

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## KNOWING THE ONE TRUE GOD JOHN 17:3

William Barclay in his *Daily Bible Study comments*: “The human mind has an amazing faculty for rejecting that which it does not wish to see. Men still accept the parts of the Christian message which they like and which suit them and refuse to understand the rest” Jesus said: “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear my word...because I speak the truth you do not believe me...he who is of God hears the words of God...you do not hear them because you are not of God” (John 8:43-47). This is an important principle. The words of Jesus are the words of God, as well as all Scripture are important. If what is preached and taught is not in the word of God it is a false teaching. False teaching is one of the most prominent subjects in Scripture and perhaps the most neglected. Warnings of False Prophets are replete in the Old Testament, especially in the Prophets. Jesus warns time and time again of false teachers and prophecies that will be present in the future. The Apostles also, in the epistles, deals with this subject. The last words of Peter covers three chapters, two of them giving over to warnings against false teachers. The whole book of Jude is about this danger. The book of Revelation deals almost exclusively with this problem. In the Old Testament false prophet were put to death (Deut. 18:20; 13:5). In contrast to false teaching the phrase “It is written” appears over 105 times in the New Testament. Paul warns we are not “to exceed or go beyond what is rotten” (I Cor. 4:6). He states his teaching was “not in words taught of human wisdom, but those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (I Cor. 2:13). This says if it is not in Scripture; it is a false teaching and should be rejected. Acts 17:11 state that the Bereans examined the scripture daily to see if what Paul taught was true.

Greg S. Deuble, a former church of Christ minister, in a compelling book entitled: *They Never Told Me This in Church States*: “There is a consensus among many New Testament scholars that much of what the historical Jesus and his Apostles taught has been submerged by influx of post-biblical tradition. Subtle foreign influences, mostly from pagan Greek philosophy, which neither Jesus nor His first-century followers endorsed, have obscured the original Gospel as Jesus preached it. Most churchgoers accept without question unbiblical traditions which they have never seriously investigated.” The Apostle Peter wrote: “False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many shall follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned; in their greed they will exploit you with false words” (II Pet. 2:1,2).

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:30). This verse has given Trinitarians, ancient and modern, a very astonishing and disquieting contempt for Scripture. They have a hard time fitting Jesus into

their trinitarian mold based upon John 17:3. Kegan A Chandler in his book *The God of Jesus* quotes from Augustine: *Homilies of the Gospel of John* these words concerning John 17:3: The proper order of the word is: That they may know Thee and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent as the only true God.” Augustine takes it upon himself to correct Jesus Christ. We will note other Augustine follies later in this article.

## WE MUST KNOW THE ONLY TRUE GOD

At the end of his earthly life, in the shadow of Gethsemane, Jesus is praying to the Father. He begins his prayer with this confession of faith: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3). This statement expressively links salvation to a correct knowledge of the identify only one true God and His son Jesus Christ. Note the words; the only true God! This is not the “Triune” God given birth in the year 325 AD by 325 quarreling Bishops and Constantine, the first “Christian” emperor, (who never ceased worshiping the sun god) in the council of Nicaea to which Augustine, a century later, developed into the doctrine of the trinity. Nor is it the figment of Jewish imagination which tried to worship God who had not revealed himself in His son, and it is not the object of pagan worship, directed toward the creature rather than the Creator. And, we might add, it is not “the man upstairs,” a term used flippantly by unbelievers, usually when they are in trouble, but a reference to the Father who sent His son not the world. Of the Father, Jesus, who when approached by a Jewish man who asked him which is the most important of the commandments, answered: “hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Mark 12:29). It is only by knowing “the only true God” that we can receive eternal life. II Thessalonians 1:7-9 warns: “Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to all those who do not know God and to those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his Power.” It is only by knowing the Bible that we can know God, and not having this knowledge will lead to rejection and destruction. Jesus expected people to not only hear but to understand. He called the multitude and said to them, “Hear and understand” (Matt. 5:10).

In a time when the common belief of a modern society is that any belief in any god, and any belief in the existence of God is enough and should be accepted; when God is described as “the force” or the “man upstairs,” and religious leaders refer to God as being “about six foot tall” (Kenneth Copeland) and “God is made up of nine trinities” (Benny Hinn), when common belief of the religious world is that God is a trinity that cannot be understood or explained, yet we are to accept it as being true, and when many sincere christians believe the god of Islam is the same as the God of

the Christian, it is time we looked at the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

### THE ONLY TRUE GOD REJECTED

The Gentiles were condemned because they “refused to have God in their knowledge” (Rom. 1:28). This passage clearly shows what happens to people, whether it is an individual, church or nation that leaves God out of their reckoning. They bring judgment upon themselves when they give no place for the God revealed in Scripture. When God is banished from life or is neglected, they become a certain kind of person and the verses following verse 28 is the most terrible description of the kind of person they become. The Apostle Paul does not leave the subject open to permit the religious establishment escape being called into account. He states: “There will be tribulation and distress upon every soul of man who does evil...for there is no partiality with God” (Rom.2:9-11). It is about three hundred years later that the religious system that “refused to have God in their knowledge” rejected the Scriptural revelation of “the only true God” and invented a “triune God” that no one can know or understand.

