

Restored Truth Bible Study #1: GOD – Who and What Is God?
May 11, 2013

We shall begin this study with a very fascinating passage of scripture - Acts 17:16 - where a minister of God has the opportunity to address the intellectual class in Athens, Greece. *Now while Paul waited for them...*[notice in verse 15 that he is waiting on Silas and Timothy to join him] *at Athens, his spirit was provoked in him when he saw the city was given over to idols...*[Or full of idols. The word provoked means to sharpen alongside of or to exasperate. Paul was deeply affected by all the idols he saw in the city of Athens. It affected him greatly and not in a positive way] (vs 17) *Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers and in the market place daily with those who happened to be there...* He discussed the truth with people.

In Halley's Bible Handbook Athens is described as the home of Pericles, Socrates, Demosthenes, and Plato; the home of ancient Greek philosophers who lived 200 to 300 years before Paul actually visited Athens. This city was the center of philosophy literature, science, and art. It was the seat of the greatest university of the ancient world and the meeting place of the world's intelligentsia. In other words Athens was the place of ancient Ivy League schools. It was where the 'supposedly' intelligent people gathered. We'll see more of this later in the scriptures. Another interesting point from Halley's Bible Handbook about Athens is that it is exactly what we just read in the Bible. Halley comments it was wholly given to idolatry. Athens was a very wicked place and still is today.

Continuing on with Paul's experience of this environment - Acts 17:18 *Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said what does this babbler want to say...*[The word babbler refers to a seed-picker or an idler who makes a living picking up scraps. Paul was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers to be a homeless person. Nevertheless they asked -] *What does this babbler want to say? Others said he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection (vs 19). And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus saying may we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak (vs 20)? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears...*[Paul's message had not been heard by these philosophers before] *Therefore we want to know what these things mean (vs 21). For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time on nothing than either to tell or to hear something new.* There were all these spiritually blind intellectuals trying to figure out the meaning of life. That is basically what this means.

Let's understand a little bit of historical background of these scriptures by first understanding who the Epicureans were. This was a group of people derived their name from the Attica philosopher Epicurus who lived from 342 to 271 BC. Epicurus was a man who was in search of a practical guide to happiness. He was looking for happiness in life like most people. True pleasure and not absolute truth was the end at which he aimed. Experience and not reason was the test on which he relied. If Epicurus had studied the book of Ecclesiastes he could have learned

quite easily from King Solomon the true practical guide to happiness. The end of Ecclesiastes says, the whole duty of man is to keep the commandments of God, but Epicurus thought happiness in life existed in pleasure and not absolute truth.

The Stoics, on the other hand, were the exact opposite of the Epicureans. They were founded by a fellow named Zeno about 280 BC. The Stoic philosophy was developed further by those who followed Zeno. Their philosophy was diametrically opposite to the Epicureans. Among the Stoics was contempt for external circumstances and absolute self-constraint were considered to be chief values. Stoics resisted imbibing in the pleasures in life. They thought it was a higher virtue to deny yourself these things. Regardless of these two bodies of thought each were accepted by the philosophers Paul encountered who wanted to know more about his teachings.

The Areopagus, also known as Mars Hill is located opposite the western end of the Acropolis in Athens. The Areopagus is simply a huge rock that was a meeting place where people would go and meet to discuss things. There is a picture of it in Halley's Bible Handbook. It is an open-air location that has been carved out of the rock. It is this huge meeting area with benches around the outside so people could sit and one could stand in the middle and speak. This information provides a little historical and geographical background of what Paul encountered during his time in Athens.

Acts 17:22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious (vs 23) For I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship. I even found an altar with this inscription 'To the Unknown God'. Therefore the one whom you worship without knowing...[It would be better translated in ignorance] him I proclaim to you...

Here Paul makes a connection with the Greeks through one of their own idolatrous altars – one made to the “Unknown God.” Truly among the Athenians and the philosophers who came to Athens this was a very apt description to god they did not know. They had all these gods and certainly didn't want to leave one out. The word ‘god’ here in the Greek refers to a deity or the Supreme divinity. We will learn more of this word's meaning later in the Bible study.

