

# The One True God

## Introduction

*It lay with its head raised and its two fore-paws out in front of it, like the lions in Trafalgar Square. She knew at once that it had seen her, for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away—as if it knew her quite well and didn't think much of her.*

*“If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment,” thought Jill. “And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth.” Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.*

*“If you're thirsty, you may drink.”*

*They were the first words she had heard since Scrubb had spoken to her on the edge of the cliff. For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, “If you are thirsty, come and drink,” and of course she remembered what Scrubb had said about animals talking in that other world, and realised that it was the lion speaking. Anyway, she had seen its lips move this time, and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.*

*“Are you not thirsty?” said the Lion.*

*“I'm dying of thirst,” said Jill.*

*“Then drink,” said the Lion.*

*"May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.*

*The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realised that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.*

*The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.*

*"Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.*

*"I make no promise," said the Lion.*

*Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.*

*"Do you eat girls?" she said.*

*"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.*

*"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.*

*"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.*

*"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."*

*"There is no other stream," said the Lion.<sup>[1](#)</sup>*

**T**he central truth running throughout the Jewish Scriptures is that there is one true God and that mankind's only hope of salvation is through that one God. Concomitant to this truth is the corollary that there are many pretender gods and

religions that claim to represent truth and reality. The Scriptures reveal conflicts between the God of the Hebrews, YHVH, and the gods of Egypt and the gods of the ancient Near East. The Bible describes the pretenders as the “host of heaven.” YHVH identified and acknowledged pretender gods and warned Israel early in its history of them with these words spoken through Moses,

*<sup>19</sup> And beware, lest you lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. <sup>20</sup> But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today” (Deuteronomy 4:19-20).*

In our day, we are faced with the same issue of God’s exclusivity as the ancient Hebrews, the peoples of the ancient Near East, the Greeks, and the Romans. The ancient world had numerous religions and gods that challenged the God of the Bible. The Jews faced the challenges of the rival gods and religious systems with Ra, Osiris, etc., Dagon, and Baal. These gods and religious systems are unfamiliar to us and pose no threat or challenge. But they have been replaced by new gods and systems. Today, we face the challenge of modern gods and religious systems that claim to offer salvation and the way to God. The list is long—as it was in the ancient Near East. For all our sophistication and understanding in science and technology, the central issue of who the true God has not changed throughout history. We are confronted with the same challenge with regard to this question as our ancestors who lived millennia ago.

This issue of God’s exclusivity and our response to him goes to the heart of human existence and our purpose in the universe. God created the human race as a means of resolving

the problem of evil. From the biblical evidence, it appears that what is of primary importance to God is not what we do but what we believe, i.e., how we respond to Him. God desires creatures who will *trust* Him. This seems to be the key element of God's plan.

Job is the archetypal man who trusted God. His life also serves as a microcosm of how God is using the human race to resolve evil. The lesson of Job is that he learned to trust God in the face of inexplicably difficult circumstances. His life was a demonstration and presentation to Satan of man's true and appropriate response to God. Hebrews 11.6 reads:

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

The Scriptures declare it is impossible to please God unless we trust Him. That is the real issue of human existence. How a person deals with that question determines his eternal destiny.

## Two Differences in the God of the Bible

Before considering the God of the Old and New Testament's claim of exclusivity, there are two differences between the God of the Bible and other gods and religions that are immediately apparent. The first thing one notices about the God of the Bible is His *holiness*. What one discovers in reading comparative religion and folklore is that the ancient gods were basically super-humans who required appeasement. They were neither holy nor morally righteousness. They were encumbered with sin just like human beings. The same is true of other modern religions. One never feels a sense of holiness and righteousness in them. The God of the Bible is different. He is holy. He cannot behold sin. He stands apart from it. It is alien and abhorrent to him. When one reads the New Testament, one has this same sense about Jesus. He claims to

forgive sin and challenges anyone to convict him of sin (John 8.46). His opponents called him a demonic half-breed but they could discover no sin in him. He is holy and righteous. His claims are outrageous for a mere man. They are rational only for one who is God.

The other difference of the God of the Bible is that he is *personal*. No other religion or religious system has a God who is personal. As YHVH in the Old Testament, God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Of Abraham, it was written, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4.3). This is to say, Abraham *trusted* God. Only a person can be trusted. In Christianity, God became a man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and identified with us. He became one of us. He went to the cross and died for each person to save us from sin and death. A *personal* God, who dies for mankind, is a concept alien to *all* other religions. Several religions contain a story of the dying God. The Egyptians had Osiris, the religions of the ancient Near East had Baal and the Greek's Dionysius. But these gods were not personal or holy and they did not die for sin to redeem mankind. Our God has wounds. He became one of us to set us free from sin and death.

