

RESPONDING TO TRINITARIAN CLAIMS ABOUT JESUS

WAS JESUS A GOD-MAN?

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

The doctrine of the Trinity states that God is **3 persons in one nature**; but the theory of the hypostatic union states that **Jesus was one person with 2 natures** – one divine and the other human. This is a contradictory position. If the 3 persons of the Godhead are one nature and Jesus' 2nd nature, when he was on earth, is combined with it then God has **2 natures**. **And yet they are supposed to be one nature** if Jesus was actually God. This would also mean that the entire Godhead was present on earth when Jesus was on earth.

MESSIAH WAS NEVER PROPHESED TO BE A GOD-MAN

- ❖ “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous *Branch* to spring up for David ... David shall never lack **a man** to sit on the throne of Israel” (*Jer. 33:15, 17*).
- ❖ *Messiah was to be “a man of sorrows” (Isa. 53:3).*
- ❖ “Behold **the man** whose name is *the Branch*: for he shall branch out from his place...” (*Zech. 6:12*).

MESSIAH WAS NEVER DESCRIBED AS A GOD-MAN

- ❖ “After me [*John the Baptist*] comes **a man** who ranks before me, ...” (*John 1:30*).
 - ❖ “...but now you seek to kill me [*Jesus*], **a man** who has told you the truth that I heard **from God**”
(*John 8:40*).
 - ❖ “For as by a man came death, **by a man** has come also the resurrection of the dead” (*1 Cor. 15:21*).
- Here we see John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul expressing themselves in harmony with what was prophesied concerning the Messiah i.e. as a human. Nothing is stated about him as a so-called God-man. Such a concept came from the pagan nations. (Also please see STUDY 13. WHAT DOES PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE REALLY MEAN?)*

COULD JESUS BE SOMETIMES GOD AND SOMETIMES MAN?

Did Jesus have one set of memories as a man and another set as “the Eternal Son”? Such an idea smacks of pagan eastern religion with its concept of individuals having lived “past lives.” Did Jesus speak as a man on some occasions and yet speak as “the Eternal Son” on other occasions? Trinitarianism proposes this scenario. How does one tell when Jesus is speaking as God or when as man? The Trinitarian scenario would mean that at times Jesus was omniscient as God and at other times lacked knowledge of things that the Father knows (Matt 24:36, Mark 13:32). If Jesus, as God, remembered what “the day and the hour” were for his return, how could he later, as man, forget that fact? *Omniscience and ignorance regarding the same fact cannot exist together*. In spite of the illogical Trinitarian statement that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man, in reality this picture gives us a Jesus who is not a complete and integrated man at any time – he is a hybrid. Such a view would contradict the biblical statements showing Jesus to be actually 100% human (Heb. 2:14, 17, 4:15; and 2 John 7) and nothing more. This is because he is “the last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45, 46)—fully human in the same sense that the perfect first Adam was—and nothing more! Theologian J. A. T. Robinson (C. of E. Bishop of Woolwich - deceased) stated that:

‘There can be no residue or trace of a Christology that says that Jesus said or did some things as God and some things as man. That is wholly alien to the interpretation of John.’ *The Priority of John*, p. 388.

CONTRAST OF “SON OF MAN” TO “SON OF GOD”

One Trinitarian argument for the ‘sometimes man – sometimes God’ picture is that the title “Son of

Man” applies when Jesus speaks or acts as a man, and “Son of God” applies when he speaks or acts as God. However, William Barclay demonstrates the faultiness of this argument:

...we have to note that it was precisely in terms of Son of Man that Jesus made many of his most superhuman claims and statements ... it appears that in fact Son of Man was a Messianic title, and a title involved in one of the most superhuman pictures of the Messiah in all Jewish thought.

Jesus as They Saw Him, pp. 70, 71.

DESTRUCTION OF MONOTHEISM

If Jesus were an “Eternal Son”—a “God the Son,” then he would have a personality and would be a different person from “God the Father” and different again from a “God the Holy Spirit.” This makes three independent personalities and must of necessity result in three Gods. It therefore breaks down the biblical monotheism. So in spite of the Trinitarian attempt to remove this problem with the concept of “one nature, three persons” normal logical reasoning would reject the concept of Jesus as a second person of the Godhead. So an alternative Trinitarian understanding has been to say that the human part of Jesus is impersonal human nature. Yet this reasoning flies in the face of the Scriptural record about the very human Jesus who wept, got hungry, needed rest and finally suffered excruciating pain before dying. This hardly sounds like impersonal human nature.

IS JESUS THE ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE EXACTLY **REPRESENTS GOD’S NATURE?**

❖ “And He is the **radiance** of His glory and the **exact representation** (Gk *character*) of His nature (Gk *hypostasis*)” (*Heb. 1:3 NASB*).

Or “He is the **reflection** of God’s glory and bears the impress of God’s own being” (NJB).

One cannot be God if one reflects or radiates God’s glory. Neither can one be God if one perfectly represents God’s nature. Jesus is one being and God in His entirety is another being. Although Trinitarians treat the word *hypostasis* as meaning “essence” in the ontological sense, yet the writer here may have used it in the sense of **substantial qualities** (Thayer’s Gk/Eng Lexicon) or traits i.e. compassion, graciousness. This would better fit the Hebrew mindset which rarely worked along ontological lines but rather described God according to His qualities (Ex. 34:6; Rom. 1:20). The New Century Version renders the passage as: “The Son **reflects** the glory of God and shows exactly what God is like.” This is similar to Jesus’ statement that “he who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) i.e. will come to know what God is like in His character.

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE **FORGAVE SINS?**

The forgiveness of sins is indeed ultimately the prerogative of God. So doesn’t Jesus’ forgiving of sins mean that he is God? Certainly not! The fact is that God can grant others to forgive sins. In the following case the Jews made faulty assumptions when:

❖ “...[Jesus] said to the paralytic... ‘your sins are forgiven.’ And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This man is blaspheming.’ But Jesus knowing their thoughts, said ... ‘that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...When the crowds saw it [*the healing*], they were afraid and they glorified **God who had given such authority to men**”

(*Matt. 9:2-8*).

So the man Jesus had been granted by God to forgive sins. In turn Jesus granted the same prerogative to the disciples and clearly they were not Almighty God:

❖ “If you [*the disciples*] forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven” (*John 20:23*).

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE PERFORMED *MIRACLES*?

Because Psalm 107:23-31 shows that Yahweh calmed a stormy wind after individuals had cried out to Him, Trinitarians state that Jesus must be God because he, too, calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. This argument, however, could only prove that Jesus is Yahweh – a thought that scholarly Trinitarians could not agree with! However, the Scriptures show that God provided the power for Jesus to use for all such miraculous works.