There is no record of the doctrine of the trinity taught or believed in the early church. During the first three centuries after Jesus’ crucifixion, the Scriptural teaching of “the only true God” was adhered to by the church. The rejection of the only true God began with the controversial teaching of some early “church fathers” (the bishop of area churches), concerning the nature of Christ. The quarreling and contentions among the two arguing sides which erupted in physical battles and persecutions, came to the attention of Emperor Constantine, the so-called first “Christian” emperor who decided to put an end to the controversy by convening a council of bishops in the year 325. Norman P. Tanner in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* wrote: “the council of 318 Bishops opened in the presence of the Emperor, but it is uncertain who presided over the council. The aim of Constantine to present a creed that would foster unity of the faith did not work out as planned. From the beginning of the session of the developers of the creed there was much division over the statements of the creed. Emperor Constantine had ordered the council of Nicaea to resolve the difference in the theology of the Godhead. The council developed into a heated battle that ended in victory for the Trinitarians. The Trinitarian position was strengthened by a new Nicene creed that was carefully worded to prohibit any belief that was not trinitarian and to strengthen the trinitarian concept. No other views were allowed.

“St. Augustine, a century later developed the teaching into a doctrine of the trinity in which all three persons, God the Father, God the son God the Holy Spirit, were separate personalities, all-co-equal and co-eternal.” It is sad to see a belief held so sacred today by the majority of Christians was actually given birth by 318 quarreling Bishops, a questionable creed and a Roman Emperor who knew little about the Scripture and less about the only true God, finalized by a dubious “Church Father.”

Why do not those who believe in the doctrine of the trinity based upon the Nicene creed also accept the doctrine of the first council of Ephesus which proclaimed the virgin Mary as the “*Theotokia*” (God-bearer), or more commonly called: “The mother of ‘God.’” Or for that matter why not believe the conclusions of all the councils?

Douglas Lockhart, by no means a conservative, in his book *Jesus the Heretic*, concerning the Council of Nicaea, which he called “a piece of incomprehensible verbalism” wrote: “All in all, a tight little package which set the inevitable ball of heresy rolling, the flames rising, the cries and screams of innocent human beings, flames rising into the fetid air of dark prisons. Because of a church council composed of people like Athanasius had and so; Jesus was no longer the Jewish Messiah, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the Archetypal Man and Light Adam of the Similitudes, he was the alien Jewish God shoe-horned into a physical body and let loose as a refurbished pagan deity of monstrous proportions.”

### GOD REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE AS THE ONLY TRUE GOD

We quote Kegan A. Chandler again, (*The God of Jesus*): “Concerning the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is not difficult to grasp how and why the Jews have affirmed their God to be singular Personality: **The Hebrew Scriptures:** There is none like YHWH our God (Ex. 8:9); You shall have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:1-30); YHWH, he is God, there is none other besides him (Deut. 4:34); YHWH, he is God of heaven above and earth below, there is another (Deut. 4:3); See now I am he, and there is no other God besides me (Deut. 32:39); YHWH is our God, YHWH is one (Deut. 6:4); For there is none but you, there is no God besides you (II Sam. 7:22); YHWH is God, there is no one else (I Kings 8:6); There is no one like you, nor is there any god beside you (I Chron. 17:20); You alone are YHWH (Neh. 9:5); You alone, Lord are God (Isa. 37:20); Before me there is no God formed, and there will be none after me (Isa. 43:10); I am the first and the last, and there is none besides me (Isa. 44:6); and there is no other, besides me there is no God (Isa 45:5); I am YHWH and there is none else (Isa. 45:18); Is not I, YHWH and there is no other God besides me, a righteous God and Savior, there is none like me (Isa. 45:21); I AM God and there is no other, I am God and there is none like me (Isa. 46:9); In that day YHWH will be the only one and his name the only one (Zech. 14:9); Do we not have one Father? Has not one God created us? (Mal. 2:10).”

He continues: “The language regarding God’s unity in the later New Testament writings is remarkably consistent with this Spirit. The language of Christ and the Apostles in regard to God is the same language of Moses and the Old Testament writings. **The New Testament:** The Lord our God is one Lord (Mark 12:29); You do not seek glory that is from the one and only God (John 5:54); We have one Father, even God (John 8:41); That they may know you the only true God (John 17:3); Since indeed God is one (Rom. 3:27); The only wise God, Amen (Rom. 16:27); There is no God but one (I Cor. 8:4); There is only one God, the father (I Cor. 8:6); There is only one (Gal. 3:20); The God and Father of us all (Eph. 4:4-6); The King, eternal, invisible the only wise God (I Tim. 1:17); For there is one God and one mediator between God and man II Tim. 2:5); You believe God is one, you do well, the demons believe and shudder (James 2:19); the only wise God and Savior (Jude 1:25).”

Chandler concludes this section by saying: “One must ask why the Supreme Being, who created language and designed the human mind, would choose to employ language which he knew the world would think he was the one individual when in fact he was a unified collective of individuals. A society? What good reason do we have to assume that when the Jew said, ‘God is one’ (Isa 51:2; Ezek. 33:24), he didn’t mean it in the same sense he meant ‘Abraham is one’ (Isa. 51:2; Ezek. 33:24).”