According to the Scriptures, there is only one God and only one way to know Him. This is through the person of Jesus Christ. Christ made the exclusive claim that He alone was God and all others and all other ways were false. All religions contain elements of truth. But the Scriptures clearly, adamantly, and fiercely claim that it is only through the God of the Bible, YHVH/Christ, that we can have our sins forgiven and gain eternal life. All other ways are death and lead to the lake of fire.

YHVH vs. the Pretenders

This study will examine several examples of God's claim of exclusivity and show that this claim by God has been

consistent throughout the Scriptures and history.

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## Creation

The opening verse of Scripture introduces God. It reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1.1).

As God’s revelation of himself has progressed we have learned that He is one in essence or being and three in person. This fact is intimated in the first chapter of Genesis and develops as God continued to reveal himself. Speaking of the creation of man, God said,

*Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth (Genesis 1.26).*

Paul revealed that the Creator was Jesus:

*<sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom*

we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything (Colossians 1.13-18).

In his divine genealogy of Christ the Apostle John, wrote,

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1.1-3).

John identified “the Word” as Jesus the Messiah. He said,

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” <sup>16</sup> For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ (John 1.14-17).

The writer of Hebrews also revealed Jesus to be the Creator:

<sup>1</sup> God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets

*in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1.1-2).*

The Holy Spirit was also revealed to be a personage of the Godhead early in the Jewish Scriptures. In Genesis 1.2 and Genesis 6.3 we read,

*The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*

*Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.'*

The revealing of the Holy Spirit continues throughout the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we read,

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1.18)*

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4.1).*

*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12.28).*

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you (John 14.26).*

Numerous other examples of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit can be found throughout the Scriptures. The Scriptures reveal many names of God and throughout the Scriptures and



there is consistency and agreement that God is one in nature or essence and three in person.

The one true God revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Israel moved to Egypt under Joseph to escape famine, God protected them. As time passed and God blessed Israel in Egypt, the Egyptians forgot it was through Israel that they had been blessed and delivered from famine. Instead of remembering Israel as a source of blessing—"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1.8)—they began to view them as a threat and a curse.

## The Exodus

In the Exodus story, the Egyptians under new rulership forgot the blessings that had come to them through Israel and Joseph and particular. The new leadership feared the growing Jewish population and tried to destroy the male children. They also turned the Jews into slaves and increased the difficulty of their labor. To overturn this situation God chose Moses as His servant to challenge the power of Egypt. The conflict between Egypt and Israel was an obvious physical antagonism. But more than that, it was a spiritual battle. The Egyptians had many gods and a mature religion and theology as did other peoples in the ancient Near East. God stepped into history and staged a conflict between himself and others who claimed to be God. Were reality and truth found in the many Egyptian gods, their priesthood and cult, or in YHVH, the God of the Hebrews? The story of the "plagues" of Egypt is the story of YHVH challenging the gods of Egypt. The chief purpose of the challenge was to demonstrate who was the true God. The spokesmen in this conflict were Moses and Pharaoh. When Moses went before Pharaoh, he went as the representative of YHVH. In Exodus 7.1-2, we read,

*<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. <sup>2</sup> You*

*are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.*

After Aaron cast his staff before Pharaoh and his servants and the staff became a serpent, Pharaoh summoned his sorcerers and magicians who threw down their staffs which also became serpents. Aaron's serpent, however, swallowed their serpents (Exodus 7.8-13). Through this action, YHVH directly challenged the gods of Egypt. The lesson from Aaron's staff/serpent swallowing of the Egyptians' staffs/serpents is obvious: YHVH is the true God, superior to pretenders.

Again, in the same chapter is the story of Aaron striking the Nile with his staff to turn it into blood. The Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate this miracle with their magical arts. Pharaoh saw the power of his magicians and hardened his heart; he thought he and his religion were equally or more powerful than the God of the Hebrews.

The Egyptian magicians were successful at duplicating miracles. They were able to replicate the miracles of creating serpents, turning the Nile into blood, and making frogs come out upon the land. They had real power. Through the plagues, God contested and attacked the Egyptian gods and theology. The Nile, sacred to the Egyptians, was the life of the nation. When God turned it into blood, it became a river of death. By this act YHVH challenged all the Egyptians held sacred. It also became apparent that while the Egyptian magicians could *duplicate* the plague of the Nile turning to blood, they were powerless to cleanse the water.

In the plague of the frogs, God again challenged the gods of Egypt. The Egyptians considered frogs sacred. They deified the frog as the theophany of the goddess Heqt. When frogs overran Egypt, the magicians were able again to duplicate the plague but were powerless to remove the frogs. Pharaoh recognized

this powerlessness as he said,

<sup>8</sup> Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the LORD that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD." <sup>9</sup> Moses said to Pharaoh, "The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?" <sup>10</sup> Then he said, "Tomorrow." So he said, "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. <sup>11</sup> The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile." <sup>12</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. <sup>13</sup> The LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. <sup>14</sup> So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. <sup>15</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said (Exodus 8.8-15).