NOT IN JESUS' OWN POWER

Prophets of the Old Testament times also performed miracles, including Elijah's stopping of any rainfall for 3½ years. Some even brought back to life individuals who had died. None of them did this as God. But God did these things through them. Similarly for Jesus:

- ❖ “Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works **from the Father**’” (*John 10:32*).
- ❖ “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that **God did through him** in your midst” (*Acts 2:22, 23*).
- ❖ “God appointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about...healing all...**for God was with him**” (*Acts 10:38*).
- ❖ “...The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the *Father who dwells in me does his works*” (*John 14:10b*).
- ❖ “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of his own accord**, but only what he sees the Father doing’” (*John 5:19*).

Later, the apostle Peter variously was granted ability to resurrect Dorcas, to read Ananias' heart, and to heal a lame man (*Acts 9:36-41; 5:1-5; 3:3, 6, 7*). As with Jesus, all these miracles were performed with the Father's power. None of these individuals needed to actually be God to perform them. So clearly it is misguided to use the miracles of Jesus in an attempt to prove that Jesus was the Almighty God.

JESUS' RESTRICTED ABILITY

- ❖ “Now He **could do no mighty work** there [*Nazareth*], except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marvelled *because of their unbelief*. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching” (*Mark 6:5, 6*).
- So in contrast to God, Jesus did not have the ability to perform all miracles at all times.*

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE OF THE ACCUSATION OF *BLASPHEMY*?

In the New Testament blasphemy often has the sense of impious or irreverent speech against God, and the penalty in Israel for this crime was stoning. So when Jesus had said “I am the Son of God”:

- ❖ “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but **for blasphemy**, because you, being a man, make yourself **God**.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, **‘I said you are gods’**?” “If he called them gods to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming’, because I said, ‘I am **the Son of God**’ ?” (*John 10:31-36 ESV*).

So because the Jews here accuse Jesus of “**blasphemy**, because you, being a man, make yourself

God” Trinitarians often understand this to mean that Jesus was actually claiming to be the almighty God? However, such Trinitarians have not realized that these particular Jews of the first century seem to be unaware of how the terms “God” and “Son of God” are used in a representational sense in the Scriptures. This situation required that Jesus, using Psalm 82, explain to them that this is not blasphemy but that he does indeed fulfil the role of Messiah as Son of God. If even the unjust judges of Israel were called “gods” then by his works he, Jesus, has every right to be called “the Son of God.” Yet Jesus did not accept any **misguided notion** that he was actually the Almighty God as the rest of the Scriptures testify.

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE OF HIS PHRASE “*BUT I SAY TO YOU*”?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus uses this phrase rather than the phrase “This is what the LORD says” which phrase was used by most of the prophets. This showed Jesus’ greater authority than any past prophet – a prophet greater than Moses. However, this was because of his position as the ultimate Messiah and not because of any supposed hint that he was really the Almighty God.

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE ONLY GOD COULD MAKE *ATONEMENT* FOR SIN?

Trinitarians teach that because God is infinite then a sacrifice of infinite value is required and so Jesus had to be God to make a sufficient sacrifice.

THE EFFECT OF COINHERANCE

The Trinitarian concept of coinherance (Gk *perichoresis*) means that all 3 Persons of the Trinity are present when any one of the Persons is spoken of. If this were true then the death of the second person i.e. *God the Son* would create the impossible situation of the death of “God the Father” and that of *God the Holy Spirit*. However, Trinitarianism posits the idea that just prior to the moment of death *God the Son* departed for heaven and so leaving only the human shell part of himself to actually die on the cross with the anguished cry: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). But please note that Jesus says: “*My God, my God*” and not *my Father, my Father*, again showing that Jesus was not God Almighty.

DID ONLY THE HUMAN PART OF JESUS DIE?

If, in Trinitarian thinking, the God part of Jesus did not die, then Jesus made no sacrifice at all—he did not give all of himself, but only an empty human shell was sacrificed. So how could there be atonement for sin in Trinitarian terms? Furthermore, the idea of Jesus having two natures in his one person is illogical because he could not have been a complete human being - one cannot be 100% God and 100% man at the same time. Factually all individuals have only a single centre of consciousness and therefore an independent will. For any individual to desire to do God’s will that person must have a will that is independent from God. If this was not so in Jesus’ case, then his surrender to the will of God becomes insincere and farcical. More importantly, the ‘two natures’ concept is completely unscriptural. Please see STUDY 13. WHAT DOES PRE-HUMAN EXISTENCE REALLY MEAN?

IT WAS CHRIST AND NOT GOD WHO MADE THE ACTUAL SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE

Although it was God’s arrangement for a sacrifice to be made which would pay for Adam’s sin, it was still Jesus who made that actual sacrifice:

❖ “...so that by the grace of **God** he [**Jesus**] might taste death for everyone” (*Heb. 2:9*).

So although God formed the plan and made the provision for salvation He could not, because He is immortal, physically make the sacrifice Himself. So it is Jesus, as a separate person from God, who physically makes atonement available for everyone:

❖ “For as by **a man** came death, by **a man** has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21, 22).

❖ “**God** shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us**. Since, therefore, we have now been **justified by his blood**, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Therefore, just as sin came into the world **through one man**, and death through sin, and so death spread to **all men** because all sinned ...

14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of **Adam**, who was **a type of the one who was to come**. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that **one man Jesus Christ** abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For **if, because of one man’s trespass**, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through **the one man Jesus Christ**. Therefore, as **one trespass** led to condemnation for **all men**, so **one act of righteousness** leads to justification and life for **all men**. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by **the one man’s obedience** the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:8-12, 14, 17).

What is shown as counting here concerns what Adam did and not what he was. So it is the corresponding but opposite action of Jesus i.e. the “*one act of righteousness – the one man’s obedience*” that brings reconciliation to God and not what Jesus was. Accordingly it did not require a ‘God the Son’ to make the sacrifice. However, this does not mean that just any man could have performed this “*one act of righteousness.*” Jesus was a unique man having been begotten by God.

THE TRINITARIAN SACRIFICE

In Greek philosophical thinking the incarnation of ‘*God the Son*’ in a human body restored the entire evil material realm because the Logos created the essential union of God and man. It is therefore the **incarnation that became paramount** to Trinitarians because it brought about the reconciliation and salvation rather than the death and resurrection of Jesus doing so. So the Trinitarian sacrifice has more to do with God becoming man than with the death of the fully human Jesus. Furthermore, this means that Jesus must have been “the Son of God **in power**” from his conception rather than as Romans 1:4 says: “by his resurrection from the dead.”

