

Who Is God?

*“There is but one
God, the Father, of
whom are all
things, and we in
him; and one Lord
Jesus Christ, by
whom are all
things, and we by
him.”*

—I Corinthians 8:6

throughout the ages there have been myriads of gods which people have worshiped and served. Many of those who have worshiped gods of one sort or another have not been satisfied to have them invisible, and they have erected images to the gods of their choice. These images, they claim, help them to visualize their gods, hence are a great aid to their so-called faith.

THE QUESTION RAISED IN

our title—“Who is God?”—was asked by the psalmist in Psalm 18:31, and might seem at first to have a simple answer, as given in our theme text. Other scriptures state also that there is only one “true” and “living” God. (Jer. 10:10; I Thess. 1:9) Yet,

MANY “GODS”

A recent search on the Internet provides a wide variety of answers to the question—“Who is God?”—as well as to the number of gods that have been worshiped down through the ages. According to several independent sources, historians have catalogued nearly 4,000 “gods” that have been

worshiped during the past six thousand years, of which nearly 3,000 can be considered “deities”—that is, gods of supreme worship. In cataloguing these by region and culture, it is perhaps not surprising that the Greek gods comprise the single greatest number, about 370, or nearly ten percent of all the gods ever worshiped.

Scholars note that of all the major cultures and religions which have existed during man’s history, only three major groups claim to be monotheistic—believers in one God—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All other groups, past and present, have been polytheistic—believers in many gods. Even among so-called Christianity, while claiming belief in only one God, the majority of its followers believe in, and have been taught, the unscriptural concept that the Supreme Deity is comprised of a “trinity” of gods.

Furthering the confusion as to “Who is God?” is the fact that, in addition to the estimated 4,000 gods mentioned earlier, “saints” have been canonized by man’s authority. These “saints” have also become objects of much worship and idolization among millions of people for nearly two thousand years. How many of these exist? According to *Catholic Online*, “There are over 10,000 named saints . . . from history, the Roman Martyrology and Orthodox sources, but no definitive ‘head count’.”

Given all of this information, it is no wonder that there is so much confusion in the world, and little in the way of satisfactory answers, as to who God truly is, and what his plans and purposes are for his creation. If we truly believe that there is a

Supreme Being who is in control of the universe and interested in the well-being of its creatures, then we should expect him to reveal to us something concerning his plans, purposes, and character, so that we might properly and knowledgeably worship him. The only source of consistent, harmonious, and reasonable testimony concerning the God of the universe is the Bible. It is to this source that we look for the answer to the question—"Who is God?"

"GODS" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There were a number of prominent gods worshiped by heathen nations during Old Testament times. One of the great sins of God's chosen people Israel was their heedless desire to join in this heathen worship of false gods. The most popular god of those times was Baal. Baal was the supreme deity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations. There can be no doubt of the historical worship of Baal. We find it established among the Moabites and their allies the Midianites in the time of Moses. (Num. 22:41) Through these nations, the Israelites were seduced into the worship of this god under the particular form of Baal-Peor.—Num. 25:3-18; Deut. 4:3

Another prominent god worshiped by ancient heathen nations, and sometimes by the Israelites, was Molech. Molech was the fire god of the Ammonites. Fire gods appear to have been common to many heathen tribes, and were worshiped in most inhuman rites. The images of Molech are said to have been hollow and made of brass. A fire burned within, and children were thrown into the arms of

the image and burned to death, in the hope of appeasing its wrath.

In most instances, the people conceived of these gods as vengeful, seeking opportunities of venting their wrath upon their subjects. This concept of deity, however, is entirely foreign to the teachings of the Bible with respect to the true and living God. (Ps. 86:15) Human sacrifices were also offered to Baal, and concerning this inhuman practice God said, "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind."—Jer. 19:5

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, we are again reminded of the many gods of the heathen world. Paul referred to these in his sermon on Mars' hill. He said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions [gods that ye worship, *Marginal Translation*], I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."—Acts 17:22-25

The most outstanding of all the false gods mentioned in the Bible is Satan, the Devil. Paul described him as "the god of this world" who "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest

the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (II Cor. 4:4) It is because Satan has blinded the minds of the people that the true and living God of the Bible is as yet an “unknown God” to the vast majority of mankind.

