

# The Harvester



## Preparing Souls

## To Serve The Lord



Volume 33

August 2012

Number 1

# THE GODHEAD (PART 2)

By Brian R. Kenyon

The Biblical word “God,” first and foremost, refers to the divine nature, which includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Context must determine whether a particular member of the Godhead is meant. In last month’s Harvester, we examined the Old Testament names of God, *Elohim* and *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*), pointing out the relevance those names have toward understanding the Godhead. We also proved that the Godhead consists of three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) with one divine nature. To recap that proof, note the following argument:

If the Bible teaches there is one God; and if the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each said to be God and yet are distinct persons; then the Bible teaches that there are three distinct persons in the one Godhead.

The details of this argument were presented in last month’s issue of the Harvester. On the next page, there is a diagram that will further explain this argument.

## GOD’S ESSENCE & ATTRIBUTES

Understanding the essence and attributes of God is necessary to understanding the Godhead, since each member of the Godhead is of the same divine nature. The “essence” of God refers to substance; that which underlies all outward manifestations of God; that in which the qualities, or attributes, inhere (Thiessen 119). If there were no essence there could be no attributes. Humans are, in a limited way, like God’s essence in

that we are spirit like God (cf. Gen. 1:26).

The “attributes” of God refer to the objective qualities that inhere in the substance (essence); they denote the way in which God exists and operates (Thiessen 123). God’s attributes can be categorized as moral and non-moral attributes. Moral attributes are those that involve moral qualities (such as holiness, love, justice, etc.). To a limited extent, humans can (and must) become like God in these attributes (cf. Lev. 11:44; Mt. 5:48; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn. 4:9-17). Non-moral attributes are those that do not involve moral qualities (such as omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.). Humans cannot be like God in these attributes.

God’s essence and attributes are so interwoven and related to each other that one cannot be totally considered in the absence of the others. We will consider each as distinct only for the purpose of this study of the Godhead. Each of these qualities is complete and perfect in its own right, and each is necessary to the sum total of God.

## THE ESSENCE OF GOD

As mentioned above, the “essence” of God refers to the “substance” that underlies all outward manifestations of God, and that in which the qualities, or attributes, of God inhere. First, God is spirit (Jn. 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). God is not physical. A spirit does not have flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). God is not like material things (Ac. 17:29; Rom. 1:23). Expressions that present God as having such things as hands, eyes, ears, and arms

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are “anthropomorphic” (literally, “man forms”). Anthropomorphism ascribes human characteristics to things that are not human. Since finite beings cannot fully comprehend infinite concepts, these concepts must be expressed in finite terms that can be understood. Anthropomorphisms abound in the study of God, for the “Godhead is one of the most difficult concepts for humans to embrace, as finite minds are striving to understand the infinite” (Lanier 61).

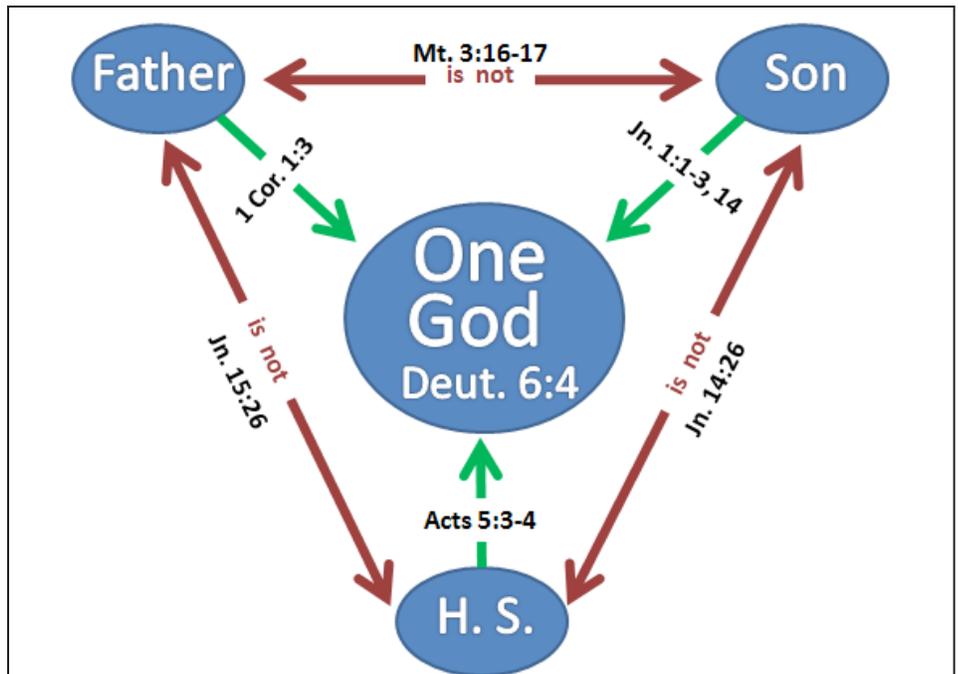
As a spirit, God is invisible (Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:15; Rom. 1:17). No human has actually seen God, nor can see God (Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16). Passages that indicate people who saw God are figurative (cf. Ex. 24:9-11). It was not the essence of God which was seen but the visual representation of God (cf Ex. 33:19-20; Num. 12:7-8) (Geisler and Howe 83). To illustrate: Can a person actually see his own face, or does he see a reflection of it in the mirror? Humans could see manifestations of God when they were embodied in physical forms such as angels. We can also see manifestations of God in the sense of seeing His works (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20). Since God is spirit, God is not subject to physical limitations.

