

One God

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In the Bible there is **one** God, **one** people of God and **one** hope of salvation for all of God's people. Throughout the Bible this theme of the oneness of God, his people and the hope of salvation for God's people always begins with simple doctrinal truths and proceeds to simple practical truths. In the Old Testament this unity begins with the fundamental truth about the oneness of God and the calling out of the one people of God, Israel, to be a witness to the nations of the world of the goodness and love of that God. This belief was emphasized repeatedly in the pages of the Old Testament and was the single most important truth in bringing unity to the Old Testament people of God, Israel. This belief is set forth both in the first commandment (Exodus 20) and in what later became known as the Jewish Shema as set forth in Deut 6:4-5:

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is **one**.*

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

This belief in the one true God is the foundation upon which all other biblical beliefs and practices are built. Thus, the Old Testament commands of the Mosaic Law were specifically based on the nature and character of that one true God as exhibited in his covenant relationship with his chosen people, Israel. Man's responsibilities in relation to God and to one's fellowman were both stated in terms of God's own character and nature which man was to imitate:

Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

... love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord (Lev. 19:2, 12).

In the New Testament the same principles are carried over from the Old Testament. God is still the only true God (John

17:2) and is to be worshipped and loved accordingly as Christ himself stated when he quoted the first and second great commandments directly from the Old Testament.

*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is **one**.*

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself ... (Mark 12:29-31).

In the New Testament, however, the nature and character of the one true God is revealed as never before. God's Word – which was with God in the beginning and which was the agent through which God created the world – became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 1:1-2, 14). Thus, to hear the words of Jesus and to witness his acts of love, mercy and power were to witness the nature and character of God himself. As Christ stated,

“Any one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

However, not only could people witness God's heart in the words and deeds of Christ, but it was through God's redemptive work in Christ – made effective through faith in Christ and the gift of God's Spirit - that people could come into fellowship and oneness with God, Christ and God's family. As Christ himself prayed,

*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be **one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be **one** as we are **one**. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent*

me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

This “oneness” or “unity” based on God’s redemptive work in Christ and brought to fruition through the work of God’s Spirit, should be the fundamental basis for practical unity amongst the people of God. However, it must be emphasized that this is a unity that must be *sought* and *built* through diligence and effort. Not by focusing on minute details of doctrine or practice, but by focusing on those central truths that unite us spiritually “in Christ” and enable us to live practically “after the example of Christ.” Paul set forth this goal of unity based on our oneness as God’s people in his Letter to the Ephesians,

*As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. There is,*

***one** body, and*

***one** spirit, just as you were called to*

***one** hope when you were called –*

***one** Lord,*

***one** faith,*

***one** baptism;*

***one** God and Father of all,*

who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

Throughout the Bible – beginning in the Old Testament and continuing through the New – this theme of oneness, or unity, amongst the people of God was always built on simple and clear truths that were understandable to the common man. This unity was based first and foremost on the Old Testament belief in the one and only true God and his covenant people Israel. It then culminated in God’s redemptive work in Christ whereby people from amongst all nations throughout the world could be united in Christ above and beyond the geographical, ethnic, racial, economic and political divisions of mankind. May we as the people of God reflect this same unity of the spirit in the bond of peace as we seek to live for our God day by day. As Paul stated,

*May the God who gives you endurance and encouragement give you the **spirit of unity** among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,*

*so that with **one** heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:5-6)*