



## NEW BELIEVER CLASS.

Part 2

## Who is God?

The question "Who is God?" is a good question. It is better than asking "What is God?" This is because God exists, created us, loves us, is concerned for our being, desires to provide for us, and sent the Son to redeem us. If we were to ask "What is God?" we might be tempted to say that God is the infinite being, the creator, a presence, or something like that. In some respect, this would be true. But the first question brings us closer to understanding more of who God really is in His character and His love for us as revealed in the Bible.

The Bible teaches us that in all existence, from all eternity, there has been and always will be only one God. God was never created, is completely loving, completely just, completely holy, completely merciful, and that He desires the best for us. God is holy and He can have nothing to do with sin as the Bible says, "His eyes are too pure to look upon evil," (Hab. 1:13). This does not mean that God cannot see what someone does that is wrong. It is a way of describing how holy God is. God cannot sin. He is perfect.

In Christianity, God is a Trinity. This means that God is three persons, not three gods. Technically, the doctrine of the Trinity states that in the one God is the person of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is not the same person as the other; yet there are not three gods, but one. This is similar in analogy to the nature of time. Time is past, present, and future. The past is not the same as the present, which is not the same as the future. But, there are not three times. There is only one thing called time. The reason the word "person" is used in describing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is because each exhibits attributes of personhood -- not in a body of flesh and bones, but in personality. In other words, each has a will, loves, speaks, is aware of others, communicates with others, etc. These are attributes of personhood and we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each demonstrate these qualities. Because of the Trinity, God can become flesh in the form of the Son, and still exist in such a way so that He can run the universe. Therefore, the Son can communicate to us on our level.

Following are a couple verses that hint at the Trinity.

- Matt. 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."
- 2 Cor. 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

The Bible says there is only one God: "I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God," (Isaiah 45:5). Yet, the Bible teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each called God.

Below is a very brief chart that shows that each of the persons in the Trinity share the same attributes that only God shares. But remember, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have wills, and speak, etc. Therefore, we say there are three distinct persons; One God:

|                    | <b>FATHER</b> | <b>SON</b>        | <b>HOLY SPIRIT</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Called God</b>  | Phil. 1:2     | John 1:1,14       | Acts 5:3-4         |
| <b>Creator</b>     | Isaiah 64:8   | John 1:3;         | Job 33:4, 26:13    |
| <b>Everywhere</b>  | 1 Kings 8:27  | Matt. 28:20       | Psalms 139:7-10    |
| <b>All knowing</b> | 1 John 3:20   | John 16:30; 21:17 | 1 Cor. 2:10-11     |
| <b>A Will</b>      | Luke 22:42    | Luke 22:42        | 1 Cor. 12:11       |
| <b>Speaks</b>      | Matt. 3:17    | Luke 5:20; 7:48   | Acts 13:2          |

## Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the central figure of Christianity. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me," (John 14:6). Also, Jesus claimed to be God in flesh. If you compare what God said to Moses in Exodus 3:14 ("And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM") with what Jesus said in John 8:58 (Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am,"), then you quickly see that Jesus was claiming to be God. In fact, others testified that He was divine as well:

- John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"
- Col. 2:9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."
- Heb. 1:8, "But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever..."

Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. He is the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth," (John 1:1-2,14). Because the word was with God and was God and became flesh, we then state that Jesus has two natures: divine and human. Therefore, Christianity teaches that Jesus is both God and man at the same time. The reason that he is God in flesh is because only God can atone for our sins; we can't do it on our own because we are finite, sinful beings and we cannot please an infinitely holy God. Jesus had to be a man to be able to die for humanity. This means that Jesus took our place on the cross; that is, He took our place and suffered the wrath of God the Father. If you trust in what Christ has done, then you will be saved from the righteous judgment of God. Jesus is God in flesh, the one who died on the cross, bore our sin in his body (1 Pet. 2:24), and physically rose from the dead.

Right now, in heaven, Jesus is still in the form of a man: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus rose from the dead in the same body he died in: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews therefore said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken," (John 2:19-21). Also, He retained the wounds of His crucifixion after He rose from the dead: "Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing," (John 20:25). Forty days after His resurrection He ascended into heaven bodily: "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight," (Acts 1:9). He will return again from the heavens, and will judge the world and all people: "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven," (Acts 1:11). Yet, at the same time, He is still divine, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," (Col. 2:9).

Jesus never did anything wrong. He performed many miracles such as healing, casting out demons, walking on water, calming a storm with the command, raising people from the dead, and rising from the dead himself. Though there have been many great teachers throughout history, none of them have performed such miracles and claimed to be divine as Jesus claimed. This is why we can believe Him when He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me," (John 14:6).

