

# One God - Two Men

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[All verses are from the NASB]

Which has the ring of scripture to the well-trained ear: "the man Christ Jesus" or "the God Christ Jesus"? While the ear that has listened to man-made liturgies might want to grasp the latter, it is "the man Christ Jesus" that rings through the pages of scripture. Paul wrote, "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

John the Baptist, introducing the Messiah to the world, presented not God, but a **man**, saying, "After me comes a **Man** who has a higher rank than I" (John 1:30). Peter's Pentecost sermon did not introduce a God-man, but revealed "Jesus the Nazarene, a **man** attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him" (Acts 2:22). Paul taught that God would one day judge the world through the Messiah Jesus, "a **Man** whom He has appointed" (Acts 17:31). Did John the Baptist, Peter or Paul ever teach or preach elsewhere that Jesus was God? We will search the gospels, Acts and Paul's letters to the churches in vain for such a statement.

When the disciples wondered, after their master had calmed a storm before their eyes, "what kind of a **man**" this was (Mt. 8:27), the gospel writer neither there nor elsewhere told his readers that Jesus was in fact God. Nor did Matthew indicate that the multitudes were mistaken when, after they witnessed a miracle, they "glorified God, who had given such authority to **men**" (Mt. 9:8). The Jews expected their Messiah to be a prophet raised up from their midst like Moses, for God had said, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [Moses], and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him" (Deut. 18:18). It was a man that the Jews expected as their Messiah, not God himself; it was a man who came, whom they heard and saw and touched (I John 1:1). "Behold the **Man**!" cried Pilate (John 19:5). The apostles and gospel writers never corrected such notions or tried to teach such a metaphysical

impossibility as being fully man and fully God, fully finite and fully infinite. Such oxymoronic thinking never flowed through their brains nor their pens.

A God-man? No, the scriptures neither use the term nor teach the concept. A mere man then? No, for Jesus was one of two men who were unique in history. Interestingly, the great theologian of scripture, Paul the apostle, is triply clear that there is but One God, the Father (I Cor. 8:6, Eph. 4:6, I Tim. 2:5) and doubly clear about Two Men (Rom. 5:12-15, I Cor. 15:21-22).

The two unique men are Adam (the son of God - Luke 3:38) and Christ (the son of God - Mark 1:1). These two men stood apart from all other men in history in their capacity to choose good or evil, right or wrong, life or death. They differed in their choices, and thus one brought death and the other brought life to the rest of humanity.

In Romans 5 Paul explains that "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men." However, he continued, "if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one **Man**, Jesus Christ, abound to the many." "The Man Jesus Christ" brought the answer to the problem of death which had reigned from the time of the first man, Adam.

In I Corinthians 15 Paul teaches the same "two men" concept, writing, "For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Paul goes on to talk of these two as "the first man Adam" and "the last Adam" (v. 45), "the first man" and "the second man" (v. 47). Neither had a human father; both were unique in the history of humanity, but both were truly men in spite of their distinction from other men, and the second was no more a "God-man" than the first, except that while the first disobeyed his God and Father, the second fully obeyed his God and Father and was given a new name and exalted as Savior and Lord, worthy of our homage, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11).

Some have argued that Jesus had to be God himself because an infinite amount of sin requires the sacrifice of a being that is Himself infinite. However, the scripture never says this, and in fact,

such reasoning poses the logical impossibility of having God die. " 'Tis mystery all, the immortal dies," a famous hymn-writer penned, and yet the self-contradiction of an immortal being dying is not at all what scripture teaches. The high priest Caiaphas had prophesied, "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish," and John the apostle goes on to note that "this he did not say on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that he might gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:50-52). As the first man had sinned, so the second man would pay for sin. As it was a man who had disobeyed, it was necessary that a man obey and be found worthy to be the perfect and spotless Lamb who would take away the sin of the world. Jesus was the man, the righteous son of God.

One God, the Father. Two men, Adam and Jesus. Even a child can learn these simple foundations of scripture. Those who learn this much well will avoid much error and confusion and go on from there to build a sound and accurate Biblical theology.

[Wanda Shirk, is an English teacher in Ulysses, Pennsylvania. She majored in Bible at Wheaton College, Illinois, one of the leading Evangelical Bible colleges in America. In the next few pages we present some more of her excellent articles on the oneness of God. But first I share some excerpts from a letter she sent to me in which she describes her own spiritual growth in coming to understand that there is only one God - the Father.]

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