

Lesson 3

The One True God

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Over 95% of the world's population believes in a "higher power." But does that mean that they worship the same God we worship? In this lesson we will look at how the Bible describes the one true God. As we do that, hopefully we will answer the following questions.

- ◆ How can someone know there is a God?
- ◆ What do we mean when we say we have a "Triune God"?

HOW CAN SOMEONE KNOW THERE IS A GOD?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Psalm 19:1-3 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, *being understood from what has been made*, so that men are without excuse.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

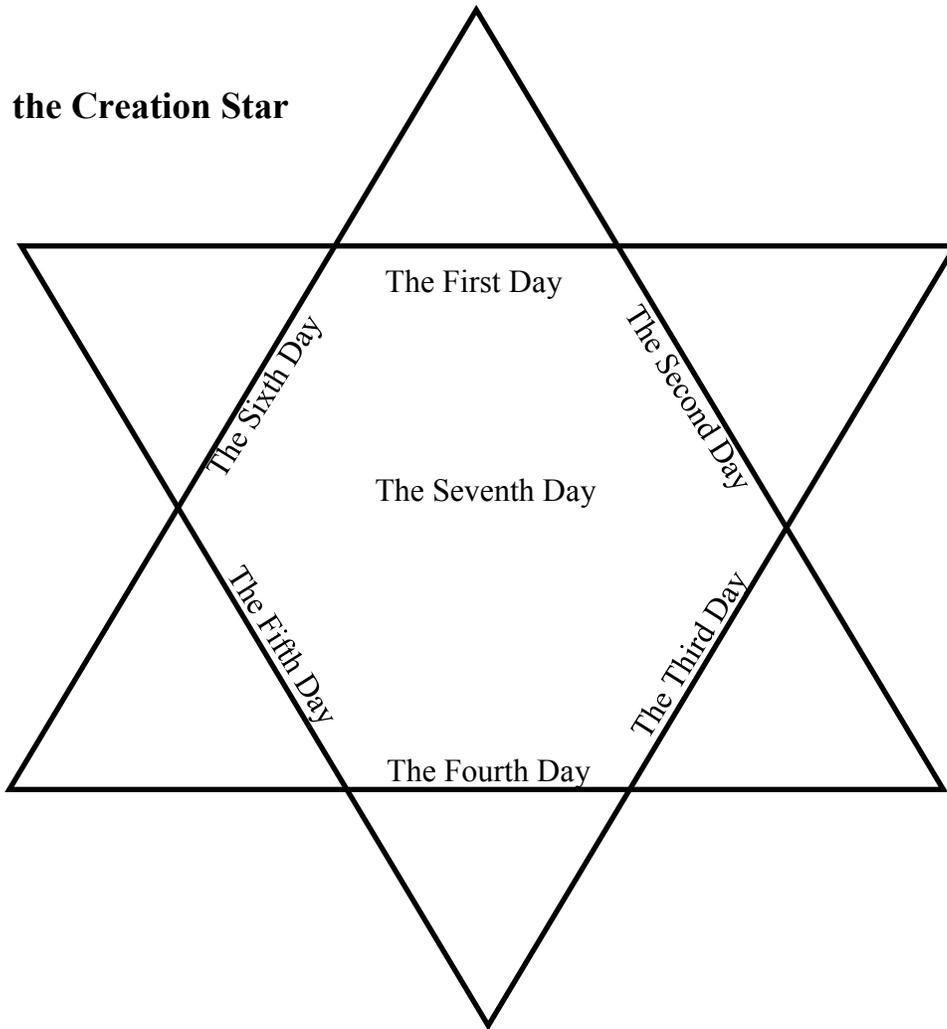
Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

- 1) According to the italicized portions of those verses, what is one way that people can tell that there is a God?
- 2) According to the underlined portions of those verses, what is another way that people can tell there is a God?
- 3) What does the Bible call someone who says "There is no God!" in spite of all this evidence?
- 4) (Not based on the passages) Do you know the difference between an "atheist" and an "agnostic"?

People can know that there is a God by looking at nature or by listening to their conscience. We now want to see *what* people can know about God from these things. We'll start with nature.