SUPERSTITION STILL PREVAILS

While the light of the Gospel shining forth from Jesus and his enlightened followers has been a blessing to many individuals throughout the centuries of the present age, the larger portion of mankind is still in darkness. Today, countless millions do not believe in any god, but those who do not believe in any god may perhaps be just as well off as those who are superstitiously bound to a false god.

Since the introduction of Christianity into the world, another false god has been created by human philosophy. This is the god of torture. Soon after the death of the apostles, some of the prominent leaders in the church became ensnared in Satan’s original deception that the penalty for sin was not death, believing Satan’s lie, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4) They concluded that since no one could die, then that which appeared to be death must be a gateway into another aspect of life. Therefore, they reasoned that since the wicked would not be worthy of a happy life after seeming to die, it must be a life of torment. Conveniently, these church leaders also borrowed similar “eternal torment” teachings of heathen religions and philosophers.

It was further conceived, but without authority from the Bible, that this torment could have purifying

power in the “souls” of those sinners who experienced it, and that eventually, after a long period of time, they would be holy enough to enter heaven. In this theory, the place of torture was called purgatory, a word that is not found in the Bible at all. It is important to note that the teaching of purgatory did not replace the doctrine of eternal torment—it only added to it, attempting, perhaps, to make it more palatable.

Centuries later, the Protestant Reformers discarded the concept of purgatory. However, they failed to realize further that the Bible does not teach torture at all, whether styled purgatory or anything else. The Reformers, therefore, held on to the false theory of hell-fire, which they taught was to last forever. This presents God in an even worse light than does the theory of purgatory, for not only would the torture serve no purpose, but it would never end.

Naturally, our minds turn in revolt from the heathen concept of a Molech who would be pleased to have his worshipers cast their children alive into the flames to be destroyed. However, even this hideous concept of a god is not nearly as horrible as the one portrayed in the dogmas of purgatory and eternal torture. It is not surprising that many philosophers of today, sufficiently liberated from the shackles of superstition to think more freely on this subject, have announced that to them this god does not exist. How could anyone find a place in his heart for such a god?

DEATH OF “GODS” FORETOLD

The Scriptures make it clear that the true and living God of the universe, the Creator of heaven

and earth, does not intend to permit false gods to exist forever. They are all to be destroyed, including Satan, their instigator and chief. Let us note some of the Bible's prophecies which indicate this. Addressing the worshipers of false gods, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." (Jer. 10:11) The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. . . . In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats."—Isa. 2:17-20

The Prophet Isaiah also wrote, "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They [the other gods] are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." (Isa. 26:13,14) This is a remarkable prophecy. It refers to the time when, according to the Scriptures, the knowledge of the true God shall fill the earth "as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9) Then the people will recognize that they have been deceived by false gods and will acknowledge it. "Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us," they will confess. In most instances, how cruel that dominion has been. The people have been held in subjection through fear. They have feared torment and other evils. Then, however, they will rejoice to realize that all these

“other lords” are dead, destroyed from the people’s minds by the enlightening influences of the kingdom of Christ.

In reality, with the exception of Satan, the false gods which have plagued the people throughout the centuries have never been living gods, except as they have lived in the fear-filled minds of their worshipers. This is true of the torment god, and of other false concepts of the Christian God which have come down to us from the Dark Ages. Since these false gods exist merely in the minds of the people, when the light of truth shines forth to them, these gods will die.

SATAN ALSO TO BE DESTROYED

Satan, however, is a real personality—the fallen Lucifer. Isaiah wrote, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”—Isa. 14:12-15

The Hebrew word translated “hell” in this passage is *sheol*. It is this same word that is translated “grave” in Ecclesiastes 9:10, which reads, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” From this text, it is clear that *sheol*, here translated “grave,” is a state of unconsciousness. It is the

death condition, and for the fallen Lucifer to be brought down to hell, or *sheol*, means that he will be destroyed. This, indeed, will be the death of the greatest of all false gods.

In Revelation 20:1-3, this god is described as “that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan.” This passage tells us that during the thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan will be bound, to prevent him from deceiving the nations. Then, in verse 10, we are informed that Satan is finally cast into “the lake of fire.” In verse 14, “the lake of fire” is described as “the second death.” Verse 10 speaks of Satan being “tormented,” but this is a poor translation. The root meaning of the Greek word here translated “tormented” is “a touchstone,” and the noted professor of Greek, Dr. Strong, shows that it is only by analogy that the thought of torture is derived from it.

