

HOW WE UNDERSTAND GOD – A CHRISTIAN VIEW

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Christians believe in One God.

Deuteronomy 6:4 – Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Isaiah 45:21 – There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is no one besides me.

Matthew 4:10 – Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

1 Corinthians 8:4 – We know that an idol has no real existence, and that there is no God but one.

Who is this God? The One who has revealed himself in deed and in word, especially in the history of the people of Israel and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 12:1-2 – Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

Exodus 3:12-14 – Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”_ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

Exodus 20:2 – I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Matthew 3:16-17 – And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Acts 3:12-15 – Peter...said to them, “...The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

Orthodox Christian monotheism is trinitarian, not unitarian. The One God is understood as a *unity*, not a *unit*. God is understood as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“In Christian theology, there is no room for a pre-trinitarian monotheism of the one God. In our time of intense interreligious discussion, Christians cannot compromise the truth that the trinitarian conception of God is not simply a Christian addition to a monotheism that we otherwise share with others. The Christian insistence is that God *as such* is to be understood as a differentiated unity.” (W. Pannenberg)

The belief **that God is triune (three-in-one) is not just an abstract doctrine**, but has profound consequences for Christian faith and life. For example, Christians say “God is love” (1 John 4:8). This is a statement not only about God's activity but also about God's nature. But what is necessary for talk of “love” to make sense? Love implies relationship. God as a monad could love himself, or some thing or someone outside himself; one could then say that God loves, but not that God's *nature* is love. To say “God *is* love” implies that God is relational in his own being, prior to any reference to creatures. It also means that God relates to his creatures in the same perfect love that eternally characterizes God's own being.

God desires that humans know him.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 – Thus says the LORD: Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.

Hosea 6:6 – For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

John 17:1-3 – Jesus...lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

God's power and deity are displayed in creation, making humans responsible before him.

Psalms 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Romans 1:18-20 – For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

But God must take the initiative for us to know him in personal relationship.

Deuteronomy 5:2,4-7 – [Moses said:] “The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb....The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.’”

Jeremiah 31:33-34 – This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Hosea 2:20 – I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.

Hosea 6:3 – Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

God is faithful to his promises.

Deuteronomy 7:9 – Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...

Psalm 36:5,7 – Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds....How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

Psalm 89:34 – I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

God is holy; sin separates us from God.

Isaiah 59:2 – Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.

1 John 1:5-6 – This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth.

God has entered human life in Jesus Christ...

John 1:1-4, 14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 – No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 14:9 – Jesus said to him, "...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Colossians 1:15-17, 19-20 – He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (See also Hebrews 1:1-3)

...in order to restore the relationship broken by sin.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 – God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Corinthians 5:19,21 – In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation....For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Colossians 1:13-14 – [The Father] has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Holy Spirit is God's continuing presence in the life of the believer.

John 14:16-17, 26 – [Jesus said:] I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you....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 have said to you. (See also John 16:13-15)

Romans 5:5 – God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8:3-4 – For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:11 – If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

What does God ask of us?

Micah 6:8 – He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Matthew 22:36-40 – And [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

John 6:28-29 – They asked [Jesus], “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

God is the righteous judge of all.

Psalm 9:7-8 – The LORD sits enthroned forever, he has established his throne for judgment. He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with equity.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 – For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Matthew 16:27 – For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

John 5:22,24 – The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son...Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

2 Corinthians 5:10 – For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.