

The Nature of God—Part One: How the Word was made Flesh in Jesus

What does the Bible tell us about the nature of God? Does Scripture present to us a “oneness” about God whose existence is defined in the context of two or three distinct beings who constitute “one” God?

Who is God? That is a simple question. However, the answer has become increasingly complicated. And this is understandably so because Scripture has been subjected to various methods of interpretation—some good, some not so good—with some accepted biblical interpretations being formulated in either liberal or conservative traditions, which makes it ever more difficult for people to accept the defined face value of scriptural statements made about God.

Nevertheless it is worth reviewing the subject of who God is respective to the defined meanings of scriptural statements while attempting to avoid the influence of traditional interpretations and the mishap of removing or undermining the authority of Scripture.

Now notably there is relatively little said about God in Scripture, which may be difficult for some people to believe given that God is understood to be the creator of all that exists in heaven and earth. Still there is not much we can know about the invisible God, even though much has been written about God by many people attempting to explain who God is.

So let’s examine the subject of who God is and how the Word who was and is God was “made flesh” in the son of God. And we begin with the story of Moses.

Now Moses was at one time a man of some renown in Egyptian society who desired to see his native people freed from their

enslavement in the land of Egypt. And as Scripture explains, Moses did receive a command from God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into a land of national inheritance. (This was after Moses had spent many humbling years in exile living among the descendants of Midian.)

And we learn from the story of Moses’ calling that an “angel of the Lord” appeared to Moses “in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Ex. 3:2). And Moses heard a voice that said to him: “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Ex. 3:6).

Here God revealed himself to Moses as the **God of the patriarchs** Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and this declaration established God’s exclusiveness to all others that were perceived as “gods” by the people of Israel. And because of this revelation it was apparent that Moses was concerned about how he would explain who God is to the people of Israel (Ex. 3:15-16).

And so Moses said to God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” (Ex. 3:13.) [Author’s emphasis throughout.]

These were reasonable questions and the answer Moses received is foundational to understanding who God is—and his oneness—from the perspective of Scripture.

“And God said unto Moses, I am that I am [I will be who/what I will be]: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM [verbal root of YHWH] hath sent me unto you” (Ex. 3:14). (YHWH is a transliteration of the proper address or personal name for God

and is referred to as the *Tetragrammaton*, meaning “four letters.” It is sometimes written as Yahweh.)

This solemn declaration—and memorial—from God regarding his own existence was voiced by God to Moses, and because God’s existence was revealed in this manner—by God speaking—we can conclude that Moses heard a voice from God saying, “I am,” and this utterance characterized God and this utterance was God.

Therefore what Moses presented to the people of ancient Israel was the proper address and characterization of God as voiced by God. Or, simply, what Moses told the people was that the voice he heard was God, and what was said was “I am,” which established the evidence of God’s existence by his own utterance, and what God spoke became the defining evidence of the oneness of God for the people of Israel.

Unquestionably then the way God revealed himself to Moses became the established way Moses would later explain God’s work with the physical creation and the purpose for that creation respective to humankind. And this revelation from God also became the foundational understanding that guided Moses and others who composed and compiled the Pentateuch and the writings of all the prophets that followed Moses. (The creation account is written as, “and God said,” and the utterance was God.) (See also Ps. 33:6.)

Of significance then is that God’s declaration to Moses was not only a memorial to his existence, but it was also a declaration of his oneness, and [this revelation holds true throughout Scripture](#).

God confirmed this himself through Isaiah who wrote: “I am the Lord [YHWH], and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that

there is none beside me. I am the Lord [YHWH], and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it” (Isa. 45:5-8).

These are the words—the utterance—of YHWH the creator God—the preserved oracles of “I am” as given to the prophet Isaiah—and this one who is God speaks for himself as recorded by Isaiah and tells us there is no other God but him.

But let’s look at this issue of God’s oneness more closely.

Scripture gives us what has become a hallmark statement regarding the oneness of God, which states that “the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4).

This statement is sometimes referred to as the Shema, and it receives significant attention in Jewish tradition and religious practice, and by any reasonable translation this statement is understood to mean that God is one and there is one who is God, and it is a statement to which Jesus agreed. And we learn of this agreement from Jesus’ ministry when a scribe recognized how well Jesus answered a challenging question regarding the resurrection, and he posed another question to Jesus: “Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord” (Mk. 12:28-29).

This is an obvious restatement of what is written in Deuteronomy, and so the scribe responded to Jesus with the same understanding as Jesus: “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he” (Mk. 12:32).

And so in this conversation with the scribe we see that Jesus recognized the prudence of the scribe and did not interpret the oneness of God differently—in any way—from what was understood by the scribe—that there is one who is God.