In the plague of the gnats, the Egyptian magicians recognized they were outclassed. Pharaoh, however, refused to yield. Gnats filled the land of Egypt. Prior to this time, the Egyptian magicians had been able to duplicate the plagues. Their powers failed in this plague, however. According to Exodus,

<sup>18</sup> The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. <sup>19</sup> Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said (Exodus 8.18-19).

More plagues continued, each an attack on the Egyptian religion. It may appear God was being harsh and unmerciful. The exact opposite was the case. God was demonstrating by his power that their religion was dead, false, futile, and that hope and life lay in Him alone. Repentance was in the power of Pharaoh. He was all-powerful. He was Egypt. In terms of Egyptian theology, he was a god. Had he repented, Egypt would have been blessed. The covenant God had made with Abraham was in effect: "And I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse" (Genesis 12.3). Indeed, God had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years but that he would deliver them (Genesis 15.13-14). Such stories are microcosms of the spiritual warfare being played out not only in Exodus but throughout human history.

After Israel had been delivered from bondage in Egypt they went to the desert. God provided them with manna and water. When they came to Mount Sinai, God gave the Law to Moses and the people. We know those main commandments as the Ten Commandments. It is essential to understand that the first commandment stated God's primacy and exclusivity. This was no accident. The first command was foundational for all the other commandments, i.e., the Mosaic Law. As recorded in Exodus, God said,

<sup>2</sup> *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before Me (Exodus 20.2-3).*

This simple statement by God indicated that he alone is God and he will not tolerate other gods or religions.

The Ark and Dagon

In 1 Samuel 4-7 is the story of the episode between Israel and the Philistines and YHWH and Dagon. Stunned by their defeat by

the Philistines, Israel brought the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh to their camp in Ebenezer. Upon its arrival in camp, the whole nation celebrated and shouted with such force that they frightened the Philistines who had heard the reports that Israel's God had defeated the Egyptians. A second battle ensued. Israel was defeated again and their Ark captured. The Philistines took it, brought it into the temple of their god Dagon,<sup>2</sup> and set it next to Dagon. The next day, the priests of Dagon went to the temple and found their idol fallen on its face before the Ark. They set Dagon up again. The following day, not only was Dagon fallen, but its head and hands were broken off. An obvious pun is intended by the writer when he says that "the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod" (1 Samuel 5.6-7, 11)—YHVH's hand destroyed Dagon's hands. In addition, the Philistines began to die and become sick with tumors. As recorded in 1 Samuel,

*<sup>6</sup> Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories. <sup>7</sup> When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god." (1 Samuel 5.6-7).*

The Philistines took the Ark to Gath and the people there also became sick and died. The same thing happened among the Ekronites. This continued for seven months—as long as the Ark was in the land of the Philistines. The Philistines, in consternation, called upon their diviners. They said,

*<sup>3</sup> They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." <sup>4</sup> Then they said, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return*

to Him?" And they said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords. <sup>5</sup> So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land. <sup>6</sup> Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed? <sup>7</sup> Now therefore, take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them. <sup>8</sup> Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go (1 Samuel 6.3-8).

The God of Israel demonstrated through these actions that He was the true God and that Dagon was powerless before him. The Philistine's recognized YHVH's superiority and gave to him a guilt offering and great wealth. Sadly, this victory had a greater effect on the Philistines than on Israel. With regard to the Philistines, we read,

*Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day (1 Samuel 5.5).*

But it took twenty years for Israel to remove its idols and return to YHVH (1 Samuel 7). The lesson from these passages is clear: acknowledgment and trust in YHVH is life; rejection is death.

## Elijah and Baal

The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, like the Exodus,

is one of the great dramas of the Bible. Again, the point of the story is that YHVH alone is the one true God. In Elijah's day, one of the dominant gods of the ancient Near East was Baal. He was worshiped extensively by the peoples of the region. Israel, contrary to God's warning commandment, also had embraced Baal worship. YHVH commissioned Elijah to proclaim himself and lead his people back to truth and reality.

The king of Israel during this time was Ahab. He and his queen, Jezebel, worshiped and promoted Baal. This is an obvious parallel to Exodus: a king following and promoting a false religion against YHVH and his prophet. In 1 Kings 18.19, the stage is set for the contest. Elijah said to Ahab,

*Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.*

An important lesson is learned from this contest. In spiritual matters, the majority is always *wrong*. Arrayed against Elijah were 850 religious leaders of Baalism. Elijah was *alone*. Sometimes, Christians are asked regarding the claim that Jesus is the only way to God, "Do you mean to tell me that you alone are right and that all other religions are wrong?" The answer to this question became obvious in the contest between Elijah and Baal's prophets.

