

Deuteronomy 6:4

God is One

Open your Bible to...

Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!

Pray

Intro

✓ Intro

In Mark's Gospel we read that a religious expert was so impressed with the way that Jesus handled the tough theological questions thrown at Him by the Pharisees and Sadducees, that he was prompted to ask a question of his own.

The question?

“What is the greatest of all the commandments in the Bible?”

To which Jesus responded without hesitation...

“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

Mark 12:29-30

Jesus' response should cause us to sit up and take notice!

That is, in light of the fact that Jesus identified this as the greatest of all the commandments should make us want to know what the Bible means when it says that...

...God is One!

For surely since this truth is of greatest importance to Jesus then it must be important for us to understand what the Bible means when it says that God is One...

...and how that truth should influence the way we think about God so that we can love Him better with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength as God commanded.

✓ The importance of this commandment

Since the time of Moses this commandment has been at the center of the Jewish religion.

For example, every morning and evening the Orthodox and religious Jews pray...

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!"

They do so because this single verse captures the fundamental difference between the God of the Bible Who they worship...the true and the living God...

...from the multitude of false gods and goddesses worshipped by the pagan nations throughout the world.

This verse reminds us that God wants His people to understand that the foundation of a relationship with Him is based on this immutable truth...

...that there is only One God.

While many people would disagree claiming that there are in fact many gods, the LORD makes it abundantly clear that He alone is God! For example, speaking through the prophet Isaiah God declares...

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”
Isaiah 44:6

So, in our continuing study of God’s attributes we turn now to the attribute of His Oneness...

...that we might know Him better so as to love Him more!

God is One

✓ God is One

As we just read the Bible declares that God is One. God’s Oneness is expressed in two divine attributes.

The first divine attribute is one most of us are familiar with and that is God’s Divine Unity.

Which means that God is One Being, not many.

There is one and only one God (monotheism), as opposed to many gods (polytheism).

There are not a multiplicity of gods and goddesses such as are worshipped in Roman and Greek mythology, Hinduism, Mormonism, Norse mythology, Wicca, and the various indigenous religions of Man.

There is only One God.

Ex. As Captain America affirmed in The Avengers (2011)

When he was told by Natasha Romanoff that Thor and Loki were basically “gods” Captain America corrected her saying...

“There’s only One God mam, and I’m pretty sure He doesn’t dress like that!”

However, when the Bible declares that God is “One” it means much more than just the fact that there exists only One God...

It also means that God is one in His nature.

Which means that He has no compartments within Himself, no division in Himself.

Everything that God is, He is perfectly and without any mixture of imperfection, or contradiction.

This is the attribute of God that most are not familiar with, which theologians call His Divine Simplicity.

✓ Simplicity

Please don’t misunderstand! When theologians and Bible students speak of God’s simplicity they don’t mean that...

God is a simpleton, that is, someone who is limited in his intellect.

Far from it!

Rather, we mean that God is simple in His being, that is He has no parts (like a body and a soul) and is therefore indivisible.

That means that all of God’s essence is identical with His existence.

Ex. God's essence is identical with His existence

Simplicity means that God is, what God has. In other words...

God doesn't just express love...

He is love.

God doesn't just possess all power...

He is power.

And so it goes with all of His attributes!

His divine essence, what God is, cannot be separated from what God has, His attributes!

All that is in God is God!

Another way of expressing this aspect of God's Oneness is to say that...

...Who God is and what God is are identical.

That's exactly the truth that God revealed when He told Moses at the burning bush...

"I AM WHO I AM." ~ Exodus 4:14

Or, we might say...

"He is who He is."

This is divine simplicity, the Oneness of the God Who is the great "I Am."

Biblical foundation

✓ One God

God's Oneness...

Both His unity—the truth that there is only One God.

And His simplicity—the truth that He is One indivisible Being is proclaimed throughout the Bible.

We've already seen in our opening texts in Deuteronomy and Isaiah that the Old Testament clearly communicates that there is only One indivisible God...

...so let's look now to the New Testament for supporting evidence which affirms the truth of God's Oneness, both His divine unity and His divine simplicity.

1) God's unity

Speaking of God's unity Paul writes in Romans 3:30...

“there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

And to his friends at Corinth...

“Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.”

1Corinthians 8:4

To which James adds...

“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”

James 2:19

So our belief in the Oneness of God as expressed in by His Unity is established on the sure foundation of God’s word.

2) God’s simplicity

The biblical evidence for God’s divine simplicity is demonstrated first of all by the fact that He is pure spirit.

That is, God is immaterial (He is not made of matter, for matter is the stuff that He made).

That’s very different than the material universe, which is made up of parts.

But God Who is immaterial does not have parts, evidence for the Oneness of His Being, which we call divine simplicity.

Jesus also affirmed this truth when He was speaking with the woman at the well in Samaria, when He told her...

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” ~ John 4:24

Jesus also declared that...

“No one has seen God at any time.” ~ John 1:18

That’s because as pure spirit God is someone our physical eyes cannot discern.