Simply, there was no dispute between Jesus and the scribe over the issue of the oneness of God.

But let's continue.

Now if by "monotheism" we mean one God, and one who is God, then the Apostle Paul certainly had a strict monotheistic view of God, even though we find among some commentators those who attempt to undermine Paul, even claiming that Paul was struggling with his beliefs about God.

Such a narrow and imposing view about Paul does not merit serious consideration because Paul knew well there was only one God and he addressed the issue when he spoke about idols—viewed as gods—and how they should be perceived in the knowledge of God. And Paul said: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [for sake of] are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled" (I Cor. 8:5-7). (See also I Cor. 8:4.) (The physical creation is not being addressed by Paul.)

Paul's unequivocal response to those who accepted many gods was to conclude "there is not in every man that knowledge," and according to Paul what they didn't know—among other things—was that there was one God who is the Father. (The gentiles in the church of God who came from a background that believed in many different gods would certainly have known the distinction that Paul

was making when he talked about idols in comparison to the oneness of God, and Paul having already heard the utterance of Jesus when he at an earlier time journeyed to Damascus, still defined the oneness of God by stating that God is the Father.)

And the Apostle Paul always emphasized the oneness of God in his letters, and stated that the God and father of Jesus "made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.... For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:24, 28-29).

So Paul tells us that the nature of God is not to be likened to those things created by God or fashioned by people to represent a god—idols of gold and silver—and in this context Paul speaks of God the Father as having offspring—particularly Jesus.

Undoubtedly then Scripture identifies one God [YHWH] who is the Father and who is the God of the fathers and the God of Moses and the creator God, and this was confirmed by Jesus when he addressed a trapping question about the resurrection of the dead. And Jesus said: "Do you not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err" (Mk. 12:24-27). (Jesus spoke of the God of the patriarchs, and the God of Moses, and the God who spoke from the bush, as someone other than himself.)

Indisputably then the God of the fathers who spoke to Moses from the bush was not Jesus as some contend, and Jesus' response affords us a complete agreement between the prophets and the apostles as to who God is. The necessity of this agreement is understood in that the church of God is founded upon the agreement of the prophets and the apostles. (It is the agreement between the prophets and the apostles that makes some teachings of Scripture inclusive and others exclusive in regard to what is acceptable and applicable biblical doctrine (i.e. clean and unclean meats, Sabbath observance, holy day observance, etc.).)

And Scripture is resolute about the agreement between the prophets and the apostles regarding the oneness of God and who it was that voiced his existence to Moses. Because Scripture states that the God of Moses spoke to the fathers by the prophets and later by his son Jesus, noting that God, "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). (The word "worlds" is transliterated as *aiōn*, which is a period of time, an "age.")

Consequently the "heir of all things" was not the one who spoke to Moses or to the fathers of ancient Israel. It was, however, YHWH the creator God who spoke to the prophets and particularly to the prophet Moses as affirmed by Stephen who said the "God of glory" who spoke to Moses was also the God of Abraham, and he said "the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold" (Acts 7:31-32).

There is no doubt that it was the God of the fathers who voiced his existence to Moses, and this was YHWH the creator God—not Jesus.

This conclusion has significance in that the Apostle Peter tells us that the God of the fathers was the one who resurrected Jesus from the dead.

And Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost [spirit], whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:29-32).

Here the Apostle Peter corrected the council and high priest and openly accused them of killing the son of God who was Jesus, and in his rebuke Peter specifically states that "the God of our fathers raised up Jesus." To the apostles and the council this could not have been anyone other than YHWH who raised Jesus from the dead, and as the apostles were a witness to Jesus' resurrection, some of them were also witnesses to the utterance who was God—just like Moses.

We have this confirmed by the Apostle Peter who said: "For he [Jesus] received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (II Pt. 1:17-18).

This utterance was God and this was the God of the fathers, and the God of Moses, and the God and father of Jesus. Consequently certain disciples became a witness to the utterance who was and is God, just as Moses was a witness to the utterance who was and is God.

And Peter addressed this further when he responded to an astonished crowd by saying, "the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was

determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:13-15).

This was a scathing condemnation.

But it leaves us with an undeniable conclusion.

The one who is called YHWH, “I am,” who was and is the God of the patriarchs and the one God of Moses glorified his son and that son was Jesus, and this glorifying of God’s son implies that Jesus was the human son of God (Mk. 14:61-62).

Let’s examine this.

While in Athens Paul was inspired to dispute the worship of idols and to speak about the resurrection, and some philosophers who heard him teach thought he was explaining a “strange” God who had resurrected a person called Jesus. In wanting to know more of this doctrine of the resurrection they took Paul to Areopagus (Mar’s Hill) where he talked about “the unknown God,” because some Athenians had an expectation of an unknown deity.