The account of how this world and the universe came into existence is found in Genesis 1:1 - 2:3. Please use your Bibles to study this account, and on the chart below list the things that were created on the various days.

the Creation Star



The “Creation Star is meant to aid in memorization of the of the six days of creation. The opposite corners of the star correspond. For example, note what was created on the second and fifth day.

5) When you look at Genesis chapter 1 you notice a chronological rhythm throughout the the creation account. In verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31 you read, “...and there was evening, and there was morning — the ____ day.” Remember in Lesson 2 on “Reading the Bible” we said that one principle of Bible study is to understand a passage literally unless the context tells us it’s to be understood figuratively. With that in mind, how long does the Bible tell us God took to create the universe and everything in it?

Not everyone believes this, of course. The theory of evolution, while declining in popularity, is still a prominent teaching today. But understand that if you embrace evolution then you confess that portions of the Bible are erroneous. That puts you on a dangerously slippery slope. If the Bible is inaccurate about God creating the universe in six days, couldn’t it be inaccurate about Jesus being the Savior? Couldn’t it be inaccurate about salvation being by grace, apart from works? Couldn’t it be inaccurate about there being a heaven. (For more information about the teaching of evolution vs. the Biblical account of creation, please see Appendix V.)

When you look at all of creation — the stars, planets, oceans, animals, insects, and mankind — you can see that there must be a God. The following passages describe some of God’s characteristics that you can see when you look at nature. Please read through those passages and then list those characteristics of God that we can see in nature.

Acts 14:17 “Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

CHARACTERISTICS

Psalms 104:24 How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

We said that people can not only learn about God from nature, but also from their conscience. The following passages describe what we can learn about God from our conscience.

Romans 1:32 They know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things *deserve death*, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, *their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing*, now even defending them.

Acts 16:29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

1 Corinthians 2:9 No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 12:3 No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

- 6) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is the only thing about God that our consciences can tell us?

- 7) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what important piece of knowledge about God are we NOT able to obtain from nature or our conscience?

Therefore while we are able to learn about God from both nature and our conscience, the knowledge we get from these things is limited. We sometimes refer to this as “the natural knowledge of God.”

DEFINITION: natural knowledge of God — The knowledge of God’s existence that can be obtained by looking at the wonders of creation or by listening to the conscience. This knowledge cannot reveal how we are saved.

For a truly satisfying knowledge of God we need to look somewhere other than nature or our conscience.

The reason that the pronouns in those verses don't seem to match up is that they are trying to describe the indescribable, our God. For while we have one God, in his Word God reveals himself as three persons. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Numbers 6:24-26 ‘The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.’

