralleled Judaism in many ways. Mithraism had one God and so did many Jewish converts. Mithraism had a high priest, a temple, and was worshiped on Sunday. Jehovah had a high priest, a temple (until A.D. 70), and was worshiped on Saturday. Mithraism had been well received by the Romans, whereas Judaism was hated and Jewish converts were put to death if caught. Records from that time period clearly show that early Christians in Rome compromised their beliefs to keep from being identified by the Romans as a sect of Judaism. For example, they abandoned the holiness of the seventh day and adopted Sunday as a day

for worship and celebration, a century-old practice established by Mithraites. By the time Constantine came to power, Christianity had swallowed up Mithraism and it disappeared in the fourth century. This background helps to explain why the clergy in Rome were determined to preserve monotheism at the council of Nicaea.

When the council convened, clergy from other parts of the Roman empire wanted to recognize three separate, distinct, self-existing Gods: “The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (tritheism). Still others like Arius from Alexandria, Egypt, who had a large following in northern Africa, supported monotheism; but, he insisted to do so, Jesus had to be recognized as a being created by the Father. His solution annoyed and frustrated the council members from Rome because if one God created another God, the result would be two Gods, and clearly, this was contrary to monotheism. Given Constantine’s threat of exile and excommunication when the council convened, monotheism prevailed at the council and this led to the creation of a creed which defies explanation or reason.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and 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 . . . [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.]” (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed)

The first five words of the creed were designed as a testing statement. If a person did not accept the first five words of the creed, he was an unorthodox Christian. There was no need for further discussion. Then, to obfuscate the problem, the council approved three words in the middle of the creed which defy reason and make no sense: “begotten, not made.” Because the meaning of this phrase is not rational and cannot be explained, a threat of condemnation (excommunication) was added to the creed (which is not often published today, but the sentiment remains).

Question 4: The council of Nicea produced a creed supporting _____ which defied explanation or reason.

What does begotten mean if not made? For example, the Bible says, **“And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. . . Shem was an hundred years old and begat Arphaxad . . . And [later] Shem . . . begat sons and daughters. And Arphaxad . . . begat Salah: And [later] Arphaxad . . . begat sons and daughters.”** (Genesis 4:18; 11:10-13, KJV, insertions mine) What does the word “begat” or “begotten” (its past perfect tense) mean if it does not mean “made” or “created?”

One Word Theology?

One night, Jesus spoke to a Jewish leader saying, **“For God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son.”** (John 3:16, KJV, italics mine) As you will see, the phrase, “His only begotten Son,” has to be understood as a common or contemporary phrase, not a theological statement, to keep from putting the gospel of John in a state of internal conflict. As a common or contemporary phrase, it meant endearment. In ancient times, “my only begotten son” was a well-worn

phrase used by proud fathers. Jesus used the phrase because Nicodemus was well acquainted with Genesis 22. In this chapter, God spoke to Abraham and He called Isaac, “your only son,” and the “son whom you love.” Actually, Ishmael was Abraham’s first-born son, whom Abraham loved, but Ishmael had been sent away from home. Therefore, Isaac was Abraham’s *only* remaining son at home, he was a miracle child, a son whom God had literally sent! Jesus drew a parallel between Abraham’s love for Isaac and the Father’s love for the world. This is why He used a common expression, “his only begotten son.” Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand the Father gave up far more than Abraham when the venerable patriarch put his *only* begotten son on the altar! Clearly, Abraham was the father of Isaac; therefore, begat Isaac. Some people insist on using one word in John 3:16 to defend a theology that puts the Bible in a state of internal conflict. We will see shortly that John says the Father did not begat Jesus and this fact destroys monotheism.

“Team Rome” (Constantine and church leaders from Rome) went into the council wanting to preserve monotheism, and establish order and uniformity. They succeeded. Constantine was thrilled and made good on a promise to send anyone refusing to accept the creed into exile. Fifty-six years later, the First Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 updated the Nicene Creed

because, at that time, the Roman Emperor Theodosius and church leaders in Rome needed to rein in some disorderly Christians in the east. The Grecians denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They reasoned that if there was one God, the Holy Spirit could not be a God. So, the Nicene Creed was updated in an effort to better defend and determine who was orthodox and who was not.

The Gospel of John

This brief history on the origin of the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) is important to understand why and how John's words (written two hundred years before the council) were twisted for political and expedient purposes. After John left Patmos, he dove "headfirst" into the controversy surrounding the nature and substance of Jesus. John considered anyone denying the divinity of Jesus as anti-Christ.