Second, God is personality. While we have personality with a physical body, God has personality without having a physical body. Some personality traits of God include: (1) self awareness—“I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14); (2) intellect—God knows (Gen. 18:19; Acts 15:18); (3) capacity to love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7-10); (4) capacity to sorrow (Gen. 6:6); (5) ca-

capacity to be angry (Deut. 1:37); (6) capacity for jealousy (Ex. 20:5); and (7) ability to be compassionate (Ps. 111:4). These traits are impossible for non-personal beings!

As personality, God obviously lives (Mt. 16:16; 1 Thes. 1:9). Since life implies power and activity, God is not a mere “influence” or “force.” Therefore, God cannot be compared to idols and/or images or to anything created (cf. Ex. 20:1-6; Ps. 115:3-8; Acts 17:24-25).

Third, God is self-evident. John said that “God is light” (1 Jn. 1:5). In what way is God light? Light is self-revealing. So also is God. Just as the evidence of light is plain and undeniable, God’s existence is plain and undeniable. Thus, the question “Where did God come from?” is irrelevant. God is not dependent upon any outside factor for His existence. As noted in a previous section, the name *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*) means the “always existing one; the uncaused cause” (Ex. 3:14). God’s existence is not grounded in God’s will, but in God’s very nature. If God could have caused Himself to be, then God could cause Himself not to be; however, God’s perfection and unchanging nature prevent these



The Bible teaches there is only one God (Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; 1 Tim. 2:5). However, the Bible also refers the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as God, yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, separate persons. Note that the Father is said to be God (1 Cor. 1:3), but the Father is not the Son (1 Cor. 1:3) nor is the Father the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:16-17). Each is distinct! The Son is said to be God (Jn. 1:1-2, 14), but the Son is not the Father (Mt. 3:16-17) nor is the Son the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26). Each is distinct! The Holy Spirit is said to be God (Acts 5:3-4), but the Holy Spirit is not the Father (Jn. 15:26) nor is the Holy Spirit the Son (Jn. 14:26). Therefore, since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each referred to as God, yet each are distinct from the others, there must be three distinct persons in the one true nature of God, or Godhead (Mt. 28:19; Jn. 14:16; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2).

## The Harvester

Published Monthly  
 Florida School of Preaching  
 1807 South Florida Avenue  
 Lakeland, Florida 33803  
 (863) 683-4043

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possibilities. There has never been a time, nor will there ever be, that God's nature was not exactly as it is now!

Fourth, God is eternal (Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2-4 [cf. Mic. 5:2]; 102:27; Is. 57:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). God is infinite in relation to time. As creator, God is the very cause of time (cf. Gen. 1:1). Time is of no essence with God (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). Eternity for God is now, for He is aware of past, present, and future.

Having considered the essence of God, note that each member of the Godhead shares the very same essence. First, consider the spirit essence of each member of the Godhead. John said that "God is a Spirit" (Jn. 4:24). That God here is the Father is obvious from the context (Jn. 4:20-24). Before His coming in the flesh, the Son also was a spirit being. This truth is evident in John's prologue: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). The word "was" in each clause is key to understanding the relationship of the Word (who is Jesus cf. Jn. 1:14) and God the Father. "Was" in an imperfect tense form of the Greek verb "to be." The imperfect tense relates continuous action in the past. Thus: (1) "In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1), the Word already was existing; (2) as long as God was (which is eternally) the "Word was with God;" and (3) the "Word," plain and simple, "was God"—whatever God was (i.e., eternal spirit being) the Word was! The Holy Spirit is also, obviously, spirit. Second, consider the essence of personality. As seen earlier in the section of the argument above on the distinct persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are persons in that each has the capacity to sorrow, to be angry, etc. Third, the Father (Gen. 21:33; 1 Jn. 1:2), the Son (Jn. 1:1; 8:58), and the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14) are each eternal.

