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Who Is God?

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WHO IS GOD?

"HEAR O ISRAEL: THE LORD
OUR GOD IS ONE LORD"

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

INTRODUCTION

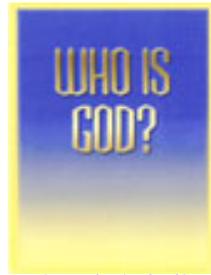
By what authority do we probe into the subject of knowing God? He has declared "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."-Isaiah 55:8,9

Assuredly we are encouraged to know God-"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."-Deuteronomy 4:29

Further in Deuteronomy 6:5 we are instructed to "love the LORD thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." How can we love the LORD if we do not know Him?

Let us go forward then to discover what His word, the Bible, teaches us. Let our approach be with "full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22) that we may know and love "the only true God." -John 17:3

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WHO CREATED GOD?

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."-Psalm 90:2

This is a concept that is difficult for us to grasp. As human beings everything has a beginning and an ending. But God has existed forever-He was not created, but is the creator of all things.

"The name Jehovah means the self existent, or eternal one." (Dr. James Strong)

The title, Jehovah, is used in the Old Testament and is applied only to the Creator, never to other gods whether good or evil. He is the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and the one in whom we "live and move and exist."-Acts 17:28, Diaglott

Can God Be Loving And Just?

Some may see God as being austere and unsympathetic, demanding cruel punishment from those who disobey His commandments.

God's justice was absolute in condemning Adam's disobedience (Genesis 2:17), but His love is manifested in His plan to redeem mankind from sin and death.

"For the wages of sin is death (God's justice), but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (God's love)."-Romans 6:23

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."-John 3:16

We must never forget the sacrifice God made in giving His Son as a ransom for Adam. We do not know what emotions God felt when His beloved, only begotten (created), Son died. However, we know that as humans created in the "image and likeness" of God, we suffer when our children suffer.

Although Jesus willingly died, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will O God" (Hebrews 10:7), it was God's love that sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent

his Son to be the propitiation (atonement) for our sins."-1 John 4:9

If God Is Love, Why Did He Permit Evil?

God did not change His mind regarding the "wages of sin." God knew that it would be profitable for man to experience the terrible consequences of sin. He could have created a race of robots who could not sin and who would praise and worship Him. But He created man as a free moral agent who could discern between good and evil. In His wisdom He permitted Adam to face this choice before having any children. Adam sinned and was therefore responsible for the actions of the entire human race. Had he sinned after having children not only he but any of his progeny who sinned would have needed a separate redeemer.

We can see the wisdom in the divine plan. Adam's sin brought condemnation on all but required only one redeemer to rescue all mankind from condemnation.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:& Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."-Romans 5:12,18

Every individual experiences sin and its results, and then temporarily passes away in the sleep of death. "All that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth &"-John 5:28,29.

The experience with sin will be a valuable lesson in the coming kingdom for which we pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9) Mankind will then have an opportunity to choose between good and evil, and if obedient to Divine law, to be restored to the perfection lost by Father Adam.

Are There Other Gods?

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word translated Lord and God (elohim) sometimes applies to Jehovah, and sometimes prophetically applies to Jesus; sometimes to angels or heathen rulers or heathen gods.

Elohim signifies a mighty one, prince, ruler or judge. It is most frequently translated "God" or "gods."

Jehovah (the All Mighty) Elohim contrasted with other Elohim (Mighty Ones):

"Give ear, O LORD, (Jehovah) unto my prayer & Among all the gods (elohim - mighty ones) there is none like unto thee &"-Psalm 86:6-8

"For the LORD (Jehovah) is a great God (el - mighty one), and a great King above all gods (elohim - mighty ones)."-Psalm 95:3

Angels called Elohim:

"Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels (elohim), and hast crowned him with glory and honor."-Psalm 8:5

Moses called Elohim:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, See I have made thee a god (elohim) unto Pharaoh&"-Exodus 7:1

Judges called Elohim:

"His master shall bring him unto the judges (elohim)&"-Exodus 21:6

Translation of the Greek word Theos as used in the New Testament:

This word, theos, generally refers to our Heavenly Father or to his Son, Jesus, but also refers to false gods.