What this text really means is that while Satan will be destroyed in the symbolic lake of fire, which is “the second death,” the memory of his wicked course of opposition to God will continue as a touchstone, or example, of the terrible results of disobedience to God and his righteous laws. The true and loving God of the Bible, while justly destroying those not worthy to live, including Satan—the “god of this world”—is not a God of torment. He will not torment even the Devil, but will destroy him, thus making an end of the chief of all false gods.

THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

Through the Prophet Jeremiah, the true and living God said, “Let not the wise man glory in his

wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” (Jer. 9:23,24) This great and loving God has not been known by those theologians of our day who proclaim that God does not exist. Their philosophies do not refer to him, but to the god of the Dark Ages, the god of torment—not the God who delights to exercise lovingkindness in the earth.

A prayer of Moses, recorded in the Psalms, says, “LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.” (Ps. 90:1-3) The true and living God of the Bible turned man to destruction through the original sentence of death which came upon our first parents. As a result of this, man has been a dying creature. This will not be so forever, for, as Moses foretold in his prayer, the time will come when God will say to the condemned, dying, and dead race, “Return, ye children of men.”

Although God sentenced our first parents to death because they transgressed his law, he still loved them, and loved their progeny upon whom the penalty of death also fell. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”—John 3:16,17

It was God’s love that prompted him to send his Son into the world to be the Redeemer and Savior of the people. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we see God’s justice operating. God could not set aside the just penalty of death upon the human race unless that penalty was paid by another, and Jesus is the one who took the sinner’s place in death. Jesus “poured out his soul unto death.” “Yet,” as Isaiah wrote, “it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”—Isa. 53:12,10

The “pleasure of the LORD” is the redemption and recovery of the fallen race from sin and death. Jesus made this possible through his own willing sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. He became the propitiation, or satisfaction, for our sins, “and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:2) Paul wrote that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, “to be testified [or made known to all] in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6) In this same passage, Paul also explains that it is God’s will for all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

THE KINGDOM CLASS

The revealment to the people of the true God of the Bible will take place during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. Those who then accept

the provision of God's love through Christ and obey the laws of the Messianic kingdom will be restored to perfection of human life on the earth, and will have the opportunity of living forever. However, those during the present age who have followed faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus will be exalted to heavenly glory with him, and will share in the rulership of his kingdom. It is to these that Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32

It is to these that Jesus also said, "I go to prepare a place for you, . . . And . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2,3) In order for these and other promises of the Bible to be fulfilled, the exercise of divine power is essential in the resurrection of the dead. When Jesus was raised from the dead he was highly exalted, symbolically speaking, to the "right hand" of God. Thus, while all things are of the Father, his blessings are dispensed through his beloved and highly exalted Son.

In the plan of God, there is another exercise of divine power in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus' followers. This is described in the Bible as "the first resurrection." (Rev. 20:6) Those raised from the dead in the first resurrection are to be joined together with Christ, to then exert divine power for the restoration of mankind in general to live on the earth as perfect human beings. The period during which this is accomplished is described by the Apostle Peter as "times of restitution of all things," and he informs us that this loving feature of the divine plan was foretold by all God's holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:19-21

With all false gods destroyed, and the true and living God of creation exalted and worshiped by all mankind, there will come the fulfillment of the Apostle John's prophecy of the time when, as he wrote, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, . . . and all that are in them," will be saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:13) The "throne" is here used as a symbol of the Creator's sovereignty over his creatures, and the "Lamb" is a symbol of Christ, who gave himself in sacrifice that mankind might be restored to life.

How thankful we are that in due time both the Father and the Son will be universally recognized and acclaimed. Then there will be no question as to who God is, for all will know him. All will understand that he truly lives, and that all false gods have been destroyed. Then the people, enlightened and restored to human perfection, will rejoice to worship and serve the one true God, and in doing so will themselves live forever in peace and in joy. ■

"This is what the LORD says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: 'I am the LORD, and there is no other. . . . Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.'"

—Isaiah 45:18,22,23 New International Version