## THE NON-MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The attributes of God refer to the objective qualities that inhere in the essence of God. The attributes can be analyzed under two categories: moral and non-moral. Since humans, in a limited way, can be like God in His moral attributes (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15-16), we will only consider the non-moral attributes concerning the Godhead. The non-moral attributes are those that do not involve moral qualities. These attributes can only be possessed by deity.

First, God is omnipotent, or all-powerful (Gen. 17:1; Re. 11:17). God is able to do whatever He wills, so long as it is logically possible (Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Mt. 19:26; Eph. 1:11). God's omnipotence is known by (1) creation (Gen. 1:1-31; Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11); (2) true accounts of miracles revealed in Scripture (Jn. 20:30-31); (3) His sustaining the world (Cor. 1:17; Heb. 1:3); (4) His answering prayer (1 Jn. 5:14-15); (5) His providence (Rom. 8:28; Mt. 6:33); and (6) His ability and plan of salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 7:25).

God cannot exercise His power in violation of His own will and/or nature. Consider some things the Bible explicitly says that God cannot do: God cannot tolerate iniquity (Hab. 1:13); God cannot deny Himself (2 Rom. 2:13); God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18); and God cannot commit sin or solicit men to do so (Jas. 1:13). The skeptic thinks he has something on God when he asks, "Can God make a rock so big that He cannot move it?" This is not logically possible. It would be like asking if God could make a four-sided triangle or a spherical cube. By definition, a triangle has three sides and a cube cannot be a sphere. So also, by definition, "God" cannot do the logically impossible!

Though God is omnipotent, He does not always exercise His full power. For example, God's power could have provided "more than twelve legions of angels" to rescue Jesus from the cross (Mt. 26:53), but that would not have been according to His will (cf. Mt. 26:39-44).

Second, God is omniscient, or "all knowing" (Ps. 147:5). There is nothing that God cannot know, and nothing can be hidden from God (Job 26:6; Je. 23:23-25; Heb. 4:13). Because of this knowledge, God cannot be deceived (Gal. 6:7 cf. Num. 32:23). God knows good and evil (Pr. 15:3); the thoughts of our hearts (Pr. 15:11; 1 Cor. 4:5; Re. 2:23); in darkness and in light (Dan. 2:22); the past and the future (Isa. 46:10); and even the hairs of our head (Mt. 10:30). Again, though God is omniscient, He does not always act upon His knowledge.

Third, God is omnipresent, or "present in all places" (Ps. 139:7-12; Acts 17:27). The Biblical presence of God is shown in various aspects. God is with all people, good or bad (Pr. 15:3; Lk. 12:2; Heb. 4:13). God is with His people in intimate fellowship (Ps. 140:13; Mt. 28:20; Jn. 14:23; 1 Jn. 1:3), whether it be in their true service (Ps. 100:2;

Due to the editor being on a mission trip in Ghana, West Africa, with his wife and brethren from the Orange Street church of Christ, the June list of supporters was not able to be listed in this issue of the Harvester as it normally would have. We will list it in next month's Harvester. Be that as it may, we would still like to say...

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Mt. 28:20), or in their true worship (Ps. 100:2; 1 Cor. 10:16). God is with His people after death (Ps. 23:4; 139:7-12). In fact, all will stand before Him at the Judgment (Mt. 25:31-34; 2 Cor. 5:10). The spiritually redeemed will be in His eternal presence (1 Thes. 4:16-17); the spiritually lost will be deprived of this presence (2 Thes. 1:7-9).

Having considered these non-moral attributes, note that each member of the Godhead shares in them, realizing that only deity can have these attributes. First, consider omnipotence. The Father (Job 42:1-2), the Son (Heb. 1:1-3), and the Holy Spirit (Mic. 3:8; Lk. 1:35; Rom. 15:19) are each all-powerful. In fact, all three members of the Godhead were involved in creation (Gen. 1:1-2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30; Jn. 1:1-3). Second, consider omniscience. The Father (1 Jn. 3:20), the Son (Jn. 2:24-25), and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-11) are each all-knowing. Third, consider omnipresence. The Father (Pr. 15:3; Mt. 6:4, 6, 18) and the Holy Spirit (Ps. 139:8-16) are each said to be present everywhere. The Son’s taking on human nature limited His physical presence (Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:6-8). Though Jesus could not physically be two places at once, He was still all-knowing, even where He was not present (Lk. 7:1-10; Jn. 1:45-49).

### CONCLUSION

The Godhead consists of three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who each share the one and only divine nature. May our understanding of the Godhead, as limited as it may be, motivate us to point to that member of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, who can save us from sin and make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

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