We trust what Jesus said. Therefore...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Jesus is prayed to - Acts 7:55-60; 1 Cor. 1:2 with Psalm 116:4; (John 14:14)</li><li>▪ Jesus is worshipped - Matt. 2:2,11; 14:33; John 9:35-38; Heb. 1:6</li><li>▪ Jesus cleanses from sin - 1 John 1:9</li><li>▪ Jesus forgives sins - Matt. 9:1-7; Luke 5:20; 7:4</li></ul> |
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## Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. He is fully God. He is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, has a will, and can speak. He is alive. He is a person. He is not particularly visible in the Bible because His ministry is to bear witness of Jesus (John 15:26).

Some misinformed people think the Holy Spirit is nothing more than a force. This is false. If the Holy Spirit were merely a force, then He could not speak (Acts 13:2); He could not be grieved (Eph. 4:30); and He would not have a will (1 Cor. 12:11).

The truth is that the Holy Spirit is a person the same as the Father and the Son are within the Trinity.

### The Works of the Holy Spirit

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| Access to God - Eph. 2:18                  | Inspires prayer - Eph. 6:18; Jude 20              |
| Anoints for Service - Luke 4:18            | Intercedes -Rom. 8:26                             |
| Assures - Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6           | Interprets Scripture - 1 Cor. 2:1,14;Eph. 1:17    |
| Authors Scripture - 2 Pet. 1:20-21         | Leads - Rom. 8:14                                 |
| Baptizes - John 1:23-34; 1 Cor. 12:13-14   | Liberates - Rom. 8:2                              |
| Believers Born of - John 3:3-6             | Molds Character - Gal. 5:22-23                    |
| Calls and Commissions - Acts 13:24; 20:28  | Produces fruit - Gal. 5:22-23                     |
| Cleanses - 2 Thess. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:2       | Empowers Believers - Luke 24:49                   |
| Convicts of sin - John 16:9,14             | Raises from the dead - Rom. 8:11                  |
| Creates - Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4               | Regenerates - Titus 3:5                           |
| Empowers - 1 Thess. 1:5                    | Sanctifies - Rom. 15:16                           |
| Fills - Acts 2:4; 4:29-31; 5:18-20         | Seals - Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30                        |
| Gives gifts - 1 Cor. 12:8-11               | Strengthens - Eph. 3:16; Acts 1:8; 2:4;1 Cor. 2:4 |
| Glorifies Christ - John 16:14              | Teaches - John 14:26                              |
| Guides in truth - John 16:13               | Testifies of Jesus - John 15:26                   |
| Helps our weakness - Rom. 8:26             | Victory over flesh - Rom. 8:2-4; Gal. 4:6         |
| Indwells believers - Rom. 8:9-14; Gal. 4:6 | Worship helper - Phil. 3:3                        |

## What do we think about the cross?

When was the last time you saw the image of the cross? Most likely, you've seen one in the past day or two, on a church, bumper sticker, tattoo or as jewelry. It is one of the most recognizable symbols in the world, but do Christians and Non-Christians really understand the significance of it?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.” Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

The cross is much more than a simple religious symbol; actually, it is the central doctrine of the whole Christian faith. Without this vital aspect, the entire system crumbles. Yes, the cross was necessary because of our sin. Through the cross, our sins have been forgiven and we have been given atonement for our unrighteousness. However, this is only one side of the issue. The problem with many Christians is that they only see the side of the cross that deals with their sins; many Christians unfortunately, never understand the aspect of the cross that deals with the transformation of their lives.

The apostle Paul recognized the dramatic changes that had taken place in his life as a result of the cross. In Galatians 6:14, Paul declares that he has absolutely no reason to boast about anything in his life except the cross of Christ. In summary, Paul says that if everything about him was stripped away, the only thing of any lasting value or worth would be the cross. This is a message that changed his life to the very core, not only because it saved him from sin and death, but because it radically altered his day-to-day living.

**Q:** Ask yourself today, what role or identity do people try and define you as? Another way to ask it would be what identity do you try to project to others? (Ask God to reveal to you what false misconceptions you might have about your true worth)

Recommended Reading for Spiritual seekers:

- “The Case for Christ” by Lee Strobel. (Former editor of The Chicago Tribune)
- “The Life You’ve Always Wanted” by John Ortberg.
- “Looking for God Knows What” by Donald Miller.
- “He Still Moves Stones” by Max Lucado.
- “More than a Carpenter” by Josh McDowell.
- “Disappointed with God” & “Where is God when it Hurts” by Philip Yancey

Recommended Reading for New Believers:

- “If you want to Walk on water, you have to get out of the Boat” by John Ortberg
- “Ragamuffin Gospel” by Brennan Manning
- “In His Steps” by Charles Sheldon
- “The Jesus I never Knew” by Philip Yancey

Recommended Daily Devotional:

- “Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado

## Your View of the Cross.

As we go about our lives, we generally discover that people hold one of three views of the cross. These are the same three views that the early church encountered 2,000 years ago, which Paul details in 1Corinthians 1:18-25.