Paul then goes on to talk about this “Unknown God” and certain things this God does. *Acts 17:24 God who made the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands...[He is clearly establishing what God is and how God is different from the gods the Athenians were familiar with] (vs 25) Nor is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything since he gives to all life, breath, and all things. (vs 26) He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth*

and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings. God is a segregationist. He intended the various races to have their own land and national borders.

Acts 17:27 So that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for him and find him though he is not far from each one of us. (vs 28) For in him we live and move and have our being as also some of your own poets have said: For we are also his offspring...[Paul here is really trying to make a connection with these philosophers in Athens through things they would be familiar with. Such as: Their altar to the “Unknown God”; and quoting their own poets] (vs 29) Therefore since we are the offspring of God...[Here we see Paul is agreeing with some of the things these poets have written to make his point] Therefore since we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by man’s devices... [This is what all these idols in Athens were made of, obviously made by the hands of men] (vs 30) Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked; but now commands all men everywhere to repent (vs 31) because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained he has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead...[Of course, we understand the man Paul is speaking of is Jesus Christ] (vs 32) And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some mocked: while others said we will hear you again on this matter. (vs 33) So Paul departed from among them. It seems Paul didn’t get another opportunity to speak to these Greek philosophers, but he took full advantage of the one opportunity he did have.

Paul identified the “Unknown God” as the Creator of this world and everything in it. He said this God would judge the world and has the ability to resurrect people back to life from the dead. In a world filled with gods of all types, who and what is this “Unknown God Paul told the Greeks about? Can we learn more about Him beyond the description Paul provided to the philosophers of Athens? The answer to question is yes we can. But we can only learn more about this God from one source, the Holy Bible.

Let’s begin to understand more about the “Unknown God” Paul discussed in Athens. He certainly will not be unknown to us in God’s Church. This ties in directly with the first point Paul made in Isa. 45:18. *For thus says the Eternal who created the heavens; who is God who formed the earth and made it; who established it; who did not create it in vain; who formed it to be inhabited...[God intended the earth to be inhabited by human beings and animals] I am the Eternal and there is no other. (vs 19) I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I did not say to the seed of Jacob seek me in vain: I the Eternal speak righteousness. I declare things that are right.*

It is important to understand Isaiah uses two words for God in his writing. One is Lord and the other is God. We are going to see the meaning of these words come out later, but before we continue this study more closely, here are the definitions of these two words.

The word Lord is the Hebrew word Jehovah. It means the self-existent or the Eternal. This word is the Jewish national name given to God. When we hear the Jews talk about God they talk about Jehovah.

A different word is used for God, where it defines who God is. This word is Elohim. Elohim means Gods, plural. It refers to the Supreme God. This will be explained in greater detail to really draw out the meaning of these two words.

Notice what is said here, and God is saying it. Isa. 45:5 *I am the Eternal and there is no other...*[That is the point Paul was trying to make to the Athenian intellectuals of his day] *There is no God besides me: and I will gird you though you have not known me. (vs 6) That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides me. I am the Eternal and there is no other. (vs 7) I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create calamity. I the Eternal do all these things.* Clearly the same description of God Paul gave to the Athenians is the very description we are reading about from Isaiah.

Notice the challenge God issues to mankind concerning His existence. Isa. 46:8 *Remember this and show yourselves men...*[This is a challenge. To 'show yourselves men' means to take courage, or to be a man, to step up] *Recall to mind, O you transgressors...*[These are breakers of God's law] (vs 9) *Remember the former things of old for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me. (vs 10) Declaring the end from the beginning; and from ancient times things that are not yet done...*[This is obviously referring to prophecy] *saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure...*[The first word God in verse 9 is the Hebrew word 'el'. It means strength or the Almighty. We can also say-] *for I am the Almighty and there is none other...*

The second use of the word God in verse 9 is the word 'Elohim' which means Gods. It is important to understand there is only one Creator God and none other. This is the point Isaiah makes and it is the same point the Apostle Paul was making in Athens. Anybody claiming the title of God who has not done, or is not able to do, the things we just read here in Isaiah is a false god, or an imposter god. If you cannot claim responsibility for the creation of the earth, if you cannot create light and darkness, if you cannot tell the end of a matter from its beginning, then you are not the true God.