After the people had gathered at Mount Carmel, Elijah asked them, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18.21). The question centered upon this: who is the true God? A simple contest was agreed upon. A sacrifice was prepared and the God who answered by fire and lit the sacrifice would be revealed as the true God. The prophets of Baal called unto Baal from morning unto noon. They received no response. As the day passed and there was still no response,

the prophets of Baal became more insistent and leapt upon the altar. Observing their behavior, Elijah began to taunt them. They then cried louder to Baal and began to cut themselves to get his attention. They continued until the late afternoon but to no avail. Elijah then commanded the people to come near to him. He rebuilt the altar to the LORD which had been torn down when the people had turned away from YHVH to worship Baal. He then prepared the sacrifice. He doused it three times with water so that everything was soaked. This ensured he would not be accused of trickery when God answered by fire. At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah said,

*<sup>36</sup> O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. <sup>37</sup> Answer me O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God and that Thou hast turned their heart back again (1 Kings 18.36-37).*

God answered Elijah's prayer:

*<sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.' <sup>40</sup> Then Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.' So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there (1 Kings 18.38-40).*

In this dramatic event, God demonstrated He was the one true God. The consequence of following a false religion and a false god is death. In Proverbs 14.12 is the warning, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."



## Elisha and Naaman

Elisha was a prophet of Israel who learned at the feet of the great Elijah. He succeeded Elijah after the LORD took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind. He asked Elijah for a double portion of the Holy Spirit who had empowered Elijah. God granted this request and Elisha became a great prophet in Israel.

God uses unusual means and methods of manifesting himself as we have seen above. In the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5), who was the commander of all the forces of the King of Aram, God used a young Jewish girl and Elisha to witness to this mighty warrior and to the King and kingdom of Aram.

Naaman was a great warrior, but had a devastating medical condition: he was a leper. In a raid, his soldiers captured a little Israeli girl who became a servant for Naaman's wife. One day she said,

*I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy (2 Kings 5.3).*

These simple words of a little girl began an international incident. We read,

*<sup>4</sup> Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel." <sup>5</sup> Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. <sup>6</sup> He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup> When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his*

leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me.” <sup>8</sup> It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” <sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean” (2 Kings 5.4-10).

Naaman was offended by Elisha’s answer. It seemed ridiculous to him. It did not fit his world view of how his cure should occur. Notice his response:

<sup>11</sup> But Naaman was furious and went away and said, “Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.’” <sup>12</sup> Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage (2 Kings 5.11-12).

Fortunately, Naaman’s servants prevailed upon their master:

<sup>13</sup> Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, “My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” <sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean (2 Kings 5.13-14).

The message of this story is evident in the testimony of

Naaman. As 2 Kings 5 records,

*"When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, 'Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel'" (2 Kings 5.15a);*

The message of God in this story from the testimony of Naaman is that the God of Israel is the only true God. We also see this fact in what Elisha told Naaman to do and Naaman's initial reaction. There are many paths that point to God in our world but there is but one true path. Naaman thought that there were other, better waters that could cure his leprosy. But there was only one water—the water of the river Jordan. Because Naaman believed and obeyed the one true God, he became whole.

Naaman also must have reflected many times on Elisha's response. Naaman had expected Elisha to come out of his house, call upon God, and put on a big show. But Elisha simply sent his messenger who told Naaman what to do. What a God! He hardly needed to lift His finger to cure leprosy!

Isaiah

Isaiah was an 8th century B.C. prophet of Judah whose ministry was to proclaim God and try to turn the hearts of the people away from false religion unto YHVH. Isaiah recorded some of God's strongest statements that he alone is God. Isaiah said,

*<sup>6</sup> Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. <sup>7</sup> And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place. <sup>8</sup> Do not tremble and*

*do not be afraid; have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none'” (Isaiah 44.6-8).*

And again,

*For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place but formed it to be inhabited), ‘I am the LORD, and there is none else’ (Isaiah 45.18).*

God continued, saying,

*<sup>22</sup> Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. <sup>23</sup> I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. <sup>24</sup> They will say of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame. <sup>25</sup> In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory” (Isaiah 45.22-25).*

Jeremiah

The one true God spoke to Israel of his exclusivity through his prophet Jeremiah who ministered to Judah in the 7th century B.C. He reminded them of his mercy in saving them from Egypt and accused them of forsaking him and losing their glory by following gods which are not in reality gods at all. Jeremiah said,

*<sup>4</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the*

families of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD, "What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty? <sup>6</sup> "They did not say, 'Where is the LORD Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and of pits, Through a land of drought and of deep darkness, Through a land that no one crossed And where no man dwelt?' <sup>7</sup> "I brought you into the fruitful land To eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, And My inheritance you made an abomination. <sup>8</sup> "The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that did not profit. <sup>9</sup> "Therefore I will yet contend with you," declares the LORD, "and with your sons' sons I will contend. <sup>10</sup> "For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, and send to Kedar and observe closely And see if there has been such a thing as this! <sup>11</sup> "Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory For that which does not profit. <sup>12</sup> "Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD. <sup>13</sup> "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2.4-13).

