

## Lord Jesus Christ Part III

David P. Stevens

In I Corinthians 8:6, the apostle Paul makes an affirmation of the one true God. Paul declares, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” Christianity is unique in its affirmation of monotheism. No other religion affirms a triune God! Other world religions affirm a type of monotheism that differs from Christianity. The Jews affirm monotheism, but reject the concept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Muslims affirm a type of monotheism, but they reject the concept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christianity is the only monotheistic religion that affirms a triune God.

The Godhead is a deep mystery. The triune God has revealed Himself through the physical creation (Rom. 1:20). He has revealed Himself propositionally in Scripture. He has revealed Himself personally in Jesus Christ and He has revealed Himself through His work of redemption (involving unique teaching and miraculous works). From each of these areas of revelation we are able to add to our knowledge of God. We know much, but, there is still much that we do not know about Him. We know what is necessary to be saved and to be with Him eternally in heavenly realms.

### **Contrast Between Monotheism and Polytheism**

Christianity is a monotheistic religion. There is one God! Paul contrasts this concept with the idolatry that saturated the city of Corinth. In I Cor. 8:5, Paul acknowledges that among the pagans there were *many gods* and *many lords*. Previously, in v. 4, he stated that an idol is nothing. Idolatry is “whatever claims that loyalty which belongs to God alone” (J. A. Motyer, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 553). Macknight states, “The Greek word *eidōlon*, translated idol,

signifies an image formed in the mind, and which exists nowhere else” (James Macknight, *A New Literal Translation of the Apostolical Epistles*, 168). While it is true that an idol is nothing (merely a fiction), it is also true that the idol is associated with spiritual deception and, consequently, is not harmless. Both the Old and New Testaments legislate against idolatry. Idolatry is sinful because every form of it diminishes the glory of God.

What is God? When Paul states that there is one God, what concept of God does he have in mind? The answer is the triune God. This is the only God there has been or ever will be! God is three persons in one divine essence. We must not allow our concept of God to degenerate into tritheism (belief in three gods). There are three aspects to the triune God that must be kept in mind. The first aspect is *monotheism*. In terms of divine essence or eternal being, God is one and indivisible. The second aspect is *sameness of the three persons* (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) in regards to essential being. The three persons that comprise the Godhead share the same essence and have the same perfections. The third aspect is *distinctiveness in regards to person*. There are three persons or centers of consciousness that comprise the one divine essence. In I Cor. 8:6, Paul includes the Lord Jesus Christ as an essential person in the one, undivided, divine essence called “God” (the Godhead). It is the triune God that is our “Father” in a spiritual sense. The use of the word “Father” refers to the relationship of the triune God to Christians (I Cor. 1:3) and is not necessarily a reference of distinction between the Father and the Son (often referred to as the first and second persons of the Godhead). The reason for affirming this is that Paul is contrasting the one, true, and living God (the triune God) with the false gods of idolatry. He is not merely comparing God the Father (as distinct from God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) to idols. Charles Hodge makes the following pertinent comments, “This one God is, first, the Father; not the first person of the

Trinity, but our father. The word does not here express the relation of the first to the second person in the Godhead, but the relation of God as such to us as his children” (*Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 144).

Two prepositional phrases are used to assert important truths about the triune God. First, He is the *source* of the created world. The prepositional phrase *ex hou ta panta* (of whom (are) all things) is an ablative of source. The use of the definite article with *panta* indicates *the sum total of all that exists*. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). God is the source of all that exists! Idols have no power and consequently have no part in creation. Second, He is our *end*. The prepositional phrase, *eis auton* ((in him-KJV or unto Him or for him) indicates that for His glory we were created and redeemed. A Christian’s entire being is directed toward God in everything he does. Our spiritual connection is with God and therefore, no compromise with false gods is permitted-- love for God, allegiance and loyalty to God forbid it.

### **The Deity of Jesus Christ**

Paul affirms that there is one God and he also affirms that there is one Lord Jesus Christ. Earlier, Paul indicated that the claim was made among pagans that there were many gods and many lords. Paul has responded to the claim that there are many gods by affirming that there is one God. He responds to the claim that there are many lords by affirming that there is one Lord Jesus Christ. He continues to identify Jesus Christ by two prepositional phrases. The first asserts that Jesus Christ is the *agent* in creation. *Di’ hou ta panta* (by whom (are) all things) indicates that Jesus is the indirect agent in creation (this construction is an ablative of indirect agency). This phrase agrees precisely with the passages in John 1:3 and Eph. 3:9. The “all things” parallels the earlier “all things” attributed to the triune God. The unmistakable

affirmation is that Jesus Christ is *theos* (God--see John 1:1-3). Though Paul does not use *theos* to describe Jesus in this passage, he uses the equally significant word, *kurios*, to do so. This word was the common designation in the New Testament for the triune God of the Old Testament (Yahweh or Jehovah) and clearly identifies Jesus Christ with the triune God. Paul affirms that Jesus Christ is creator. The result is an affirmation of His eternity, His self-existence (being uncreated Himself), His pre-existence to the incarnate state, His power, and His glory. Second, Paul affirms that Jesus Christ is the *means* of new spiritual life. The prepositional phrase *di' autou* (through him) is also an ablative of indirect agency. Jesus is the means by which we become new creatures. We are His spiritual creation (Eph. 2:10). This fact magnifies the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Both of the prepositional phrases used by Paul to describe agency, as it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, connect Jesus Christ with the triune God and affirms Christ's deity. To affirm that there is one God and one Lord is not to affirm two gods. It is to affirm that there is one triune God and that Jesus Christ is the second person of that trinity (Godhead).