

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED (CONT'D)

It is unfortunate that many accepted authors and teachers are so mesmerized with the Trinitarian doctrine. For example, Dave Hunt, author of many Scriptural studies, stated in *Berean Call* "The One who the Bible calls 'the God of Israel' is so designated 203 times. Unquestionably the Hebrew prophets all agree that the God of Israel exists as a tri-unity, three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but one God that in the Messiah He becomes man." He cites no Scripture for this assertion, perhaps because there is none. It is remarkable that an "accepted scholar" in the religious world would make such a statement, but even more remarkable that many Christian people believe him. Dr. John F. McHugh writing on John 1-4 in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* shows the fallacy of Dave Hunt's article: "Those who listened to Jesus during his life-time did not come already endowed with faith in a Trinitarian Godhead, nor did those people who heard the preaching of the Apostles; it was not a matter of teaching people who already believed in the Trinity that one of those divine persons had become a human being. Neither in Judaism nor elsewhere is there any trace of such a belief."

God declares over and over "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." and Jesus quotes this statement in Mark 12:29. Trinitarians say that when the Bible speaks of God as one, it is speaking of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being one God. But the Apostle Paul states: "But there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we exist for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and we exist through him" (I Cor. 8:6). Notice that the one God is distinct from the one Lord. The word "God" in this passage refers to the Father alone. Here the term means Supreme Sovereign and head of all. Paul further says "the head of Christ is God" (I Cor. 11:3). If one were to read through the New Testament and substitute the phrase "God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" in place of the word "God" it would be seen that the Trinitarian definition could not possibly apply. In John 17:3 Jesus refers to God as "the only true God." He tells his Apostles "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

There are many scriptures that Trinitarians use to try to "prove" that Jesus was God. We'll examine some of them.

John 1:1-3: The way this passage is usually interpreted and read is: "In the beginning was *Jesus* and *Jesus* was with God and *Jesus* was God," or "in the beginning was the Son and the Son was God." As all can see the text simply says "In the beginning was the Word" (capitalized by the translators because of the prevalent belief in the trinity). It does not say "in the beginning was the son of God." In fact, there is no mention of the son of God until we come to verse 14, where "the word (not the son) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth." The son is what the word became, but what is the "word"? According to *The Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* the standard meaning of "word" is "utterance, promise, command, etc. it never means a personal being, never the 'son of God.' There is a wide meaning for 'word' and 'person' is not among these meanings." It further states: "The noun *dabar* (word) occurs some 1455 times in the Old Testament. The word of the

Lord has power because it is an extension of God's knowledge, character and ability." God expressed His intention. His word, His self-revealing utterance, this is His word which became flesh. The word *was* God means that the word was fully expressive of God's mind. The word, then is the divine expression, the divine plan, the very self of God revealed. "The word was with God" Logically, nothing can be both "identical to" and "with" anything else. So, the sense in which "the word *was* God is limited by the statement that it was *with* God. This points to a meaning closer to "represents," "manifests," or "reveals." Jesus, the word made flesh, represented and manifested God.

Verse 2: "He was in the beginning with God" Some versions read: "The same was in the beginning with God." "He" is a pronoun and can legitimately be translated "it." Graeser, Lynn and Schoenheit in *One God and One Lord* says: "The primary reason people get the idea that 'the word' is a person is that the pronoun 'he' is used with 'the word.'" Many early translations before the KJV, and some since, refer to the word as "it." Alexander Campbell in his translation of the New Testament from the original Greek (He entitled it *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ*) translated John 1:1 as: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *This* was in the beginning with God. All things were made by *it*, and without *it* not a single creature was made. In *it* was life and the life was the light of men." However, we do not have to depend on translations to see that "it" is a correct translation. John in the introduction of his epistle I John shows that *what* was in the beginning was not a *who*. Read his words: "*What* was from the beginning, *what* we have heard, *what* we have seen with our eyes, *what* we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—" (I John 1:1). Verses 1-5 of John chapter one speaks of God's creative power in the word which was in the beginning was God, then verses 5-12 is a departure from the subject of the Word and relates to God reaching out to His people through John the Baptist and their rejection of God's efforts. Then in verse 14 he comes back to the subject of the Word and it is here we have the first mention of Jesus: "the Word became flesh."

Verse 3 and Colossians 1:16, 17 are favorite verses the Trinitarians use to prove that Jesus was the creator not only of the worlds, but the creator of all things.

Verse 3: "All things came into being through Him ("It" the Word) and apart from Him ("it" the Word) nothing came into being that has come into being." Isaiah 44:24: "Thus says the Lord. Your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, I, the Lord the *maker of all things*, stretching out the heavens by *Myself*, and spreading out the earth *all alone*." Isaiah 45: 12, 18: "It is I (singular, one person) who made the earth and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with my hands...For thus says the Lord who created the heavens, He is God who formed the earth and made it. He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited, I am the Lord and there if *none else*." God *alone* and *none else* created.

Colossians 1:16, 17: "For in him all things were created both in

the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Without considering the context Trinitarians have a good case, but when the context of Paul’s words is studied their case dissolves. The phrase “whether thrones, dominions or rulers or authorities” describe what Christ created. The context of Christ being the creator of all things is not concerning the physical creation of the universe, but the post-resurrection, glorification, exaltation and empowerment of Christ. The “all things” here are the things for the Church, not the things of the original creation. Connect these verses with the parallel passage in Ephesians 1:20-22: “He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenlies far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age, but the one to come. And He put *all things* in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over *all things* to the church which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Chapter 2:14,15 of Ephesians speaks again of what he created: “that in him He might create the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.” The context is the new creation, not the original creation.