## Ezekiel

The entire book of Ezekiel may be seen as a defense of the truth that the God of Israel, YHVH, is the one true God. The theme of the book is "then you will know that I am the LORD."

This expression, or variations on it, occurs 63 times.<sup>3</sup> God related to Ezekiel actions he would take towards Israel and to

the peoples interacting with the nation. All of these actions were to demonstrate that he alone was God.

## Daniel

Through the book of Daniel we learn how God used Nebuchadnezzar to demonstrate He was the one true God. Nebuchadnezzar ruled the ancient near east during the time of Daniel. In one of his military campaigns, he conquered Judah and brought a large number of Jews captive to Babylon. Daniel was one of these, along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

In the second chapter of Daniel is the account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the grand statue which portrayed the rise and fall of imperial powers. This dream disturbed the king so that he could not sleep. He ordered his magicians, soothsayers, and wise men not only to interpret the dream but to tell him what he had dreamed. His wise men were flummoxed (quite naturally) over this order. They told Nebuchadnezzar that no one had ever given such an order, that his demand was impossible, and that only God could do what he commanded. Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the deaths of all the wise men. When Daniel learned of Nebuchadnezzar's death order, he arranged to have an appointment with the king. During the night, God revealed to Daniel Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning. In his audience with Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel addressed the king. We read,

*<sup>27</sup> Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. <sup>28</sup> However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed (Daniel 2.27-28).*

After these introductory remarks, Daniel related to

Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its interpretation. When Daniel finished speaking, Nebuchadnezzar was stunned. The Bible recorded his response:

*<sup>46</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. <sup>47</sup> The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery" (Daniel 2.46-47).*

This was an incredible response. Nebuchadnezzar exercised absolute power in his kingdom and no one approached him without bowing before him. But after hearing Daniel, he was so overwhelmed that he prostrated himself (שָׁרָף שָׁרָף שָׁרָף שָׁרָף) before Daniel and worshiped him. Surely, nothing like this had ever happened at an absolute monarch's throne! The Aramaic word translated "did homage" above is שָׁרָף. It means "worship." Nebuchadnezzar's other actions of presenting Daniel an offering and incense were actions reserved for the worship of deity. The point of the story is obvious. It was to demonstrate that the God of Israel was the one true God. Nebuchadnezzar clearly recognized this reality.

The third chapter of Daniel makes the same point. There we read that Nebuchadnezzar constructed a statue of himself and ordered that everyone worship (שָׁרָף) it—same word as above. The penalty for not worshipping the image was death in a fiery furnace. The Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who were friends of Daniel, refused to obey Nebuchadnezzar's command. When they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar, he addressed them:

*Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will*

*immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands? (Daniel 3.15)*

Nebuchadnezzar's statement revealed his mind that he believed his power to be absolute; he dared any god to save his victims. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego stood their ground and defied the king's order.

*<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. <sup>17</sup> If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3.16-18).*

Their response enraged Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel recorded:

*<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup> He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire (Daniel 3.19-20).*

After the soldiers threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar and his court saw an amazing sight. Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt eager to see the effect of his wrath, quickly noticed an unanticipated event:

*<sup>24</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men*



we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." <sup>25</sup> He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" <sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them. (Daniel 3.24-27).

After Nebuchadnezzar's court had examined Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Nebuchadnezzar spoke.

<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way" (Daniel 3.28-29).

Nebuchadnezzar's word was absolute. Yet Nebuchadnezzar recognized the God of gods had trumped his orders and done the impossible. In the next chapter of Daniel, we gain even greater insight into what Nebuchadnezzar believed and thought about the God of Israel. Below is the decree Nebuchadnezzar wrote and published throughout his empire.

<sup>1</sup> *Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: 'May your peace abound! <sup>2</sup> It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. <sup>3</sup> How great are His signs, And how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation'" (Daniel 4.1-3).*

The greatest example of God's sovereignty and the fact He is the one true God occurred when God removed Nebuchadnezzar from his kingship and rule. God revealed what He would do to Nebuchadnezzar through a dream. When his wise men could not interpret his dream Nebuchadnezzar summoned Daniel for help. Daniel was disturbed by the dream but gave Nebuchadnezzar its meaning:

<sup>24</sup> *this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes (Daniel 4.24-25).*

The divine decree was fulfilled a year after Daniel had related the interpretation. We read,

<sup>29</sup> *Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. <sup>30</sup> The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' <sup>31</sup> While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice*

came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,<sup>32</sup> and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'<sup>33</sup> Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws (Daniel 4.29-33).