IT IS OUR “BROTHER” WHO MAKES THE SACRIFICE FOR US

❖ “For it was fitting that he [*Jesus*], for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified **all have one source**. That is why he is not ashamed to call them **brothers**, saying, “I will tell of your name to **my brothers**; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise” ... 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise **partook of the same things**, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil ... 17 Therefore he had to be **made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, *to make propitiation for the sins* of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:10-12, 14, 17, 18).

Furthermore, the concept of atonement makes it impossible for it to have been enacted **between 2 co-**

equal entities. The one making the atonement must be the lesser of the two. Only one entity can be Almighty God (monotheism).

IT IS FAITH RATHER THAN THE CONSTITUTION OF CHRIST THAT SAVES

Concerning the argument that only God's literally sacrificing Himself could atone for our sins and that the death of one man could not atone for the sins of all men; this is nullified by Jesus' statement showing that it is 'looking to him' when he is "lifted up" that saves:

❖ "And as Moses **lifted up the serpent** in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever **believes in him** may have eternal life" (*John 3:14, 15*).

So it is not whether Jesus is of the essence of God or not that will save, but just as the Israelites **in faith** looked toward God's single provision of the bronze serpent and so were saved from the poison of the snakes (Num. 21:7-9), so also it is faith in God's single provision of His human Son in his "*one act of righteousness*" as the ransoming sacrifice that makes atonement for any human and thereby saves them. There was nothing inherent in the serpent in regard to salvation, but only faith in that provision by God. So Jesus teaches that it is **faith** in God's human provision that saves mankind.

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE NOW HAS
DIVINE TITLES?

JESUS AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST IN A CERTAIN CONTEXT

In the following text it important to note that Jesus said that he died – something that God, in fact, cannot do:

❖ "I am **the first and the last**, and the living one. I died, and am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (*Rev. 1:17 b, 18*).

The title "*the first and the last*" is similar to God's title of "*the alpha and the omega*" in Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13. However, 22:13 includes the descriptive title for God as "*the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*" Yet, Jesus' statement in Revelation 1:17, 18 concerns his being "**the first and the last**" with reference to his resurrection because he said "I died, and am alive forevermore." This shows that he is not God Almighty who is immortal and therefore can never die. So Jesus is "the first and the last" in a sense different to that of God's being "the first and the last" (22:13). Jesus is not called "the beginning and the end."

"LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS"

"*King of kings*" is a title that even Artaxerxes of Persia bore (Ezra 7:12). Because Jesus is the agent of God he naturally bears some of the titles of God. This is similar to the angel of the Lord who carried the divine name (Gen.18; Ex. 23:21). This principle of agency allows Jesus to carry, in Revelation 17:14, God's title of "**Lord of lords and King of kings**" (1 Tim. 6:15). Hence the bearing of such a divine title does not make Jesus the Almighty God.

JESUS AS SHEPHERD AND SAVIOUR

Jesus is indeed "the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), "the great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20), and "*the shepherd and overseer of our souls*" (1 Pet. 2:25). However, his being both our shepherd and our saviour is in a representative way just as with other men used by God at earlier times (Judges 3:9 NAB also see LXX; Neh. 9:27 ESV). In fact, God, who is the Father, is the ultimate saviour and the ultimate shepherd of His people.

OTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD THAT ARE APPLIED TO JESUS

Just as Yahweh viewed himself as the **husband** of Israel, so, too Jesus is described as the husband of his disciples – the bride. This does not mean that Jesus is Yahweh.

DOES THE APPLICATION OF THE *YAHWEH TEXTS* TO JESUS MEAN THAT JESUS IS YAHWEH?

The NT writers either quote from OT texts concerning Yahweh or take a thought from them and apply them to Jesus. Trinitarians make the assumption that this must mean that Jesus is Yahweh and therefore is God. Examples are:

- **Romans 10:13:** “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of **the Lord** will be saved.’”

The context of 10:13 is in 10:9 which shows that the reference is to Jesus: “If you publicly declare that ‘word in your own mouth’ that **Jesus is Lord**...you will be saved.” Then verse 13 quotes from Joel 2:32 where the divine name YHWH is used. The context shows that Paul’s intention was to apply the thought in Joel to Jesus. However, this does not mean that Paul is saying that Jesus is Yahweh, but rather that to call on the name of Jesus as God’s plenipotentiary has the same effect as calling upon Yahweh – i.e. one’s salvation.

- **1 Peter 2:3:** “...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

The context (vs 4) of this text shows that Peter applies it to Jesus although it is a clear allusion to Psalm 34:8 which says: “Taste and see that Yahweh is good” NJB. As with Paul, Peter’s application of a Yahweh text to Jesus simply implies that he functions as Yahweh in the OT representational sense. Concerning this verse F. Hort wrote in his *The First Epistle of St Peter* p.104:

St Peter is not here making a formal quotation, but merely borrowing OT language, and applying it in his own manner. His use though different from the Psalm, is not at variance with it, for it is through the kindness of the Son that the Father is clearly made known to Christians: ‘he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.’”

So in reading these texts from the Hebrew Scriptures one has to be careful not to jump to conclusions when such passages are quoted by the New Testament writers.

- **Hebrews 1: 10-12.** *Please see* STUDY 11: JESUS IS THE AGENT OF THE NEW CREATION.

CAN THE SHEMA BE SPLIT?

In recent times some Trinitarian theologians have proposed that the *Shema* i.e. “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” (*Deut. 6:4 Young’s Lit*) when applied by the Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 8:6** can be used to prove that Jesus is God just as the Father is God, and therefore Paul has split the Shema when he says:

- ❖ “...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and **one Lord, Jesus Christ**, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” (*1 Cor. 8:6*)

However, the phrase “**one Lord, Jesus Christ**” focuses on the fact the Jesus is the one Lord Messiah [*Christ*] in contrast to Him who is the “one God, the Father.” Hence there is no splitting of the Shema. It applies entirely to the “one God, the Father” as the Lord God—Yahweh; whereas Jesus is the one Lord Messiah. These individuals are always differentiated. In fact, Emeritus professor James Dunn asks:

...whether Paul did indeed intend to ‘split the shema’. The one *God* is not only referred to as ‘the Father’ but is also seen as the *source* and origin of everything, and as the *goal* toward whom believers should direct themselves; whereas the one *Lord* is referred to in terms of agency, the *mediating agency* through whom all things and believers have effective being. *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus*, p. 109.

YAHWEH AND JESUS ARE DIFFERENT BEINGS

The Old Testament defines Yahweh alone as God. He is never described as a 3 person being but always as a singular person:

- ❖ “Yahweh declared to my Lord, ‘Take your seat at my right hand till I have made your enemies your footstool’ (Ps. 110:1 NJB).