Satan is called theos in 2 Corinthians 4:4:

"In whom the god (theos) of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not &" In Acts 12:22 this same word is used of Herod when the people of Sidon and Tyre shouted after his oration: "It is the voice of a god (theos), and not of a man." -1 John 5:7,8

This scripture seems confusing, until we understand that most of it is spurious:

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

The words underlined above are not found in any of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts, nor in any of the ancient translations. That they are not a genuine part of the original text is the unanimous verdict of contemporary scholars and evangelicals.

SUMMARY

The Heavenly Father was not created, but has existed forever.

He is perfect in all attributes of character - perfect in His justice, so that the just sentence of His righteous law cannot be infracted, even by Himself; perfect in wisdom in that His plan regarding man's creation and salvation was so complete no failure could arise - nor the necessity for change of the divine plan. "For I am the LORD, I change not &" (Malachi 3:6) "Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world."-Acts 15:18

Perfect in love, for there could be no greater love possible; perfect in power so that all His good purposes could be executed and result in the originally designed results. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."-Isaiah 55:11

WHO IS JESUS?

"The LORD possessed (created) me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever 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 highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." (Proverbs 8:22-30)

Who Was Jesus Before He Became A Human Being?

What a beautiful description is given of Jesus as a spirit being before he was "made flesh." His name was the "Logos" or God's mouthpiece, or Word.

"In the beginning was the Word (Logos) and the Word was with the God and a god was the Word. (Interlinear Diaglott translation of John 1:1) Unfortunately many versions of the Bible give the thought that the Word was God.

Jesus was the "beginning of the creation of God" (Revelations 3:14), the "firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15). He was the direct creation of the Father, and spoken of as the "only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14) The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus was the active agent of Jehovah in all the creative work: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."-Colossians 1:16

Referring to Jesus, God "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."-Hebrews 1:2

Who Could Become A Ransom For Adam?

When Adam sinned and condemned future generations to be born in sin, a "ransom" or corresponding price had to be provided to release mankind from condemnation and guarantee restoration of all that was lost.

Jehovah could not become the ransom, because a corresponding price called for the death of a perfect human being. God was divine, and could not die.

Angelic beings likewise could not satisfy God's justice.

Only a being willing to give up his glorious spirit nature and become a human and sacrifice his life as "a ransom for all" would be acceptable.

Jesus' pre-human life is referred to in Philippians 2:5-9 (Revised Standard Version). "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied (Greek, 'divested') himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him&"

As a perfect man he suffered Adam's penalty, thus releasing Adam and his posterity from the curse of death.

"For since through a Man there is Death, through a Man also, there is a Resurrection of the Dead; for as by Adam All die, so by the Anointed also, will All be restored to life."-1 Corinthians 15:21,22 (Diaglott).

Was Jesus Equal To His Father?

Jesus, during his life on earth, always re-mained subordinate to his Heavenly Father.

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."-John 12:49

"& I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."-John 14:28

However, a wonderful spirit of oneness existed between Jesus and his Heavenly Father, for he declared: "I and my father are one." (John 10:30) In the 17th chapter of John, Jesus prayed that his church would experience this same oneness with God, a oneness of purpose.

"That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou has sent me." -John 17:21

The scriptural understanding of Jesus as the beloved and only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father gives us a greater appreciation of him and his great sacrifice.

Just before his death, Jesus prayed: "And now, Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."-John 17:5

Because of Jesus' faithfulness, at his resurrection, the Heavenly Father did more than restore his Son to his former position of glory in the heavenly realm - He exalted him to the divine nature.

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."-Hebrews 1:3,4

After his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."-Matthew 28:18

In due time, and in accordance with his Father's plan, the beloved Son of God will exercise this power to bring about the great work of restitution. "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom heaven must receive (retain) until the times of restitution of all things &"-Acts 3:20,21

What a glorious outlook!

SUMMARY:

Jesus existed as a spirit being before he was made flesh.