Let's understand exactly who God is. Here is who God is. John 1:1 *In the beginning...*[We need to know this is the very starting point of the Bible even though we are almost three quarters of the way through it] *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God (vs 2) He was in the beginning with God. (vs 3) All things were made by him; and without him nothing was made that was made.*

In the Greek the word for 'Word' is logos. It refers to something said and it can include a person's thoughts. As it is used here in John 1, it refers to Jesus Christ. If we look at verse 14 we will see this. (vs 14) *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

What we need to understand is when we go back to the Hebrew word 'Elohim' which means Gods, we see 'Elohim' established here in the first three verses of the book of John. John is specific there is the Word who was with God, two separate entities or beings. To make it very understandable for people – persons, but not persons as we understand human persons; but two beings separate from one another yet together. There is God and the Word. It is through the Word all things were created, but what exactly does this mean?

Heb. 1:1 *God...[The same God John was talking about] who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets (vs 2) Has in these last days spoken to us by his Son whom he...[That is God] has appointed heir of all things...[The word 'He' there refers to God. He is the One who has appointed heir of all things] through whom also he...[That is God] made the worlds.*

God is the Creator and it is through the Word, who later became His Son Jesus Christ, that the physical universe we see around us was created. God said create this and the Word created it. In essence, God the Father used Jesus Christ, His Son, to do the actual creating. These two beings worked together in tandem to create. Notice this relationship between God and the Word, who later became Jesus Christ in John 17.

Here we read of the relationship between God and the Word, who is now Jesus Christ. This is the prayer Christ gave right before He was arrested on the evening of the Passover. John 17:1 *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up his eyes to heaven and said Father...[So God, who we read about in John 1, is God the Father. He is the Supreme One. He is the one in charge. Notice what Christ says:] the hour has come glorify your Son that your Son also may glorify you.*

The relationship between God and the Word, when the Word became Jesus Christ, was and is now Father and Son. It is a family relationship. 'Elohim' in the Hebrew, which we understand means Gods, can refer to a family, just like other words such as Church refers to one group consisting of a number of people. In a family there is more than one person who makes up the family. It consists of a father and mother and children. Here in John we see the relationship between God and Christ as Father and Son.

John 17:2 *As you have given him authority over all flesh...[The Father has given Christ authority over all flesh] that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him...[It is very important to understand, reading through the narrative, who 'He' applies to, who the word 'You' applies to, and who the word 'Him' applies to] (vs 3) This is*

eternal life that they might know you...[Referring to God the Father] the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (vs 4) I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do...

If you recall in the Introduction to the 18 Restored Truths Bible Study, we covered the five reasons why Christ came to the earth. This is what Christ is talking about here although He had yet to be sacrificed and resurrected. In Christ's mind it was already done. (vs 5) *And now, O Father, glorify me together with yourself with the glory which I had with you before the world was.* This takes us right back to the verses we read in John 1:1-3, which is the beginning of the Bible.

Now notice some things Christ said after addressing the Father. He is asking the Father some specific things that pertain to those who will become members of God's Church. John 17:11 *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world... [Referring to His disciples] and I come to you, Holy Father, keep through your name those whom you have given me that they may be one as we are...[There is oneness in the context of unity, but oneness also refers to the family; becoming part of one family. Christ is not only praying for the disciples. He says:] (vs 20) I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their words...[Christ is praying for future believers of the truth, who will get God's truth through the disciples, the first ministers, personally trained by Jesus Christ] (vs 21) That they all may be one...[Both the disciples in the first century and those who would follow after] as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me...[Of course, this is not going to happen until Jesus Christ returns] (vs 22) And the glory which you gave me I have given them that they may be one just as we are one...[One family, unified, in agreement, in cooperation, and in authority] (vs 23) I in them and you in me that they may be made perfect in one...[Why should they be made perfect? Because they aren't perfect yet, not in this physical life] and that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. (vs 24) Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am...[These verses take on a very powerful context when read them in the context of family. Here Christ is saying He wants those He is praying for to be with Him] that they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world...[Again, this takes us back to John 1:1.] (vs 25) O righteous Father, the world has not known you: but I have known you and these have known that you sent me. (vs 26) And I have declared to them your name and will declare it that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.* Christ is asking is for the God family to be increased.