Clearly, Yahweh [*Jehovah*] is a separate being from David’s Lord, who is recognized by all as being the foretold Messiah. Furthermore, the Hebrew word used here for “lord” is *adoni* which is never applied to God Almighty but only to humans and angels. Charles Bigg, DD., Canon of Christ Church, and Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Oxford. ICC, 1910, p. 99, 127 stated that:

Ps.110 prohibited the apostles from identifying Jesus with Yahweh ... We are not to suppose that the Apostles identified Jesus with Jehovah. There were passages which made this impossible, Ps 110:1. Mal.3:1.

Bigg also reported F. J. A. Hort as saying “**It would be rash to say that the NT identifies Jesus with Yahweh.**” Also in a letter to Sir Anthony Buzzard, Professor James Dunn spoke of: “**such heretical formulations as 'Jesus is Yahweh'!**”

So clearly, just as the Jews always believed, the *Shema* shows that God is a singular person. (Please see STUDY 3: THE ONLY GOD IS ONE PERSON).

JESUS IS NOT THE ONE ONLY TRUE GOD, BUT HIS AGENT

Jesus, as a believer in the Jewish *Shema*, confirmed its statement that God is a singular person. At the same time he confirmed that God was quite separate from himself as God’s commissioned agent when he said:

- ❖ “Father ... this is eternal life, that they know you **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ [*Messiah*] whom you have sent” (*John 17:1, 3*).
- ❖ “...there is **One God** and one mediator, the man Messiah Jesus” (*I Tim. 2:5*).
Here, Paul is making the same distinction between the “One God” and Jesus as his pre-eminent agent.

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE WAS **WORSHIPPED**?

Originally the English word “worship,” as used in the KJV and other older translations, had a broad meaning so that worship could rightly be rendered to humans as well as to God. However, over time the word has narrowed in meaning so that today it refers only to worship of God. On this subject there are several Greek words in the New Testament, but unfortunately they have continued to be rendered with by the one word “worship” in many translations, rather having renderings which show the difference in meaning and application. These Greek words are:

LATREUO and LATREIA

The Greek words *latreuo* and *latreia* are found respectively 21 times and 5 times in the NT and according to the Greek-English lexicons refer to worship or religious service and that are applied legitimately **only to the Father as the one true God** (Acts 24:14, John 17:1, 3) or to false gods e.g. “the host of heaven” (Acts 7:42) and to “what had been created” (Rom. 1:25).

NOTE: Revelation 22:3b seems ambiguous concerning to whom the Greek word *latreuo* applies. The text says: “...the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and **his** servants will worship (*latreuo*) **him**.” The issue is: to whom do “**his**” and “**him**” apply – God or Jesus? *The Translators’ Translation* comments in its notes that: “John is writing a little loosely. If a translation is to be more explicit, the main reference in the paragraph is to God, see verse 4.” That the reference is to God and not to Jesus is strongly indicated by the similar statement in Rev. 7:15: “Therefore they are before the throne of **God**, and serve (*latreuo*) **him** day and night in his temple” Additionally, Revelation 22:3b makes a clear distinction between God and Jesus so that Jesus is not the Almighty God. So

because all other occurrences of *latreuo*, in terms of true worship, apply to God then the pronouns “**his**” and “**him**” in Revelation 22:3b also apply to Him - the Father who is the true God (John 17:1, 3, 1 Cor. 8:6).

THRESKIA

The NIV Theological Dictionary of the NT states concerning *threskia*: “There is little difference between *latreia* and *threskia*, which means worship of God (Jas. 1:26-27), worship of Angels (Col.2:18), and religion in general (Acts 26:5).

PROSKYNEO

The lexical definitions of *proskyneo* are: *worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself to, show reverence to, pay homage to, welcome respectfully*. *Proskyneo* is certainly rendered to Almighty God (John 4:21-23). It is also rendered to Jesus when others bowed before him as king (Matt. 2:2), as lord (Matt. 8:2), as “Son of God” [meaning Messiah (Matt.14:33)]. All of these were instances of simply **giving honour to** (paying homage to) **someone of higher rank**. Other instances concerned:

- The synagogue official who, as a Jew, would not have recognized Jesus as being God (Matt. 9:18).
- The Gerasene demoniac who “bowed before him” (Mark 5:6). No doubt this was because the demon recognized Jesus as being “the Son of God,” but not meaning a so-called ‘God the Son.’
- The man born blind paid homage to Jesus as “the Son of Man” not as God (John 9:35, 38).
- In Matthew 28:9 the women disciples “clasped [*Jesus*] feet, **kneeling before** him (*proskyneo* [REB, Barclay])” or “bowing to the ground before him” [Weymouth, Goodspeed] or “**did bow to him**” [YLT], or “**did him homage**” [NAB, NJB]. There is nothing in this context to indicate that they worshipped Jesus as Almighty God. Indeed, there is nothing more here than the “paying of homage” to him.

In all or many of these occasions most translations render *proskyneo* as “worship,” thereby giving the impression that Jesus must be God. However, *proskyneo* is also rendered to the human master in the parable of the unforgiving slave (Matt. 18:26), to “the holy ones” (saints) (Rev. 3:9), to “the dragon” (Rev. 13:4), to “the beast from the sea” (Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15), and to King David (1 Chron. 29:20 LXX). So the fact that *proskyneo* is rendered to mortal humans and satanic beings, all of whom obviously are not the Almighty God, demonstrates that when *proskyneo* is rendered to Jesus it is no proof that he is the Almighty God.

Furthermore, the fact that both “**him who sits on the throne and...the Lamb**” are worshipped (*proskyneo*) (Rev. 5:13, 14) does not mean that the Lamb is also God. This is because a similar situation occurred whereby king David received “worship” **as God’s representative**, as we learn that: “*the assembly... paid homage (Gk proskyneo in LXX) to the LORD and to the king*” (1 Chron. 19:20). The KJV uses the word “worshipped.” Yet nothing here would imply that David was worshipped as Almighty God.

The instance where John is told by the angel not to pay homage to him (Rev. 19: 10, 22:8, 9) and the instance where Cornelius renders *proskyneo* to the apostle Peter, but Peter refuses it (Acts 10: 25, 26), are both instances where the recipient does not feel that he is the superior of the one doing obeisance – as Peter said: “Stand up; I too am just a man.” These are not cases where either of them was being worshipped as God.

JESUS WAS “WORSHIPPED” ONLY FROM A PARTICULAR TIME

- ❖ “And again, when he brings **the firstborn** into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’” (*Heb. 1:6*).

The bringing of “**the firstborn** into the world” occurred when Jesus was born, and *Hebrews 1:6* shows that the homage (Gk *proskyneo*) paid to Jesus by the angels was commanded to begin at the precise time of his birth. Yet if Jesus were God Almighty he would have been worshipped by the angels from eternity.