Although Nebuchadnezzar suffered tremendous humiliation, he grew to true greatness from his experience.

<sup>34</sup> But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.<sup>35</sup> All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'<sup>36</sup> At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.<sup>37</sup> Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4.34-37).

In chapter 5 is the story of Belshazzar, a grandson of

Nebuchadnezzar, who ascended the throne. The story of the disembodied hand and the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's party is familiar to readers of the Bible. Daniel interpreted the handwriting and told the king his kingdom was finished. God had given his kingdom to the Medes and Persians. Darius the Mede took over rulership along with Cyrus the Persian (chapter 6). Daniel prospered under Darius, so much so that others in Darius' administration became envious and conspired to kill Daniel. They convinced Darius to sign a decree that anyone who made a petition to any god or man other than Darius for 30 days be thrown into the lion's den. Darius signed the decree, not knowing the intent of the plotters. The conspirators, knowing Daniel prayed regularly to God, then accused Daniel before Darius. Darius, greatly distressed over this matter, had to follow the law he had created. However, Darius had faith in the God of Daniel. He said: "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you" (Daniel 6.16).

After Daniel was delivered to the lions, Darius spent the night fasting. He refused entertainment and had no sleep. He truly loved Daniel. When it was light, he rushed to the lions' den, called to Daniel, and was jubilant to find him alive. He then threw the conspirators and their families into the lions' den for their treachery. Daniel recorded:

*<sup>25</sup> Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language who were living in all the land: 'May your peace abound! <sup>26</sup> I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever. <sup>27</sup> He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions'" (Daniel 6.25-27).*

## Jesus

When we come to Jesus we discover an astonishing thing. We find a man who claimed to be God. Furthermore, like YHVH in the Old Testament, He claimed He and He alone was God. This was shocking but not altogether unknown or absurd. The Jews had prophecies of a coming Messiah who would usher in a golden age for Israel. The Jewish Scriptures also recorded God appearing and interacting with men and women (Genesis 17.1-4; 18.1-3; 32.24-30; Daniel 3.22-25), sometimes under the moniker of "the angel of the LORD" (cf. Genesis 16.7-13; Exodus 3.1-6). Moses recorded that God walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.8). So the matter of God interacting with men in physical form was known. What was new, of course, was his birth and life in Jewish society. Throughout his ministry, Jesus proclaimed He was God and the only way to God.

John recorded the following when Jesus spoke to his disciples about his impending crucifixion and resurrection,

*Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me' (John 14.6).*

With this one statement, Jesus excluded all paths to God but himself. Because Jesus himself declared He was the only way to God, those who believe in Him also make this claim. Jesus' statement excluded all the religions that claim a path to God outside of himself.

Such a statement is fiercely unpopular. It was unpopular when Jesus said it. The Jewish Scriptures attest to this fact. The prophets of YHVH proclaimed the exclusivity of YHVH. They were hated, abused, and killed. Many think this truth is narrow-minded, prejudiced, and intolerant. This opinion depends on one's concept of truth. Jesus declared,

<sup>13</sup> "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. <sup>15</sup> "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? <sup>17</sup> So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> So then, you will know them by their fruits. <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness' (Matthew 7.13-23).

## Jesus as YHVH

The word YHVH or Yahweh (יהוה) is translated "LORD" in Scripture. The Masoretes (500-950 A.D.) added the vowel points of *Adonai* (אדוני) to YHVH since they considered the name too sacred to pronounce. YHVH was the "incommunicable" name. It is from this construction that we get the name *Jehovah*. In Hebrew, Yahweh is composed of four consonants "YHVH" called "the Tetragrammaton" (four letters). YHVH (Exodus 3.14) means "He who is" or "I am who I am." It is a declaration of divine, eternal, self-existence.

Jesus connected himself to the Exodus passage above when he ascribed eternal, self-existence to Himself. In the following pivotal passage, Jesus mixed it up with the Jewish religious leaders. John recorded,

<sup>48</sup> *The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* <sup>49</sup> *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.* <sup>50</sup> *But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.* <sup>51</sup> *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."* <sup>52</sup> *The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'* <sup>53</sup> *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"* <sup>54</sup> *Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';* <sup>55</sup> *and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.* <sup>56</sup> *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."* <sup>57</sup> *So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"* <sup>58</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."* <sup>59</sup> *Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8.48-59).*

The Jews understood clearly that Jesus was ascribing to Himself the eternal, self-existence of YHVH. In fact, they understood He was claiming to be YHVH.