Remember the word 'us' Christ used to describe the relationship He had with the Father. Notice how this little word 'us' comes up in Genesis. This takes us to a time prior to the original creation of the universe. Gen. 1:1 *In the beginning God...[Elohim - We could say in the beginning Gods] created the heavens and the earth...[Elohim created] (vs 2) And the earth was...[Or became] without form and void...*

We saw in the Restored Truths Introduction these Hebrew words mean waste and empty. Remember in Isaiah 45 it says God did not create the earth in vain. That is the same word used here. God did not create the earth in waste. It means the earth was created and then became in the condition we are reading about in verse 2. The earth had already been created, but it was not created originally without form and void. It was not created in waste and emptiness, but something happened to cause this condition. This is a very important to understand.

(v2) ...and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. God was getting ready to recreate the surface of the earth.

These verses tell us what God is and what God looks like. We know God is a family. We know God is a Creator. This is what God is. Gen. 1:26 *Then God...[Elohim] said let us...[The same us that Jesus Christ was talking about in John 17] make man in our image [let us make man to look like us] according to our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. (vs 27) So God...[Elohim] created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim he created him; male and female he created them.* Human beings are created in the image of God, to look like God. What does God look like?

Let's look at a description of Jesus Christ in His glorified state as provided to John in vision. John was one who was present for the transfiguration. When John saw this, maybe 50 years later, he probably was familiar with what he was looking at, because at the transfiguration John saw Jesus Christ in His glorified state. Rev. 1:12 *Then I...[That's John] turned to see the voice that spoke with me. Being turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands. (vs 13) And in the midst of the seven lamp-stands one like the Son of man clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. (vs14) His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire. (vs 15) His feet were like fine brass as if refined in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. (vs 16) And he had in his right hand...[Which means if he had a right hand, He has a left hand] seven stars: out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*

We are created in the image of God. Do we have a head? Yes. Do we have hair? Yes. Do we have eyes? Yes. Do we have a mouth? Yes. Do we have a chest? Yes. Do we have feet? Yes. This is the image of God. It's what God looks like.

Let's understand very clearly what the image of God is. This is speaking of an event yet to happen, but it is speaking of Christ's return to battle the armies which have been gathered at Jerusalem to fight against Him. Notice some of the descriptions provided. Rev. 19:11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and*

he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. (vs 12) His eyes were as a flame of fire...[That's the same description we read in chapter 1] and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no one knew except himself. (vs 13) And he was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...[Christ has a body here] and his name is called the Word of God. (vs 14) And the armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean. (vs 15) And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should strike the nations.

Really there is no difference between what Christ looks like in Revelation 1, which John saw nearly 2000 years ago, and what Christ is going to look like at His Second Coming.

This is what Christ looks like; but what does the Father look like? Let's notice something John writes: John 1:18 *No one has seen God...[That is God the Father] at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of his Father he has declared him...* No one has seen God the Father. So how do we know He looks like us, or we look like Him?

Notice an interesting exchange Christ has with one of His disciples named Philip. John 14:7 *If you had known me you would have known my Father also: and from now on you know him and have seen him...*[The word 'seen' is the same word that is used in John 1:18. It means to stare at, to discern clearly, to attend to. In other words, Christ is saying if you have seen me you have seen the Father. Clearly, we know this is what Philip was asking] (vs 8) *Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father...[Show Him to us. Let us see] and it is sufficient for us. (vs 9) Jesus said to him I have been with you so long and yet you have not known me Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say show us the Father? (vs 10) Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works. (vs 11) Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the works themselves.*

Christ is talking about more than just physical appearance. He is also talking about God's Spirit working in Him. Nevertheless, here the disciples were looking at a physical Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ looked just like His disciples. He had the image of a human being. This is the way He was. It is the image mankind was created by God in and that image is the same image as God the Father.