So clearly the ‘*showing of reverence to*’ or ‘*paying homage to*’ “the Lord Jesus Christ” is different from the worship which is offered to the Almighty God. Such homage is paid to the heavenly Father as Lord God, but to Jesus as Lord Messiah (John 20:31).

IS JESUS ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE CHRISTIANS ARE TO *CALL ON HIS NAME*?

This is a similar issue to that of the previous one involving worship of Jesus. However, to call upon the name of the LORD in the OT meant that one was appealing to God. So to call upon Jesus’ name as Stephen did when he was dying (Acts 7:54-60) or as Christians are admonished to do in 1 Corinthians 1:2 also means that we are to appeal to Jesus:

- ❖ “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place **call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”
(1 Cor. 1:2, 3).

In the phrase “call upon” the Greek word *epikaleo* means “**to appeal to**” and in the Greco/Roman world it was often the word used to describe an appeal to or an invoking of one’s god. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 this word is: “in the present middle participial form, indicating a continual earnest appeal and dependence upon Christ, who alone can save. (*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Vol.10, p. 189).

However, because the phrase “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” refers to: **all that Jesus is as Lord and Messiah** - then any **calling upon** i.e. appealing to, *must involve our communication with him*. It is just as Paul’s appeal (Gk *epikaleo*) to Caesar (Acts 25:11) would have involved *direct communication with Caesar* and not just his aides. Hence, all such appealing to Jesus is to him as Messiah in his position as the ultimate functionary of God. This is why Jesus could receive Stephen’s spirit when Stephen died.

DOES *HONOURING* “THE SON” MEAN THAT HE IS GOD?

This, too, is a similar issue to that of the previous ones involving worship of and calling on the name of Jesus. In this instance Jesus speaks of his being honoured just the same as the Father is honoured:

- ❖ “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that **the Son does likewise**. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For **as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life** to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, **that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father**. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (*John 5:19-24*).

TRINITARIAN ARGUMENT

That Jesus is here claiming *divine* honor is evident from the immediate context. Jesus has just claimed that he does whatever the Father does (v. 19) and that “he **gives life** to whomever he wishes.” The Father has even entrusted to the Son (v. 22) the responsibility of rendering eternal judgment over all people...We can assign no higher honour or status to someone than that of our ultimate, final Judge.

RESPONSE: With reference to John 5:19-23, Raymond Brown, in his famous Commentary on John, states that:

The parable that Dodd finds in John could be set in an apprentice shop where **a youth is learning a trade**. He cites a series of references from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (from Egypt of NT times), where it is insisted that the apprentice must do what the master does, p. 218.

Furthermore, F. F. Bruce comments on 5:23 that:

An ambassador receives the honour due to the sovereign whom he represents; dishonour to the ambassador is an insult to his sovereign. The Son is the Father's **envoy plenipotentiary**. The Father bestows the authority and the Son exercises it; the Father sends the Son and the Son is sent.

The Gospels and Epistles of John, p. 130.

The implication of the Trinitarian Argument is that Jesus is God Almighty. However, from the two quoted theologians we can see that the honour that Jesus receives is because of his diligence in imitating his master and his obedience to his master “the Father” who sent him as His representative and to do works which are normally the prerogative of the Father - Yahweh - in the OT. So if the Son is honoured by men then the Father is also honoured. This is clearly at a much higher level than was the case when the prophets, kings, judges and priests who represented Yahweh. This is because Jesus is the Son – the Messiah. It does not mean that he is the Almighty God.

EVERYTHING IS ‘FROM’ THE FATHER BUT NOT ‘FROM’ JESUS

The Scriptures often use the words “from,” “in,” “through,” “for,” and “to” in relation to both the Father and Jesus. So we need to analyse who the words apply to in their various contexts.

ALL THINGS ARE **FROM** ONLY THE FATHER

- ❖ “For **from him** [*God*], and through him and to him **are all things**. To him be glory forever. Amen” (*Rom. 11:36*).
- ❖ “...yet for us there is one God, the Father, **from whom are all things** and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (*1 Cor. 8:6*).
- ❖ “...for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And **all things are from God**” (*1 Cor. 11:12*).

ALL THINGS ARE **IN, THROUGH, TO and FOR** THE FATHER

- ❖ “for **“In him** [*God*], we live and move and have our being’...” (*Acts 17:28*).
- ❖ “For from him [*God*], and **through** him and **to** him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (*Rom. 11:36*).
- ❖ “For it was fitting for Him, **for whom are all things**, and **through whom are all things**, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (*Heb. 2:10 NASB*).
- ❖ “...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and **for whom we exist**, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (*1 Cor. 8:6*).

ALL THINGS ARE **IN, THROUGH and FOR** JESUS

- ❖ “He [*Jesus*] was in the world (Gk. *kosmos*), and **the world came to be through** (Gk *dia* - genitive) **him** [*Jesus*] but the world did not know him” (*John 1:10 NAB. Also see interlinear*).

It is the world of humanity (Gk *kosmos*), rather than the universe that is meant here according to the

context. So we notice that the world only came to be through him at a time he already was in the world since his birth. We also notice that the world only came to be through him at a time that the world had failed to recognize him. That is: it already did not know him. So in what sense did the world *come to be through* Jesus if this occurred after he had been born and was later rejected? Clearly this does not mean that he was the original creator of the universe. Only God was that (Isa. 44:24). Yet in contrast to God's initiating activity – the world came to be *through* (Gk *dia*) Jesus and therefore not *by* or *out of* him (2 Cor. 5:18) so that God's purpose for the world would come to its completing stage in the new creation (John 1:12, 13). In this way Jesus, during his lifetime on earth, acted as God's agent to complete the creation by his work and his sacrifice.

NOTE: According to Bauer's Gk/Eng. lexicon the range of meanings of the word *dia* in the genitive is: instrumentality, of attendant or prevailing circumstance, of occasion, in consequence of. The dictionary definition of the English word *through* includes "by reason of."

NOTE: Verses 3 and 4 do not apply to Jesus but to *God's word* i.e. His declared purpose. See STUDY 17: THE 'LOGOS' IN JOHN'S PROLOGUE.

WE EXIST AS NEW CREATION THROUGH JESUS AND IN HIM

Although several texts speak of things which are through the Father, others speak of things which are through Jesus in relation to the new creation:

- ❖ "...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, **through whom are all things and through whom we exist**" (1 Cor. 8:6).
- ❖ "God...in these last days did speak to us in a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through whom** also He did **make the ages** (Gk *aionas* = ages)" (Heb. 1:1, 2 Young's Literal also see NJB).
- ❖ "...because **in him** [*Jesus*] were the all things created, those in the heavens, and those upon the earth, those visible, and those invisible, whether thrones, whether lordships, whether principalities, whether authorities; all things through him, and for him, have been created.." (Col. 1:16 Young's Lit.).