Jesus Equal to the Father

Jesus also claimed equality with the Father. In John 10.30, Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." It is significant that Jesus used the Greek neuter form, i.e., (ὅν) for "one" instead of the masculine form (εἷς). By his choice of words, Jesus was not saying that there was no difference between Himself and the Father. He was saying that He and God the Father were one in nature or essence (i.e. the neuter form of "one") but not one in person (i.e. the masculine form of "one"). That is why we have the doctrine of the Trinity in which God is one in nature but three in person: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

### Jesus Received Worship

Jesus also received and accepted worship. For a mere human being to accept worship is blasphemous. Only God is worthy of worship. This was especially true in the case of Jesus. Being a Jew, Jesus fully understood the significance of such an act—as did the Jews around him. Matthew said,

*<sup>2</sup> And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." <sup>3</sup> Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (Matthew 8.2-3).*

In the story of Jesus quelling the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Matthew recorded,

*<sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. <sup>33</sup> And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matthew 14.32-33)*

Thomas, doubting his fellow disciple's report of Jesus' resurrection, was met by Jesus. John said,



<sup>27</sup> Then He \*said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20.27-28)

## Jesus Forgave Sin

Mark recorded the following in which Jesus forgave sin,

<sup>1</sup> When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. <sup>2</sup> And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup> And they \*came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup> And Jesus seeing their faith \*said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup> But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, \*said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He \*said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." <sup>12</sup> And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying

*God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this" (Mark 2.1-12).*

The Jewish scribes were right in their assessment that God alone can forgive sin. If Jesus were not God then he would have been a blasphemer as they maintained. But Jesus provided them with a physical demonstration to validate His deity. He healed a man with a hopeless condition. As to Jesus' question about what was easier to say—to forgive sin or to heal—the answer is it is easier to say that one forgives sin since no evidence is required. How is it possible to verify or falsify forgiving sin? Healing, however, requires visible proof. Therefore, to demonstrate He had the authority to forgive sin, Jesus healed the man of his paralysis. That was the proof.

Everything Jesus did and claimed demonstrated that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He claimed to be the only God and the only way to God.

Jesus said,

*<sup>1</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." <sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not*

*hear them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10.1-9).*

With this illustration, Jesus asserted that He was the only God and the only way to God. According to Jesus, all other ways, religions, and philosophies that claim to be ways to God are thieves and robbers.

## Peter

Peter, transformed from cowardice to boldness after he witnessed the resurrected Messiah, maintained salvation was through Jesus alone. Luke recorded Peter's speech before the rulers and elders:

*<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, <sup>9</sup> if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. <sup>11</sup> He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4.8-12).*

## Paul

Paul affirmed Christ's deity and that salvation is through him alone numerous times. To the Colossians, he wrote,

*<sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and*

transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Colossians 1.13-20).

In Titus, Paul wrote,

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2.11-14).

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul quoted Isaiah and identified Jesus as YHVH. He wrote,

<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not

regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2.5-11).

The passage Paul quoted from Isaiah is the following:

<sup>21</sup> Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me. <sup>22</sup> Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. <sup>23</sup> I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance (Isaiah 45.21-23).

Paul's letter to the believers at Philippi made a clear case that Jesus was Lord (κύριος) and the same as Isaiah's LORD (יהוה). That is to say, Jesus is YHVH. One day, every created being will bow in submission and acknowledge that Jesus is the one true God.

Paul wrote Timothy the following words regarding the work of Christ and God's desire that all come to a saving knowledge of Christ the only mediator between God and man:

<sup>3</sup> *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,*  
<sup>4</sup> *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge*  
*of the truth.* <sup>5</sup> *For there is one God, and one mediator also*  
*between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup> *who gave Himself*  
*as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper*  
*time (1 Timothy 2.3-6).*

## John–Revelation

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John saw the future plan of God unfold upon the earth. He witnessed the throne room of God. Notice who is being worshiped. It is YHVH/Jesus. John wrote,

<sup>11</sup> *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around*  
*the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the*  
*number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of*  
*thousands,* <sup>12</sup> *saying with a loud voice,*

*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and*  
*riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and*  
*blessing.”*

<sup>13</sup> *And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth*  
*and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I*  
*heard saying,*

*“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be*  
*blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and*  
*ever.”*

<sup>14</sup> *And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the*  
*elders fell down and worshiped (Revelation 5.11-14).*

John recorded that when Jesus returns, he will come as King of

## Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev.19.16).

<sup>9</sup> Then he \*said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he \*said to me, "These are true words of God." <sup>10</sup> Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he \*said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." <sup>11</sup> And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19.9-16).

Jesus' final words to John were,

<sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22.12-13).