John 4:23 Two other things about God. God is spirit. We will talk more about spirit in the next Bible study. Christ says: *The hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father is seeking such to worship him...*[This is very interesting. Christ is not talking about people worshipping

him. He is talking about people worshipping the Father] (vs 24) *God is a Spirit...*[God is not flesh] *Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.*

You see, we are clay representations of what God looks like. We are subject to decay. This will be covered in the next Bible study. We are physical representations of what God looks like. God is spirit. The description of Jesus Christ we read in Revelation 1 shows you what God looks like in the spirit.

God is something else. 1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: For love is of God, and everyone who loves is born...*[That should be translated begotten] *is begotten of God and knows God.* (vs 8) *He who loves not knows not God; for God is love.*

The word 'love' is the Greek word agape. What we are talking about is a principled type of love. This is not a warm and fuzzy love, which makes our hearts twitter-patter and our hands and feet sweat. The love we are talking about is described in verse 9. *In this the love of God was manifested towards us that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live.* This takes you back to John 3:16 where it says God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. In other words He SENT Jesus Christ down to earth to DIE, paying the penalty of our sins. This is the type of love God is.

God is a family, currently consisting of two individual spirit beings, God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. God the Father and Jesus Christ have a plan allowing other individuals, who are currently physical, to eventually become spirit-born members of the God family. We see in 1 John 3 when this will actually happen. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God. Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know him...*[Why? Because when Adam and Eve partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God cut off any relationship between human beings and Himself, except for those He specifically called out of this world] (vs 2) *Beloved, now we are the children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.* God is going to begin increasing the size of His family at Christ's return.

Hopefully, in the first part of this Bible study, it is clear who and what God is, and it is clear God consists of two individual beings at the moment. These two beings have a family in relationship with one another. They both look like human being who are created in their image and likeness. This is not nebulous thinking, but very solid thinking and explanation based on the Bible. We also know God is the Creator, God is spirit and God operates on a principled love.

As we begin the second part of this Bible study, let's talk about what God is **not**.

The teachings of traditional Christianity describe God as a trinity. The trinity views God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one God. Cardinal Gibbons in his book *Faith of Our Fathers*, opens up the book in chapter 1 with the following comments. He writes:

The Catholic Church teaches that there is but one God who is infinite in knowledge, and power, and goodness and in every other perfection; who created all things by his omnipotence and governs them by his providence. In this one God there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are perfectly equal to each other.

The Bible shows us God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are not perfectly equal to each other. Notice what the Apostle Paul writes. 1 Cor. 11:3 *I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ; the head of woman is man; and the head of Christ is God.*

Clearly, Paul shows God and Christ are not equal in authority to each other. Paul provides a pattern of authority or government within the God family where one is in charge and the other is subordinate to the one in authority.

Notice what Christ says about the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 *However, when it, the Spirit of truth, has come it will guide you into all truth for it will not speak on its own authority; but whatever it hears it will speak and it will tell you things to come. (vs 14) It will glorify me for it will take of what is mine and show it to you.* The Holy Spirit operates as God directs it to do.

So when Cardinal Gibbons says God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal to each other, he is incorrect based upon the Bible. There is subordination. There is authority. There is government, with God the Father as Supreme and in top authority.

The origins of the trinity in thought and practice go back to ancient heathen religions around the world. These religions were in existence long before the establishment of the Catholic Church. Notice how the Catholic Church says just as much in its own catechism or its own book of doctrinal teachings.

In section 251 of the catechism of the Catholic Church the following is written about the trinity and of how it came into existence.

In order to articulate the dogma of the Trinity the church had to develop its own terminology with the help of certain notions of philosophical origin, the words substance, person, or hypostases, relation and so on.

What is being said is the words used to describe the trinity came from certain philosophical origins. By the way they are the same philosophical origins Paul was addressing in Athens on Mars Hill.