The phrase: 'in him' means 'in union (or connection) with', 'in association with', or 'by reason of' according to Bauer's Gk-Eng. Lexicon. In context this verse does not mean 'by' or 'by means of':

- ❖ "...if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).
- ❖ "...**in him** all things hold together. He is the head of the *body*" (Col. 1:17).
- ❖ "...to head up all things **in Christ** things upon the heavens and things upon the earth; **in him, in whom** also we were assigned" (Eph. 1:10, 11 KIT).

The phrase 'all things' is limited to "**thrones or lordships or governments or authorities....of the body, the congregation.**" The creating of *an authority* is not the physical creating of people. *Therefore, it is "all things" within the context and not all things absolutely.*

From all of the above Scriptures it is evident that all things come only from God who is defined in the Scriptures as the Father. It is also evident that context must be taken account of when the phrase "all things" is used. Clearly Jesus was not the one who created the universe or acted as co-creator with the Father or acted as agent of the Genesis creation, but rather was the co-creator or agent of the New Creation. Furthermore, as above, Psalm 110:1 precludes any teaching that Jesus is Yahweh.

Please see STUDY 10: JESUS IS NOT THE AGENT OR CO-CREATOR OF THE GENESIS CREATION and STUDY 11: JESUS IS THE AGENT OF THE NEW CREATION

JESUS IS NEVER HONOURED AS IF HE WERE THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE

There are several arguments put forward by Trinitarians and others to the effect that Jesus must have been the creator of the universe. One such argument is that although Moses received honour, Jesus received much greater honour as the builder of creation. So the letter to the Hebrews admonishes Christians to:

❖ “...consider Jesus, the *apostle and high priest* of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who *appointed him*, just as Moses also was faithful in all **God’s house**. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much **more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself**. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as *a servant*, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God’s house as *a son*. And **we are his house** if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope” (*Heb. 3:1-6*).

THE ARGUMENT THAT JESUS IS THE CREATOR OR THE AGENT OF CREATION

Moses is to Jesus as a house is to the builder of the house! In other words Moses is part of the creation, “the house,” and Jesus is being described as the “builder of the house,” or the one responsible for the creation. “For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (v. 4). Here the writer to the Hebrews is telling us to honour Jesus as we would the “builder” of creation— God.”

RESPONSE

This argument wrongly interprets the analogy of verse 3 and its clarification in verse 4 as being combined into being a direct reference to Christ as the creator/builder of the universe and thereby making Jesus into “God” in verse 4. However, the “house” (in verses 3 and 4) is a reference, not to the creation of the universe, but to the people of God (v. 6) which God built through Jesus. He is the agency through which the “house” - the people of God/the church is built. The comparison is that just as God’s glory is far more than the glory of His creation of the universe so the glory of the exalted Jesus as “Son” is far greater than the glory of Moses as “servant.” So, there is here no proof that Jesus was either the agent or the builder of the universe. Furthermore, the exalted Jesus was appointed as a representative—an “*apostle and high priest*” in that house. Yet as “Son” and heir he is superior to Moses who also faithfully served in that house as shown in *The Word Biblical Commentary* on Hebrews 3:1-6:

...the logic of v 3 demands the equation of Jesus (v 3a) and “the house-builder” (v 3b). But on this understanding v 4 cannot be integrated with the development, since there *the action of building is assigned to God, and not to Jesus* ... The designations “apostle and high priest” in Heb 3:1 anticipate the comparison to be developed between Jesus and Moses in their office **as commissioned representatives of God** ... Jesus was faithful to the one who **appointed him in his house....**” The glory (doxa) of Moses is the tribute he received from God in Num 12:7; the glory of Jesus is the christological oracle concerning the faithful priest, which finds its fulfillment in the one who was **crowned with glory** and honor **at his exaltation**. Vv 3 and 4 assume the form of a comparative argument based on *analogy*. Such an argument does not entail a one-to-one equivalence but establishes **a relation of proportion** by means of analogous comparison. The initial basis of the analogy is the general principle that a house-builder receives more honor than the house he has built (v 3b). The analogy was suggested by the reference to “his house” in v 2, but the statement in v 3b has no theological significance. Like the correlative statement in v 4a (“for every house is built by someone”), **it simply enunciates a truism**. The theological statement is provided in v 4b, where **God is identified as the builder of all things**. The substitution of “all things,” for “house,” and the employment of the verb “to make, create”, indicate that it is God in his role as creator who is in view. **The function of v 4 is to clarify the comparison** asserted in v 3a. It explains the other side of the analogy (v 3b) by correlating it first with another general principle (v 4a) and then with the theological

principle that God is the creator of everything ... Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses **in the same measure as God has more honor than the universe he created**. So, far from being parenthetical, v 4 is the center of the argument set forth in 3:1-6.

5-6a The superior status of Jesus is indicated by the designation "Son," and by his appointment to exercise his rule over (epi) the house of God. What the writer understands by "Son" has been demonstrated in 1:3-6, where he refers to the **exaltation and dignity of the Son in terms of enthronement**, acclamation, and the worship of the angels. Here the same exalted status is affirmed in the contrast between a servant within the household and **the Son who presides over its administration**.

6b "we are," serves to emphasize the *corporate* conception of **the church as the "house of God."** ... Because Jesus is a faithful high priest in the service of God, Christians have the right to approach God...

So in Hebrews Jesus is being honoured as God's representative over "the household of God" i.e. the body of Christians. He is not being honoured as God, who alone built the universe (Isa. 44:24).

IS JESUS THE ALMIGHTY GOD BECAUSE HE NOW FUNCTIONS AS GOD?

Only since Jesus' resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand does he now fully function as God i. e., God's plenipotentiary, and therefore have the full powers from God to fulfill God's purpose.

ON EARTH JESUS WAS NEVER OMNIPOTENT, OMNIPRESENT NOR OMNISCIENT

The incident with Nathaniel (John 1:47-49) does not indicate that Jesus was omnipresent or omniscient even though Jesus demonstrated a miraculous power. Neither do the cases of distance healing (Matt. 8:5-13; John 4:46-54) that Jesus performed require that he had these particular qualities of God. However, it is posited by Trinitarians that Jesus was omniscient because he supernaturally knew that:

1. Lazarus had already died
2. The woman at Sychar had had 5 husbands
3. Judas would betray him
4. Peter would deny him
5. He would be arrested in Jerusalem:

However, this cannot be the case because Jesus did not know the time of his return (Matt 24:36) or who pulled at his robe (Luke 8:43-48). Just as it was God who granted Jesus the ability to perform miracles (Acts 2:22, 23; 10:38) so, too, would He grant him supernatural knowledge for certain purposes.