John 8:58: “Jesus said to them ‘truly, truly I say unto you, before Abraham was I am.’” “I am” is capitalized in most versions equating Jesus with the “I AM” of the Old Testament. To Trinitarians this means Jesus existed before Abraham and existed as the great “I AM” which was God Almighty (Gen. 17:1, Rev. 11:17). However, Jesus is speaking in the context of his being the son of God, the Messiah. He said “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and he was glad.” God revealed to Abraham that the Messiah would someday come. This day was in the mind of God before Abraham was born. Jesus was “the lamb having been slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8—Greek text), so he was the Christ, the Messiah, before Abraham was born. The I AM in Exodus 3 is introduced as I AM WHAT I AM. Jesus did not say this. He did not say “Before Abraham was, I was.” And Jesus did not say “Before Abraham was, I AM WHAT I AM.” Why did the translators capitalize I AM (*ego eimi*) here in John 8:58 and did not capitalize the same phrase in all the other places it is used? In all the other scriptures where “I am” is used it is never capitalized and is always followed with “*he*” meaning “*he*” is not in the original language, but is supplied to make sense, namely “I am the Christ.” John 4, 25, 26: “The woman said unto him ‘when the Messiah comes, which is called Christ, when he comes he will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her. ‘I that speak unto you am (*ego eimi*) *he*’.” John 8:28: “When you have lifted up the son of man, then you shall know I am (*ego eimi*) *he*.” John 9:9: concerning the blind man Jesus healed: “Some said, this is he, other said, he is like him, but he said I am (*ego eimi*) *he*.” What Jesus said was: “Before Abraham was born, I am (*ego eimi*) *he*.” Why did the translators not put “*he*” in italics here as they did in the other passages? And why did they capitalize it? Their interpretation is based upon the translator’s personal bias. If Jesus is saying he is “I AM” as the term is used of God in speaking to Moses, then he is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. If this is true, then anywhere and everywhere the word Jehovah (LORD) is used, it must refer to Jesus. This leaves the Almighty God out.

Philippians 2:5-8: “Have this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he

humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.” This passage is the flagship of Trinitarians. To them it teaches the dual nature of Christ by the interpretation of the fact that he “existed in the *form* of God” and “*emptied* himself.” The Greek word “form” is “*morpha*” which Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines as “external appearance” (Vol. 4 p. 742). It is used several times in the N.T. for example, Mark 16:12 “And after that he appeared in a different *form* to two of them while they were walking on the way to the country.” Mark is referring to Luke 24:13ff. The *form* was a human (outward) form, but different from that which Jesus bore during his earthly ministry. He did not have a different “essential nature,” he simply had a different outward appearance. The word is used in II Tim. 3:5 where Paul speaks of evil men who have “the *form* of godliness” or an outward appearance of godliness. Trinitarians assert that the word “form” refers to Christ’s inner nature as God. The NIV wrongly translates Phil. 2:6 as Jesus being “in the very nature of God.” The majority of Greek scholars do not agree with this rendering. This verse does not say “Jesus being God,” but rather “being in the *form* of God”. If Jesus is God, why did Paul not simply say so? Paul is simply saying Jesus represented the Father in every way. This agrees with Jesus’ statement in John 14:9: “he that hath seen me has seen the Father” and with II Cor. 4:4: Christ was “the image of God.” The Scriptures teach that God cannot change and that God is not a man. As one manifesting the Father, he did not, as Adam, grasp at being like God, the last Adam emptied himself of all his rights to claim divinity and took the *form* of a bondservant and claimed to be “the son of man.” If Jesus were God how could he grasp to be equal with God? This would say he did not grasp at equality with himself.

Verse 7: This verse has been variously translated: “But made himself of no reputation” (KJV), “but made himself nothing” (NIV), “but laid aside” (Living Bible), “but emptied himself” (NASB, RSV, NRSV). The Greek word is *kenos* which literally means “to empty” (Kittel). Dr. Just Gonzales in *A History of Christian Thought* states the Trinitarian position on the “dual nature of Christ” by saying: “The divine and human natures exist in a single being, although how that can be is the greatest mystery of the faith.” As I already noted Biblical truth is not an incomprehensible mystery that cannot be known. In fact, we are commanded to know and understand that which has been revealed. If Jesus was God, he could not empty or lay aside his divine nature because this would force God to change and God cannot change. Remember “God is not a man” (Num.23:19) and “I the Lord do not change” (Mal. 3:6). Peter said “Jesus a man attested (accredited) by God” has now been made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:22,36).

It is important to note one more thing about this passage. The context is our treatment of others. He says; “do not merely look out for our own personal interest, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude (mind) in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (verses 4 & 5). Christ is our example in our treatment of others. Therefore, when he did what it is said he did (verses 6-8) it was done as the son of man during his ministry on earth, not what he did in Heaven. If it was “the emptying of his glory in heaven in his becoming a man” as some say, then we could not have the same attitude in ourselves. There is no way we could relate to one who supposedly was Almighty God before his existence as a man and who during his sojourn here on earth was a “God-man.”

Next month we plan to consider John 20:28 and the Holy Spirit.