So Paul spoke to them of the creator God, and about the hope of the resurrection from the dead, and he explained how this hope was through Jesus because God had “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

And that man who will judge for God in that day is Jesus.

Now what Paul stated about God and Jesus reveals to us that by reason of Jesus’ resurrection, glorification and ordination as a judge Jesus did not have inherent eternal life, which means Jesus was subject to judgment

leading to his resurrection (judged “without sin”). And in overlooking the fact that Jesus was human and “born under the law” some unintentionally deny Jesus came in the flesh (that he was born human), and thereby they disregard the significance of Jesus’ birth and death in regard to salvation.

However, Scripture is emphatic about Jesus being human and that salvation is through him, because Scripture states that Jesus was a “prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts 2:30).

Doubtless then God conceived a son in the flesh by the holy spirit making Jesus human, which was acknowledged by the angel who said: “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.... Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost [spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:30-31, 34-35).

It is certain then that YHWH had a human son who was called Jesus.

How then was “I am”—the utterance who was and is God—made flesh as stated in Scripture?

We have to remember that God’s kingdom is the inheritance of God’s human son—not us—which means the only way we can inherit this same kingdom is if by some means we also become children of God.

Now because of Adam’s decision to judge God he lived a life at enmity with God, and nearly all the world since followed Adam’s decision to walk contrary to the law of God. Therefore a solution was needed to reconcile

Adam and his descendants to God in a way that didn't nullify God's law, because it is the law that defines the nature of our reconciliation with God. Consequently the arbitrating solution was a sacrifice who would stand in our stead and incur the penalty of death for us, and by this sacrifice we would be made blameless as a result of having our sins imputed to this same sacrifice. And then by being given an earnest of eternal life, we could be reconciled to God and considered adopted children of God and heirs to the kingdom of God (Acts 3:22-26).

This fundamental understanding of Christ's sacrifice tells us that God does all things by and through Jesus in regard to reconciliation and the new creation, and by reason of Jesus being the human son of God, Jesus could not have fulfilled this sacrifice for us unless God was in him (Heb. 9:14).

This was confirmed by Paul who said that "in him [Jesus] it did please all the fulness to tabernacle, and through him to reconcile the all things to himself—having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

So Paul explains to us that God did "tabernacle" in Jesus and God "through" Jesus is reconciling "all things to himself"—by "the blood of his [Jesus'] cross" so that we can become the adopted children of God and heirs to the kingdom of God. For it is understandably by and through Jesus that we can be justified by his sacrifice, and reconciled to God by the working of the earnest of the holy spirit, which is expressed in our obedience to God.

But let's look into this a little more.

Now the utterance who was and is God who spoke to Moses made a covenant by promise to Abraham establishing his descendants as heirs to a promised land in lineal perpetuity, and also—through one of Abraham's descendants—this same inheritance would be established eternally for Abraham and his family, implying a resurrection from the dead.

And so it was foretold that God would have a son in the line of Abraham—and the royal line of David—who would make this promise possible. This son of God would also be a prophet like Moses, and God sent him to the people of Israel as a messenger—"mighty in deed and word [*logos*] before God"—but the world rejected him and killed him (Lk. 24:19). (Gentiles are also fellow heirs, Eph. 3:6.)

However, the apostles did not reject him and they were also witnesses to the "*logos*" because they witnessed God in Jesus.

Let's explain.

Consider how ancient Israel passed under the cloud while in the sea and were baptized to Moses, and also consider that the cloud—even though seen by the people of Israel—was not the evidence of God. We could say the same for the bush and the flame that was in the bush that these were not the evidence of God. But we can say that the evidence of God was the utterance who was and is God, and this utterance was heard from the bush and from the cloud. (See the account of Elijah and the "still small voice" (I Kg. 19:12).)

Likewise when the disciples looked at Jesus who was the human son of God, they were not looking at the evidence of God. The only evidence of God for them was the utterance who was and is God who was in Jesus. Paul verified this by saying: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word [*logos*] of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19). (See also Jn. 3:2.)

This evidence of God in Jesus was eventually acknowledged by Thomas who said when he saw the resurrected Jesus, "my Lord and my God," which was what Jesus taught when he told his disciples that if they saw him they also saw the Father (Jn. 14:9; Jn. 20:28).

In other words, Jesus was not himself eternal as proven by his birth and death and his resurrection to human life prior to his ascension as witnessed by the disciples (Lk. 24:37-40). But in being able to see and touch and hear Jesus as the son of God—before and after the resurrection—the disciples became witnesses to the evidence of the “eternal life which was with the Father” because “God was in Christ” (I Jn. 1:1-3). (Eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23; Titus 3:7).)