Which is course why any time God wants to communicate face-to-face with people He shows up in the Person of God the Son...

...Jesus—God in human flesh!

Which is exactly what the apostle Paul affirmed when he wrote...

“He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God (pure spirit)...” Colossians 1:15a

All of these verses and many more testify that God is immaterial—He is pure spirit, and therefore He is simple, He is One and has no parts.

✓ God is not complex

Additional evidence for God’s simplicity is found in the apostle John’s 1st epistle where he revealed that...

*“...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”
1John 1:5*

Here John is affirming that God is One in His being and that by extension there exist no contradictions or conflicts within Himself.

He is pure light, with no mixture of darkness at all.

What God is, He is perfectly, and without any impurity, for all of eternity! For example God’s Oneness as expressed in His simplicity tells us that...

God is wisdom, and in Him there is no folly at all.

God is good, and in Him there is no evil at all.

God is power, and in Him there is no weakness at all.

All this is true because God is One without any contradictions or conflicts in His being and as such He exists eternally in perfect, indivisible, Oneness.

√ Human attributes and essence

God's Oneness stands in stark contrast to you and me, and for that matter all of creation for we are complex beings—that is, we are made up of many parts as the apostle Paul testifies...

*“A person’s body is one thing, but it has many parts.
Though there are many parts to a body, all those
parts make only one body... The human body has
many parts.”*

1Corinthians 12:12 & 14 NCV

Paul's point is that while we humans have one body, that body is made of lots of different parts! We have...

Organs
Bones
Blood
Fingernails
Hair

And we recognize that we can lose and add parts!

For example, a person can lose a tooth, or hair, but a person can also add parts...

...like a crown to replace a bad tooth, or a toupee to cover a bald head!

We can even change our personality.

And at death our soul is separated from our body.

While our essence remains the same (what we are)—we're still human...

Nonetheless our attributes (who we are)—the unique person that each of us is, changes over time!

The point is that our attributes are not the same as our essence.

So Bible students classify humans, and for that matter everything else in creation as complex, that is we're made up of many parts...

But not so with God!

God never changes because He is perfectly One in His nature.

His essence (What He is) and His attributes (Who He is) are identical and cannot be separated!

As such every attribute of God exists in perfect unchanging harmony with every other attribute of His nature...

...therefore He cannot lose or add anything to Himself because He has no parts—God is One!

Ex. God's Oneness/Simplicity

God doesn't have a mind that contains all of His knowledge and wisdom, and a heart that feels love and compassion.

Rather, each attribute of God exists wholly, indivisibly, and eternally with every other attribute of His!

You can't separate God's love from His justice, nor His mercy from His wrath, or His knowledge from His compassion...

...everything that God is, He is wholly and without division because He is simple in His being—God is One!

Implications of God's Oneness

✓ Implications of God's Oneness

You might be thinking to yourself...

"So what? Why is any of this important?"

First of all this truth is important because Jesus said it is!

He declared that God's Oneness is the greatest of all the commandments!

Secondly, it is important because the doctrine of God's oneness debunks the false logic that some people use to reject faith in Christ.

Ex. You've probably heard someone at some time say...

"A God of love would never send anyone to hell."

The truth of God's Oneness responds by saying that we cannot elevate any one of His attributes over any of His other attributes because that would in effect limit Him to only one attribute...

In other words for a person to claim...

"A God of love would never send anyone to hell."

...would logically mean that God could only be Love, but never Just.

That false logic is what we call a fallacy of composition! What is a fallacy of composition you might wonder?

A fallacy of composition says that what is true of part is true of the whole.

For example, someone watching the sermon today online would correctly observe that I am bald, which reminds me of my life verse, Leviticus 13:40...

“As for the man whose hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, but he is clean.”

Back to my illustration!

That person watching the sermon today online would correctly observe that I am bald.

But they would be very wrong to conclude that all the pastors are bald.

Or worse still to conclude that our whole congregation is bald!

That’s a fallacy of composition—to conclude that what is true of part of our congregation is true of the entire congregation!

That’s the error and false narrative of the person who elevates any one of God’s attributes over any other attribute...

...like concluding that a God of love could never be a God of justice.

But because God is One all of His attributes exist together in perfect harmony therefore He is able without conflict to be both loving and just.

Ex. Oprah Winfrey

As we learned in my last study Oprah Winfrey rejected the Christian faith when she heard a pastor say that God is a jealous God.

She incorrectly elevated the attribute of God's jealousy above all of His other attributes including love!

Well God's Oneness reminds us that God's attribute of jealousy operates in perfect harmony with all of His attributes including His love!

In fact, God's jealousy is an expression of His perfect love to protect us from anyone and anything that would rob us of what God knows is best for our lives.

The take home point is that God's Oneness tells us that His essence (What God is—divine) and His attributes (Who He is—His divine nature) are identical and inseparable...

...or we might say it this way, what God is, is what God is like.

Ap. All idolatry is sin

If God's unity is true, that is, there is only One God then...

Polytheism in all its forms is false because it denies God's divine unity.

