

One God, the Father

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Throughout the NT the one God of the Bible, the creator of the heavens and the earth, is consistently defined and referred to as:

"One God, the Father" (I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6);

"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:3; Peter 1:3);

or, finally, *"God our Father" (Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:2).*

Of all the titles for God which are used throughout the Bible it is the title "Father" which best sums up his character as a personal God who loves and cares for his people. It is in fact God's desire to be a father of a people who would freely worship and serve him in love that is at the heart of God's purpose in creation itself. This is set forth beautifully in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Eph. 1:2-10 NIV).

It was God the Father's "good pleasure" and "will" to bring about a family of children - "to the praise of his glorious grace." This was his central purpose in creation and it is towards this goal that all of history has been moving until this very day. Through the redemptive work of God's own Son and through the power of his own Spirit, God has already made it possible for all of God's people - whether Jew or Gentile - to enter into the most intimate of personal relationships with God as their own Father. Paul sets this forth clearly in his letter to the Galatians:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, so that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:4-6).

It is this desire to have a people endowed with his own Spirit that is at the heart of God's desire to be "Father". As Jesus explained:

... a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for Salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

God, who is spirit, cannot ultimately be worshipped through the works of men's hands: neither in a Jewish temple in Jerusalem nor through the temples of pagan religions. Stephen made this clear about the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and it was resistance to this line of thinking that ultimately cost him his life:

However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord.

Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all of these things? (Acts 7:48-50).

Later in the Book of Acts Paul also made the same point in regards to the pagan temples that were so prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. When speaking to the Athenians he stated:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he gives all men life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:24-25).

"God is Spirit" and it was the massive misunderstanding of his nature, his character and his purposes that caused resistance to the gospel truth in NT times - both in Israel and the pagan religions of the world. Unfortunately, the same can be said about much of Christendom today. The fleshly "works" of religious ritualistic practices "cannot please God" because God is Spirit. As such he can ultimately be "truly" worshipped only by those who have received the Spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-6).

It was for this purpose that God "poured out his Spirit" on Pentecost. It was always his desire to be a Father to a people in which he could "live" and "walk among" (II Cor. 6:16). As God stated in the OT and as we find fulfilled in the NT:

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters (II Cor. 6:18).

Since Pentecost this gift of holy Spirit has been freely available to all of God's people, enabling them to "worship by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3:3).

In short, it was for the purpose of building a new and permanent dwelling place for God - a "spiritual house" in which he could be truly worshipped - that Christ came. God our Father, who is Spirit, now "lives" or "dwells" in us his people - the true "temple of the living God" - thus, making it possible for us to know and worship him as a personal Father, in spirit and in truth. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians beautifully summarizes these truths:

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2:18-22).

May we as God's people "walk worthy of this calling" to which God has called us. May we manifest to the world "the unity of the Spirit" to which we have been called so that others may see that for us, God's children, there is:

One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:6).