## Conclusion

The biblical doctrine that Jesus is the only way of salvation evokes controversy and contention. It always has. This

doctrine of the exclusivity of salvation by YHVH/Christ alone is, however, what the Scriptures teach consistently. No one stated this truth more adamantly than YHVH/Jesus himself. He declared that He *alone* is the way of salvation. John recorded,

*“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14.6).*

Inevitably, we must ask several questions. If salvation is possible by another way, what are we to make of the death and resurrection of Christ? If salvation is possible by other means, was it necessary for God to sacrifice his Son? What was God demonstrating for hundreds of years when He chose to reveal Himself through the Jews and to require blood sacrifices as patterns for the one true and final sacrifice for sin?

If the death and resurrection of YHVH/Christ is not the only solution to the problem of sin and the means of obtaining righteousness, then Christ's death and resurrection become meaningless. All one can say about the life of Christ and his subsequent death if He is not the only way of salvation is that Jesus was a good man who offended the powers of his day, that He was murdered for it, and that His life is an example of sacrifice and courage. If this is true, Christianity is not a message of hope and eternal life; it is only a message of one who was willing to die for a noble cause. If Jesus is not the only way of salvation, Christianity is just one more religion composed of moral adages. Christ is not the way to God and to life, through whom we have forgiveness of sins and an eternal, personal relationship. We also have to ask why are we instructed to be witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection if salvation is available through other means. Do we need bother those of other religions if their ways of salvation are just as valid as the way of Christ? Is religion merely a matter of culture? If Christ is not the only way of



salvation, why should we tell anyone about Christ's death and resurrection?

The line of reasoning that maintains that there are many ways of salvation is not Christian nor is it Jewish. The Old Testament Scriptures are replete with examples of such false reasoning. Indeed, if one believes this, he has missed entirely the message of the Bible. Such reasoning defies God and repudiates the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It insults God for it says in effect, "Your Son did not die to save the world; His death was merely a tragic event in human history." Rather than reject God's revelation to us, let us believe God and trust in His goodness. He loves us. Let us obey him and tell people of His love and wonderful salvation that is available in Christ.

To know Christ and to know God is a matter of putting your trust in Him and His work for you on the cross. Almost 2,000 years ago God demonstrated His love for you by sending His son, Jesus Christ, to the cross. Jesus paid the penalty for your sins to reconcile you to God. He did all the work; He picked up the tab. To experience God's salvation, all God requires from you is that you accept his Son's work on the cross on your behalf. That is to say, your part in salvation is to receive Christ's gift to you—to put your trust in Christ—that he died on the cross and was raised from the dead for you and has paid for your sins. That is what salvation is. No work is required of you. You can *do nothing* for salvation. You do not deserve it and you cannot earn it. Salvation is a *gift*—the most wonderful gift possible. It is a provision of God's grace. If you have never received God's salvation or are unsure about it, you can be sure by thanking God and trusting him that Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave for you. The choice is yours—either accept Christ's work on your behalf or depend on your own goodness for righteousness. It's that simple.

As the Scriptures state,

<sup>21</sup> But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. <sup>27</sup> Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3.21-28).

<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. <sup>5</sup> But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, (Romans 4.4-5).

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2.8-9).

<sup>1</sup> Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also

*received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (1 Corinthians 15.1-5).*

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3.16).*

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, C. S. *The Silver Chair*, p. 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “[Dagon](#).” Unlike the Baals, who, among the Canaanites, were essentially local deities, Dagon seems to have been considered by the Philistines as a national god (I Par., x, 10). To him they attributed their success in war; him they thanked by great sacrifices, before him they rejoiced over the capture of Samson (Judges, xvi, 23); into his temple they brought the trophies of their victories, the Ark (I K., v, 1, 2), the armour, and the head of Saul (I K., xxxi, 9, 10; I Par., x, 10). A bronze demi-rilievo of Assyro-Phoenician workmanship would also suggest that Dagon played a prominent part in the doctrines concerning death and future life.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 6.7, 10, 13, 14; 7.4, 27; 11.10, 12; 12.15, 16, 20; 13.9, 14, 21, 23; 14.8; 15.7; 16.62; 17.24; 20.12, 20, 26, 38, 42, 44; 22.16; 23.49; 24.24, 27; 25.5, 7, 11, 17; 26.6; 28.22, 23, 24, 26; 29.6, 9, 16, 21; 30.8, 19, 25, 26; 32.15; 33.29; 34.27; 35.4, 9, 15; 36.11, 23, 38; 37.6, 13, 28; 38.23; 39.6, 7, 22, 28.

<sup>4</sup> The Aramaic word אלהים may be translated “God” or “gods” depending on the context. In most cases, it is translated “God.”

material, but it may not be sold.

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