Tritheism (three Gods) is a heresy because it denies God's simplicity.

Idolatry of any kind is sin.

And, if it is true that one and only one Being in the universe is God...

Then one and only one Being is worthy of our worship!

Therefore, the worship of anyone, or anything else is a sin against the One true God and is worthy of judgment!

Objections to God's Oneness

✓ The Trinity

There are a number of protests raised against the simplicity of God that are based on very sophisticated philosophical arguments that would literally require me to spend the next 30 minutes just trying to define the metaphysical terminology we would need to understand those arguments!

If that's something you're interested in I would point you to pastor Tom and our resource library!

For the rest of us who do not have a Ph.D. in philosophy the most common argument we'll run into against the Oneness of God is the question...

"How can God be One, yet exist as Three Persons as claimed by Christianity? That sounds like a contradiction!"

That's the argument you'll hear from Jews, Muslims and cult members who reject the Trinity—the reality that there is One God in Three Persons.

However, to provide you with a solid biblical defense of the Trinity will take an entire sermon.

So we'll have to wait until next week when I will focus our time on the attribute of God's Triune Nature.

The benefits & blessings of God's Oneness

✓ The benefits and blessings of God's Oneness

Alright pastor...

"That's interesting but how does God's unity & simplicity touch my life and my daily experience in Christ?"

Let's look at a few benefits!

- 1) God's Oneness means that He is indivisible and therefore indestructible

Because God does not have any parts...

He cannot come apart, be torn apart, blown apart, or fall apart!

In a world where everything and everyone eventually comes apart, is torn apart, blown apart or falls apart...

...it's a great comfort to know that our hope in God, Who is One, is eternally secure because His divine simplicity tells us that He is indivisible and therefore indestructible!

Ex. People and places

We cannot put our hope in the fiercest warrior, the most benevolent king, or the greatest statesman...

...because every person's body and mind will one day fall apart.

We cannot put our hope in the highest wall, or the strongest fortress, or the deepest bunker...

...because every wall or stronghold built is made up of parts (stone, brick, steel, and mortar), all of which can be torn apart or blown apart and will one day fall apart.

And finally we cannot even put our hope on terra firma, the good ground beneath our feet, nor on the highest mountain, nor even the massive continents spanning our globe...

...for the earth can be shaken, the mountains fall down, and even the continents can come apart.

Nothing in all of the created universe is eternally secure because everyone and everything can fall apart, come apart, be blown apart or be torn apart.

Except for God who alone is One!

So our eternal hope in God is secure because it is placed in the God Who is One in His essence—a being Who cannot fall apart, come apart, blown apart nor be torn apart!

Therefore, His purpose and plans cannot be defeated, divided, or destroyed...

...including His plan to bring you safely to the shores of the eternal Home that He is preparing for those who love Him!

Ap. A corollary

Anyone or anything that can come apart, fall apart or be torn apart is not God!

So we can reject every cult leader who claims to be “god”, or “Christ”, on the evidence that they all eventually...

...come part, fall apart or can be torn apart!

Only God is One, therefore He alone is indivisible, indestructible, and our eternally secure fortress in Whom we can take shelter!

2) Because God is One He is never conflicted

That means God is never conflicted in His thoughts...

...He doesn't wrestle in His mind between doing what is right and what is wrong like we do!

Ex. The war within

Everyone of us knows from personal experience what it's like to be conflicted!

As the apostle Paul so eloquently describes in Romans chapters 8 and 9 the war between our flesh and the spirit for control of our mind!

Even when we make what we know is a good and godly decision we can still lose sleep tossing and turning over that decision because we're conflicted in our mind and emotions.

But not God! Because He is One He doesn't second-guess any decision that He has ever made!

He isn't pacing back and forth this morning in Heaven stressing out over whether or not it was a good decision to let you become one of His kids by faith in Jesus.

Therefore, He will never regret His decision to accept you into His family!

Think about that for a moment. How many times have you made a decision only later to regret it!

But God has never known regret because He is never conflicted about anything—including every decision He has ever made.

So, when it comes to the question of our salvation we can quiet our anxious hearts and reject the condemnation of the Devil's whispers by reminding our self that God isn't conflicted about His decision to choose you!

Listen to the apostle Paul's encouragement to people like you and me who are prone to be conflicted about our salvation...

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...”

2Thessalonians 2:13

In fact, God is so sure of His choice of you that He already sees you in Heaven...

“and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

Ephesians 2:6

And in Revelation 5 John describes a future time that he saw the Church—you and me gathered around the throne of God worshipping Him in Heaven!

So we can give thanks to God for the salvation that He has provided...

...and for His Oneness, which richly supplies us with the assurance that He will never regret choosing you and me to spend eternity with Him!

Close

✓ God is One

There is only One God and He cannot be divided.

Everything He is, He is completely and perfectly, without division or contradiction for all of eternity.

Everything that He is, He is wholly and without division because He is simple in His being—God is One!

With this new understanding of God's nature we can love Him in the way that Jesus commanded when He said...

*'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and
with all your strength.'*