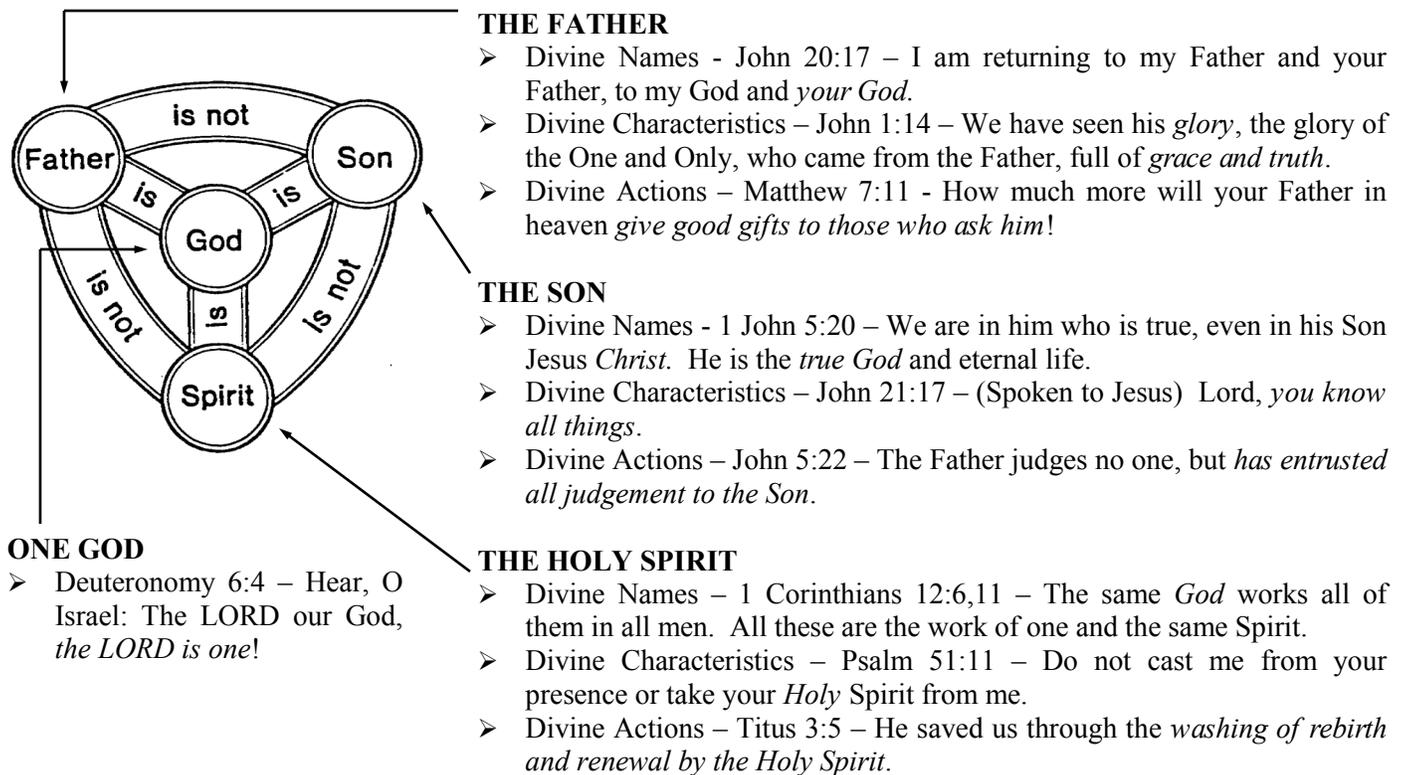
Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [*i.e.*- *God the Father*], and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

11) Who are the three persons of the Trinity?

The concept of a “three-in-one” God is impossible for our minds to grasp, yet we believe it because it's what God's Word teaches. We use the word “triune” since it conveniently expresses this incomprehensible truth. “Tria” means three. And “unus” means one. .

The following diagram is a way of picturing our Triune God. It illustrates how each person of the Trinity is named in Scripture, has divine characteristics, and does things only God could do. It shows that each person of the Trinity is distinct from one another, yet all our God — the one true God. This diagram can serve as the answer to our question, “WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY WE HAVE A ‘TRIUNE GOD’?”



1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Job 36:26 *How great is God*—beyond our understanding!

Romans 11:33 Oh, *the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

John 5:23 He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

Psalm 96:5 For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

- 12) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is the only way that we are able to believe in a Triune God?
- 13) We should not be alarmed by the fact that we cannot understand God’s existence. According to the italicized portions of those passages, what comfort do we have in knowing that God’s existence is beyond our comprehension?
- 14) According to John 5:23 and Psalm 96:5 is it possible to deny the Trinity and still believe in the one true God?

(Almost from the beginning of the Christian church, believers have stated their faith in the Triune God through brief statements known as creeds. The three best known and most widely used creeds are the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. All three can be found in Appendix VI.)

TAKING IT DEEPER

- A) Agree or Disagree — People could come to saving faith if they would only look closely at nature and listen to their conscience.
- B) Agree or Disagree — We have one God, but sometimes he acts like the Father, sometimes He acts like the Son, and sometimes he acts like the Holy Spirit.
- C) Agree or Disagree — Essentially all people believe in the same God. They only call him different names and worship him in different ways.
- D) Agree or Disagree — It is possible that God created the world by guiding the evolutionary process.
- E) Question: We said that there are three persons in the Trinity and that they all do divine things. Can we distinguish between the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit?
- F) Question: Would it be proper to address a prayer to only one member of the Trinity?
- G) Question: What is the difference between these two groups?

| Group A | Group B |
|---------|----------|
| Mormons | Baptists |
| Jewish | Lutheran |
| Muslim | Catholic |