This is also what Jesus explained to Philip when he said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (Jn. 14:10-11).

Jesus explained clearly then that God was in him, and so “I am” was evidenced in Jesus by what Jesus said—and indirectly by the works—the truth of which was proven by the resurrection.

Simply, Jesus had eternal life in him by the holy spirit and in him was the thought of God—and this was how God who is the Word (utterance) was “made flesh” in his son Jesus. Or, we could also say that God was present in Jesus as understood by the presence of the spirit and mind of God. (Consider how a human is to be understood as the image of an invisible God (Col. 1:15).)

This was affirmed by the Apostle John who wrote that “In the beginning was the word [utterance], and the word [utterance] was with God” (Jn. 1:1).

In this statement John used the term *logos*, which means “utterance,” or “something said,” or “thought,” and John used this term as it is understood in the creation account in Genesis, and in the account of Moses’ calling to lead ancient Israel. (The word *logos* is understood to mean speech and its related

thought because words imply thought and so the word *logos* is also translated as “doctrine” as we find in the example of the “logos of Christ” (Heb. 6:1).)

Thus, John said the “word [utterance] was God,” and Moses said to the people that the “I am” (what he heard spoken) was the “God of your fathers,” and this understanding of who God is as stated by the Apostle John is the same understanding of who God is as stated by Moses. Therefore Jesus’ words regarding eternal life were not his own because the *logos* of God was voiced by Jesus, and the expression “made flesh” conveyed the certainty that God was evidenced in his son by what Jesus said and also by the presence of the holy spirit as revealed in Jesus’ resurrection. Therefore when Jesus spoke the thought of God he revealed the Father (Lk. 10:21-22; Jn. 16:25). (This conclusion is not ascribed to Modalism.)

Now let’s also remember that God is unseen and by consequence the utterance who was and is God becomes the comprehensible and defining image of God, because as John said “no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (Jn. 1:18). And Jesus did declare him, especially when he said “before Abraham was, I am,” which confirmed the authority of Jesus’ words regarding the way to eternal life, and by this Jesus affirmed that God was in Christ as evidenced by the *logos* that they heard. (Review the account to see that Jesus did not say that he was “I am.”)

So the utterance was with God and was and is God, and God was “made flesh” in Jesus, which is to say the eternal spirit was in Jesus and God’s thought was evidenced in him when Jesus declared the Father by voicing the thought of God. For Jesus said, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings [logos]: and the word [logos] which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (Jn. 14:24). (The expression “made flesh”


has been subject to a mix of figurative and literal interpretations. But as defined *logos* means “something said,” and so the utterance of God was not a separate being from God who was transformed into a human being—denying the humanity of Jesus—but rather what was thought by God was voiced by his son Jesus.) (The implication is that Jesus also had a *logos* as did God the Father because Jesus referred to “my *logos*” and a different “*logos* which you hear,” implying that God and Jesus each had a distinct *logos*, which is accounted for in Scripture.)

We also should note that the Apostle John does not state that Jesus is God, but he does state that the “utterance was God,” and John confirms—as does Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus—that the utterance was God and God was in Christ and Jesus was “his [God’s] glory” (Jn. 1:14).

Therefore the God of the fathers, and the God of Moses, and the God and father of Jesus was “made flesh” in the son of God, making Jesus to be in the image of the Father, and God’s thoughts were evidenced in Jesus who was the spokesman of God (spokesman of God’s *logos*). And Scripture confirms this of Jesus by stating that he is “the brightness of his [God’s] glory, and the express image [“voiced” representation] of his [God’s] person [essence]” (Heb. 1:3). (Here we notice the singularity by which God is addressed in regard to his son Jesus.)

This situation creates a fellowship with God through Jesus as the apostles affirmed, which also creates a distinction between God and the son of God as understood by our fellowship with God. Paul made this clear to Timothy when he wrote: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man [*anthrōpos*, human] Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). (This was written of Jesus after he was glorified by God the Father.)

Therefore we can conclude that there is only one God who is the Father, and he is “I am” who spoke to Moses, and he is the *logos* (utterance) who was in Jesus, and this God (YHWH) is the God of the patriarchs, and the God of Moses, and the God and father of Jesus.

Note: This commentary respectfully acknowledges the beliefs of others while attempting to distill down much of what is written about God. It is not intended to be a discussion of God’s attributes and benevolence, but rather a responsible exegesis in explaining a fundamental understanding of who God is and his oneness as would have been understood by the 1st century church. **(Continued in part two of this series.)**  (andrewburdettewrites.com)