His *very first* sentence in the gospel of John declares, **"In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God."** (John 1:1, insertion and italics mine) John then says something in his second sentence that eliminates the idea that Jesus is a created being: **"He [Jesus, "the Word"] *was with God in the beginning.*"** (John 1:2, insertion mine) Many people think this sentence is just a repetition of

verse one, but it isn't. John wants us to understand that the Father has *never* lived alone. Jesus and the Father were together in the beginning because both deities are separate, distinct, and self-existing. Jesus was neither begotten nor made, or created by the Father. He is a self-existing God who was with the Father in the beginning. Jesus, like the Father, is from everlasting to everlasting. (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 1:8; 22:13)

Question 5: John considered anyone who denied the divinity of Christ _____ - _____.

When John was on Patmos, Jesus revealed to him that one of His titles is, "The Word of God." (Revelation 19:13) Later, when writing his gospel, John used a shortened form of this title. He is the only Bible writer to call Jesus, "The Word." John teaches us in his Epistle that Jesus was the Father's Witness on Earth and existed from the beginning, before anything or anyone was created, Jesus was appointed to speak for the Father. This role explains the title, "The Word of God."

Why is it necessary for one God to speak for another God? Jesus said: **"No one has seen the Father except the One who is from God; only He has seen the Father."** (John 6:46) Paul explains why no one has seen or can see the Father, **"[He] lives in unapproachable**

light, whom no one has seen or can see.” (1 Timothy 6:16, insertion mine) Paul adds, **“The Son is the image of the *invisible* God.”** (Colossians 1:15, italics mine) John explains it this way: **“No one has ever seen God [the Father], 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, insertion mine) The angels have not seen the Father. They see His glory and glorious form at times, but His features cannot be seen. The Father is a visible representation of the infinite power and glory that each God has explaining why He lives in unapproachable light. Two Gods, the Father and the Holy Spirit, will remain invisible for eternity. The Father’s invisibility requires a visible agent; otherwise, a voice without a source is a voice without ownership. Therefore, one God (Jesus, “The Word”) lives in the form of a created being and through Him, the Father speaks so that the Father’s truth can be traced back to its source. The Father rarely speaks in the Bible. When He does, the Father briefly exalts Jesus. (See Psalm 2:7-12; 45:6-7; Matthew 3:17 and Mark 9:7.)

When we consider the gospel and epistles of John, add Paul’s statements on the nature and substance of Jesus, and have a proper understanding of the book of Revelation, which explains all that Jesus is, the New Testament proves Jesus is the God of the Old Testament.

Question 6: Jesus was appointed to _____ for the Father which explains His title as the _____ of God.

He is the God who interfaced with the patriarchs and prophets of old. He is a separate, distinct, self-existing God who was with the Father in the beginning! When Jesus told Moses His name is, "I AM," He told Moses exactly who He was. The title means "self-existing." All three Gods have no beginning. All three are "the First and the Last" because they are self-existing from everlasting to everlasting. Yes, they have different roles, but they are one in purpose, plan, and action! Each God has all the power and prerogative that belongs to deity, but they have surrendered their powers and prerogatives to one another so that they function as one. The result of their union is a living demonstration of love.

When the Bible says, "God is love," the phrase means much more than God is very kind and generous. The phrase means three Gods love one another with all their heart, mind, and soul, and their neighbors as themselves! They have proven their love through the plan of salvation and they will continue to demonstrate their love for their children throughout eternity!

If anyone wants to become a member of the “family of three Gods,” that person has to love as they love. This explains why the two greatest commandments require everyone to love God first and most and his neighbor as himself. (Matthew 22:37-40) This is how they live. Great confusion exists on this topic today because monotheism and other impediments are difficult to overcome. The only way to keep the Bible free of internal conflict is to conclude that three separate, self-existing Gods exist. They are separate beings with separate wills. They subjected themselves to one another in love from the beginning so they can eternally demonstrate love in action. If faith without works is dead (James 2:17), then love without *ongoing* evidence is meaningless. Ask any married person! If two separate and distinct people can live together as one flesh because of love (Genesis 2:24), three separate and distinct members of deity can live together as one God because of love. (Matthew 28:19; Genesis 1:26)

There are two points you should remember from this booklet. First, you should understand the controversy among early Christians over the nature of Jesus and the consequences of monotheism and polytheism, and need to know why John dove into this matter in his gospel. This is why John used the word, “antichrists” to identify people who diminished the self-existent nature of the great, “I AM.” Second, anyone diminishing an eter-

nal self-existing God called “Jesus” is knowingly or unknowingly anti-Christ. The devil has done everything within his power to rob the Holy One of His identity. This is the most egregious case of identity theft in history and it will continue until the Antichrist and the antichrists are destroyed. Watch for it!

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1. Antichrist, future date
2. monotheism
3. council
4. monotheism
5. anti-Christ
6. speak, Word

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