At that time he was known as a god, or mighty one.

He was the direct creation of God, the "Only Begotten." As Jehovah's representative, and in His name and through His power, Jesus created all things -angels, principalities and powers, as well as the earthly creation.

Jesus voluntarily gave up his position and nature to be made flesh and become our Redeemer.

Because of Jesus' faithfulness, his Father rewarded him with the divine nature.

It is this great One whom we delight to honor and to worship and to serve as one with the Heavenly Father, in word and in purpose and in spirit.

WHO OR WHAT IS THE "HOLY SPIRIT"?

The word "spirit" in the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew word "ruach", the root meaning of which is "wind." In the New Testament, also, the word "spirit" comes from a root meaning "wind"- the Greek word "pneuma."

These two words are also translated "breath", "mind", "life", meaning an invisible power or influence.

Unfortunately these words were incorrectly translated "Ghost" in the King James Bible. In the American Standard Version the term "Holy Ghost" does not appear.

The holy Spirit is described in the Bible as "The Spirit of God," "The Spirit of Truth," "The Spirit of Love," "The Spirit of a Sound Mind," "The Spirit of Christ," "The Spirit of Holiness," etc.

The title "holy Spirit" describes the mind of God - His power or sanctifying influence.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor."-Luke 4:18

How Does The Holy Spirit Operate?

The prophet Isaiah, in speaking prophetically of Jesus, describes the operation of God's holy Spirit. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear (reverence) of the LORD."-Isaiah 11:2

Our Lord Jesus received wisdom and power by an outpouring of the holy Spirit at his baptism (Matthew 3:16), and his faithful followers desire to have the mind or spirit of Christ.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"-Philippians 2:5

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." -1 Corinthians 2:16

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."-Romans 8:9

Another use of the word spirit is in the sense of generative power, as in Genesis 1:2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The spirit or power of God, His energy, rendered the waters fruitful, prolific.

Similarly, the "Holy men of God (prophets) spake and wrote as they were moved by the holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21 - Diaglott translation) The holy Spirit of God influenced their minds, causing them to bring forth thoughts which God wished to have expressed.

Also, the skilled workmen who were selected by Moses to build the Tabernacle, were brought under the influence of the divine power to energize their natural faculties without affecting them in any moral sense. "And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel & And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship&Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work & "-Exodus 35:31-35

In Numbers 11:17-25 we are told that Jehovah endowed Moses and the elders with His spirit for judging Israel's affairs.

In the same manner God's spirit was with the kings of Israel, so long as they were loyal to him. (1 Samuel 11:6) Notice that in the case of Saul (1 Samuel 16:13,14), because of unfaithfulness, this spirit of wisdom departed from him and was conferred upon David.

Holy Spirit Not Yet Given

However, no manifestation of the spirit of God, prior to the first advent of Jesus, was the same as the manifestation and operation of God's spirit upon Jesus-from his baptism to his crucifixion, and upon the Church of Christ at Pentecost until now. "The Holy Spirit was not yet given (except to Jesus) because Jesus was not yet glorified."-John 7:39

Gifts Of The Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists some of the gifts of the spirit: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." These gifts were given to the early Church by the holy Spirit, but there is a difference between God's power, His spirit, and these gifts. The Apostle Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that a time would come when some of these gifts (prophecy and tongues) would cease. These gifts were necessary at the inauguration of the Church, but became unnecessary after the Church had been established.

Now, instead of having such gifts miraculously bestowed, the operation of God's spirit or power, is upon the minds of those who have consecrated their lives to serve the Lord. The Apostle Paul urges

the Church to develop spiritual gifts - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance&"-Galatians 5:22,23

This same holy Spirit or influence of God will operate during the establishment of His Kingdom on earth to bring the world into harmony and unity with the principles of righteousness.

SUMMARY

The Spirit of God, or holy Spirit is the divine will, influence or power of God exercised in many ways, using various agencies to accomplish various results:

In the creation of the world.

To influence the servants of the past.

In the development of the Church.

To bring the world of mankind back into harmony with God according to His plan of salvation.