1. The first of these, according to Paul, is that the cross is a scandal, or as Scripture records, “a stumbling block.” You see, in Jesus’ day, the religious leaders had already formed a little theological box. They had their minds set on who God was and how He operated, and if something came along that did not fit inside their little God-box, they just cast it out. This is exactly what they did to Jesus. How does Jesus fit into your world?
2. A second view of the cross that we run up against is that the message of the cross is simply “foolishness.” Worldly wisdom cannot grasp the fullness of the cross. It just doesn’t seem to make sense that the Roman world’s greatest symbol of shame can be our symbol of victory. We ask, how can death bring about success? How can one man’s execution 2,000 years ago affect my life today? Why on earth should I care about an embarrassing legal/religious matter somewhere in ancient history? Scripture answers, “The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). God knows what He is doing, even if we don’t see how His plans can work out. Remember, God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8.) The cross is a stumbling block to Christians and non-Christians alike in that all humans are at risk for allowing their performance-oriented need for approval to define them rather than the cross of Christ.
3. The third view that people have of the cross is that it is “the very power of God to those who believe.” In every other religion in the world, how is man made acceptable to God? It is through works: do this, don’t do that, go here, say this, starve yourself, work yourself, improve yourself. People are made to work and slave to make themselves “worthy” of God. Believers in Christ do not have to worry about this, because Jesus has done the work for us. Because we could never be “good enough,” Jesus gave Himself to provide a way—the only way—for man to enter into God’s holy presence.

How we view the cross is a vital, fundamental part of our walk with the Lord. It is a stumbling block and foolishness to many, but it is also clearly the power of God in a sick world. We must be ready to give an account of our understanding of the cross to any who ask. As Paul proclaimed, “for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

**Q:** Carefully read 1 Corinthians 1:18. Describe the ways in which the cross of Christ is A) a stumbling block, B) foolishness, and C) the power of God in your life.

### Living the “With God Life.”

John 15:1-5

Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

## **Your True Identity.**

Colossians 3:1-4 “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

**1. Crucified.** There is simply no way for a believer to reach fulfillment in Christ until he understands this point. Jesus did not just die for us, he died with us. Our old, sinful natures were put to death the moment that Jesus died. The apostle Paul makes this point over and over again in his writings:

- Colossians 3:3 – “For you have died . . .”
- Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ . . .”
- Galatians 6:14 – “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

**2. Burial.** Not only are we identified with the crucifixion of Jesus, but also with His burial. This is seen in Colossians 3:1, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ . . .” Well, how can we be raised up with Him if we have not been buried with Him? We can’t! So, we see that we have indeed been buried with Christ. How do we represent this burial? Through the waters of baptism.

Read Ephesians 2:4-7: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

**3. Resurrection.** We have seen that we died and were buried along with Christ, but we certainly did not stay in the grave once He rose from the dead. Instead, Scripture is clear that we were raised back to life with Him. Colossians 2:12-13 clearly makes this point, as you were “buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him.”

**4. Heavenly places.** Since we have been resurrected with Jesus, a new question arises: Where does God see us? Yes, we are here on earth, walking around, sitting at home, going to work, and so on, but is that all? My friend, when God looks down upon us, He sees beyond where our physical bodies are and sees our real selves, seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ. Now, what in the world does this mean? This refers to our heavenly citizenship. You see, our real lives are where we will spend eternity. For those of us in Christ, that place is heaven. That is why Scripture admonishes us to get our minds on heavenly things, because that is where our nature is. (Colossians 3:2)

**5. Hidden.** Colossians 3:3 reveals another interesting part of our union with Christ. It says, “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” What does it mean to say we are “hidden” in Christ? Let me ask you a question. If you are sitting in heaven, hidden with Christ in God Himself, who can pull you out of that? Who can seek you out, pull you out of that safety, and strip you of the blessings of almighty God? My friend, no one can do that. If you are in Christ, you are sealed and protected in Him forever.

**6. Returning.** The last thing we need to discuss regarding our position in Christ is our role in His Second Coming. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 shows in a mighty way how Jesus will return in the future. At that time, we will all be there in the clouds with Him because we were identified in His crucifixion, identified in His burial, identified in His resurrection, identified with His place of honor at the Father’s right hand, identified in being hidden with Him, and finally, identified with His return. When God sees Jesus in each one of the positions, He also sees every single believer with Him, eternally secure as a part of the family of God.