SO IS JESUS NOW OMNIPOTENT?

It is God who has granted Jesus, "all authority in heaven and earth" (Matt. 28:18) since his exaltation and for him to now also be "the ruler of God's creation" (Rev. 3:14 NIV). Jesus did not acquire these powers by himself but rather:

- ❖ "...he [*God*] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **far above all rule** and authority and power and dominion, and **above every name** that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he [*God*] **put all things 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" (*Eph. 1:20-22 ESV*).

The things which are stated in the Scriptures as tremendous powers given to Jesus include everything to do with the church, the resurrection, the kingdom and power over the orders of things in heaven and on earth. However, *the Scriptures never mention any power granted to Jesus to literally create new physical things*. Furthermore, when God's purpose is completed Jesus delivers the kingdom to God:

- ❖ “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has **put all his enemies under his feet**. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then **the Son himself will also be subjected to him** who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all”

(1 Cor. 15:24-28).

So, there is nothing revealed in Scripture to indicate that Jesus has been or ever will be omnipotent even though he wields tremendous power on God’s behalf. Only the One God is omnipotent.

IS JESUS NOW OMNIPRESENT?

Although the Father is omnipresent in His entire creation by means of His spirit (Ps. 139:7-12), and Jesus has been granted by God to have His spirit, this means of outreach for Jesus is only described in the Scriptures as involving the church and all the individuals who seek God (Matt. 18:20, 28:20). So Jesus, although present by spirit wherever his disciples are, is not omnipresent throughout creation as is God by His spirit. Furthermore, just as God is not actually omnipresent in the Buddhist sense so too with Jesus as he showed by the following statements:

- ❖ “For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But **you will not always have me**” (Mark 14:7).
- ❖ “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for **if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you**. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).
- ❖ “**I will remain in the world no longer**, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father” (John 17:11 NIV).

The Trinitarian argument that these statements by Jesus refer only to him as a man fail, because in each case Jesus will have ascended to heaven. So when, in Matthew 28:20 Jesus says: “I am with you always to the end of the age” he evidently means that it is by the outreach of the spirit, rather than that he is actually omnipresent.

IS JESUS NOW OMNISCIENT?

Of God it is said that “he **knows everything**” (1 John 3:20). However, the context of this verse shows that the “everything” is in relationship to God’s reading of the hearts of Christians. It is similar with Jesus’ conversation with Peter who said:

- ❖ “Lord you **know everything**; you know that I love you” (John 21:17).

As with the many cases where the words *every* or *all* are used in the Scriptures it is vital to see them in context. The context in John 21 is that of Jesus’ ability to read the hearts of his disciples and in this instance it was Peter’s heart that Jesus was able to read. So it does not infer that Jesus now knows everything in the universe:

- ❖ “Lord you know the hearts of **all**, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place of...” (Acts 1:24).
- ❖ “And all the churches will know that I am he who **searches mind and heart**, and I will give to each of you according to your works” (Rev. 2:23).
- ❖ “[Jesus] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge... For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:3, 9).

Although evidently Jesus was granted the supernatural ability to read hearts/minds and after his exaltation to have “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in relation to God’s purpose this does not necessarily mean that he has the same knowledge as God regarding all the details of the entire universe. So there is no Scriptural proof the Jesus is now omniscient.

JESUS DID NOT EXIST FROM ETERNITY HE WAS BEGOTTEN

In the third century the Son was still seen as subordinate to the Father and the holy spirit was considered to be inferior to the Father and to the Son with prayer being offered to the Father alone.

ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON

Nevertheless, at this time **Origen** propounded the concept of the Son’s being *eternally begotten* or *eternally generated* as meaning a continuous generation of the Son by the Father. The purpose of this doctrine is to propose that Jesus as Son of God had no beginning and therefore is a part of the Godhead. Without this doctrine of *eternal generation* there can be no doctrine of the Trinity.

THE SON WAS BEGOTTEN AT A SPECIFIC TIME

❖ “You are my Son; **today** I have *begotten* you” (*Ps. 2:7*) (*quoted at Hebrews 1:5*).

The term begotten is clearly defined in all lexicons as meaning *generated*—a coming into existence at a particular time. Therefore, Jesus was generated or begotten in time i.e. “**today** I have *begotten* you.” The word **today** does not mean *in timeless eternity* as taught by Trinitarians. In fact, specific time is involved in bringing Messiah into existence:

❖ “I will make him the **firstborn** the highest of the kings...” (*Ps. 89:27*). (In the Septuagint the Greek word is *prototokos* which means *first-born*).

Although firstborn generally refers to *special status*, primarily in a family, it is also pertinent to the usual *birth order* (according to Bauer’s Gk/Eng. Lexicon) and hence implies a coming into existence.

ETERNAL GENERATION IS A CONTRADICTION OF TERMS

Therefore Origen’s concept of *eternal generation* of the Son is a contradiction in terms. This would mean that the Son had a **beginningless beginning**. Furthermore the Son/Father relationship logically implies a coming into existence of a son. As leading exponent of the Trinity doctrine Millard Erickson explains:

The begetting passages [in the New Testament] should be seen as referring to the earthly residence of Jesus, rather than some continuous generation by the Father. *Making Sense of the Trinity*, p.86.

Famous Bible commentator Adam Clark shows in his *Commentary on Luke 1:35* the unscriptural nature of this doctrine when he writes:

The doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ is, in my opinion, antiscritural and highly dangerous. I have not been able to find any express declaration of it in the Scriptures...To say that he was begotten from all eternity is absurd, and the phrase ‘eternal son’ is a positive self-contradiction. ‘Eternity’ is that which has had no beginning, nor stands in any reference to time. ‘Son’ supposes time, generation, and father, and time also antecedent to such generation. Therefore the conjunction of these two terms ‘Son’ and ‘eternity’ is absolutely impossible, as they imply essentially different and opposite ideas.

J. O. Buswell’ D. D., former dean of the graduate school, Covenant College, St. Louis, MO, wrote:

The notion that the Son was begotten by the Father in eternity past, not as an event, but as an inexplicable relationship, has been accepted and carried along in the Christian theology since the fourth

century....We have examined all the instances in which 'begotten' or 'born' or related words are applied to Christ, and we can say with confidence that the Bible has nothing whatsoever to say about 'begetting' as an eternal relationship between the Father and the Son.

A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, p. 110.

Along with other mysteries the contradictory concept of *eternal generation* is also explained by some Trinitarians as something incomprehensible to the human mind but nevertheless true. Yet throughout the Scriptures there is no such person as an *eternal Son of God*.

DO MELCHIZEDEK'S DETAILS PROVE THAT JESUS HAD NO BEGINNING

- ❖ “For this Melchizedek ... He is without father or mother or genealogy, **having neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but *resembling the Son of God* he continues a priest forever” (*Heb. 7:1, 3 ESV*).

This is the popular translation of this verse which is sometimes used by Trinitarians to promote the idea that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ or at least that he was a type of the Christ regarding the concept of Jesus having had no beginning. Is this really a correct understanding of the words of the writer to the Hebrews? In fact, the writer did not mean that Melchizedek actually never had any parents or had no beginning or is still alive now, but rather that there is no record of the details of his life in the biblical account. This is seen in the fact that the Greek word *apator* does not mean ‘fatherless’, but rather that being “without father” implies that his father was unknown or not mentioned i.e. not in the biblical record. However, William L. Lane translates verse 3 as:

His father, mother, and line of descent are **unknown**, and there is **no record** of his place of birth or of his death, but having been made to resemble the son of God, he remains a priest continuously.

Word biblical Commentary Vol. 47a, p. 157.

And the NLT renders verse 3 as:

“There is **no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors**—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, **resembling the Son of God.**”

So Melchizedek is not being portrayed as someone literally “**having neither beginning of days nor end of life**” but, that there is no record of these details. On this understanding Melchizedek cannot be used as a type of Jesus in any sense of his being fatherless, motherless and having no beginning or end.

THE REFERENCE IS ONLY TO PRIESTHOOD

The only sense of Melchizedek’s “*resembling the Son of God*” is inasmuch as “he continues a **priest** forever.” So the key factor for the writer in choosing Melchizedek as a type of Jesus is the uniqueness of his priesthood i.e. it is one that is not based on the circumstances of his descent as is the case with the Levitical priesthood. This is shown in Hebrews 7:6:

A PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR TO THE LEVITICAL

- ❖ “But **Melchizedek, who was not a descendant of Levi**, collected a tenth from Abraham. And Melchizedek placed a blessing upon Abraham, the one who had already received the promises of God. **8** The priests who collect tithes are men who die, so Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that **he lives on**” (*Heb. 7:6, 8 NLT*).

Melchizedek, of course, does not literally physically “live on” but only in the sense that Shakespeare lives on in his work. Melchizedek lives on inasmuch as he is recorded in the Scriptures and so can be used by the writer of Hebrews for the purpose of showing that Jesus is a high priest forever. Hence, F. F Bruce Comments:

The title which Abraham gave Melchizedek was received by one who, **as far as the record goes**, has no “end of life” (emphasis ours) *NICNT. The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 163.

JESUS' PRIESTHOOD IS NOT BASED ON DESCENT FROM LEVI

❖ “For the priest we are talking about belongs to *a different tribe*, whose members have never served at the altar as priests. What I mean is, our Lord came from the tribe of **Judah**, and *Moses never mentioned priests coming from that tribe*. This change has been made very clear since a different priest, **who is like Melchizedek**, has appeared. Jesus became a priest, *not by meeting the physical requirement of belonging to the tribe of Levi*, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. And the psalmist pointed this out when he prophesied, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (*Heb. 7:13-17 NLT*).

So the purpose in choosing Melchizedek as a type of Jesus is to stress the uniqueness of Jesus' high priesthood. However, unlike Melchizedek Jesus' genealogy can be clearly seen from the Bible record (Matt. 1 and Luke 3: 23ff) as well as in the above verses. So the point that the writer to the Hebrews is making is that the old Levitical hereditary descent is of no importance for the choosing by God of a final and permanent high priest and that an everlasting Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to that of Levi. Another important factor is that both Melchizedek and Jesus were appointed as kings as well as high priests; yet kingship was never applicable to the Levitical high priesthood.

JESUS IS A PERMANENT HIGH PRIEST

❖ “This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron's descendants became priests without such an oath, but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to him, “The LORD has taken **an oath** and will not break his vow: ‘You are a priest forever.’” Because of this oath, Jesus is the one who guarantees this better covenant with God. There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But **because Jesus lives forever**, *his priesthood lasts forever*. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf” (*Heb. 7:20-25 NLT*).

THE SON OF GOD HAD A BEGINNING

In Hebrews 7 Melchizedek is not being presented as a type in regard to Jesus' genealogical details, but rather as a type of the priesthood that God is now using – one that is not dependent on a line of descent from Levi or Aaron or, indeed, any predecessor. So evidently there is no hint in the Scriptural record that Melchizedek was in any way a pre-incarnate Jesus – he was simply a type of Jesus in regard to a unique priesthood. Neither can Hebrews 7:3 be used as a proof text that Jesus had no beginning – a concept proven false in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and completely foreign to the rest of the biblical record. (Please see the previous subheading: JESUS DID NOT EXIST FROM ETERNITY HE WAS BEGOTTEN and STUDY 14: WHEN DID THE SON OF GOD COME INTO EXISTENCE?)

IS JESUS A ‘MERE’ MAN?

Jesus was never a mere man because prior to his resurrection:

- He was the only man ever to have been literally ‘begotten’ by God.
- He was the only man ever to have been conceived in a virgin.
- He was the only man ever to have lived a perfect life i.e. without sinning.
- He was the only man in a position to pay for Adam's sin. Prior to Jesus' exaltation he was the equal of the pre-sinful Adam.

Jesus is an even greater man since his resurrection because:

- He is the only man to have been granted imperishability and immortality with power.
- He is the only man to be literally in God's presence.
- He is the only man who has been granted "all authority in heaven and on earth."
- He is the one who will be earth's ruler in God's Kingdom.

So, although Jesus was and is human he was and is a completely unique human.

THE CONCLUSION IS THAT JESUS CANNOT BE THE ALMIGHTY GOD

From the above Scriptures it is evident that all that Jesus said and did was because the Father, who alone is God, granted such prerogatives to him. Furthermore, although Jesus now functions as God it is in the same OT sense as with Moses and others i.e. representationally. All the biblical data can be fully and rationally explained without recourse to Trinitarian concepts.

John 17:3 - Only the Father is God. There is no 'God the Son' anywhere in Scripture.

1 Corinthians 8:6 - Only the Father is the one God.

Ephesians 4:4 - The "one Lord" is Jesus. And separately there is "one God and Father of all."

1 John 5:18 - Jesus was "born (begotten) of God" and so cannot be God.

Begotten means came into existence, so that God brought Jesus into existence and one cannot come into existence twice unless one believes Greek philosophy or science fiction. The idea that Jesus existed from eternity was first thought up by Origen in the 200s A.D. and such a concept is nowhere taught in the Scriptures.

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