In doing this, (In using these terms is what the Catholic Church is talking about here) she (Referring to the church) did not submit the faith to human wisdom, but gave a new and unprecedented meaning to these terms, which would from then on be used to signify an ineffable (Which simply means something that is incapable of being expressed in words) mystery (Or a mystery that is not able to be understood. It is not able to be explained in words) infinitely beyond all that we can humanly understand.

The trinity was developed using terminology of ancient philosophical teachings. It was done in such a way human beings can't understand it. The Catholic Church readily admits the trinity is not something people can humanly comprehend, although they are expected to accept it. If they reject it, they are considered a heretic.

In Section 252 the Catechism explains how the terms which came from ancient philosophical teachings are used to describe God.

The church uses:

- 1. The term substance, rendered also at times by essence or nature, to designate the divine being in its unity.*
- 2. The term person, or hypostasis, to designate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them.*
- 3. The term relation to designate the fact that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others.*

It is important for us to understand as members of God's Church the terms substance, person, hypostasis and relation came from Greek philosophy. These terms were used to describe life. They came from the reasoning of human beings. These terms were incorporated by the Catholic Church to deceive people about who and what God really is.

In 325 AD at the Council of Nicea the view of God as a trinity got its start and continues to be promoted today. About 50 years after Nicea, the actual adoption of the trinity as the official teaching on who and what God is was

adopted. Also at the Council of Nicea, Arianism, which is another false concept about who and what God is, was rejected. By default the teaching of a fellow named Anathesais was adopted. This was the trinity teaching which came out of Egypt where Anathesais was from and educated. This teaching gained traction and 50 years later at the Council of Constantinople, it was officially adopted as the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Many will turn in the Bible to 1 John 5 to prove God is a trinity. Let's turn there to see if this is actually true. 1 John 5:7 *For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.* (vs 8) *There are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, the water and the blood. These three agree as one.*

If this is not marked in your Bible, you might want to mark it. You might want to put a bracket before the two words 'in heaven'. Then put another bracket after the words in verse 8 'on earth'. The following phrase should be bracketed: *[In heaven the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit and these three are one. (vs 8) And there are three that bear witness on earth.]* You should make a notation in your Bible that this section of verses 7 and 8 are not found in John's manuscript. This phrase or set of words was not a part of the original Greek manuscript. It was added later, much later, for the purpose of promoting the teaching of the Trinity. Much like the Holy Spirit being described by the pronoun 'he'. It should be 'it' because the Holy Spirit is not a person. It is a thing. It is something, but it is not a person. This is why we would use the pronoun 'it' to describe the Holy Spirit as opposed to using the pronoun 'he'. Therefore, 1 John 5:7-8 should read: *For there are three that bear witness: the spirit, the water and the blood. These three agree as one.*

Does this verse prove God is a trinity? No, not when we read it as it was originally inspired. Let's go back and take a look at it. 1 John 5:8 *For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree as one...*

What do the Spirit, the water and the blood represent and why do they agree as one? The spirit represents the down payment of God's Holy Spirit when a person receives it after repentance and baptism, which is what the water symbolizes. The blood is referring to the blood of Jesus Christ and applies to the forgiveness of sins. These three things work together, and when we repent God the Father can then apply the blood of Jesus Christ to our sins. When baptized we are picturing the burial of the 'old man'. The resurrection of the new man is now possible with the giving of the Holy Spirit. These three things agreeing as one means these three things work together in helping the begetting of a new child of God. We will talk about this as this study series proceeds.

If you want to know more about the trinity it is suggested to obtain a copy of [Is God a Trinity?](#) by George L. Johnson. It is a booklet once produced by the Worldwide Church of God. It was produced in the early 1970s. It

gives quite a breakdown of the origins of the trinity, how it developed, and what it is. Basically, this study has just hit the highlights. If you don't have this booklet a link to it has been provided above.

The fact is, God is not a trinity. The trinity is an idolatrous teaching. It is a teaching which closes God off from being properly understood. People will call it blasphemy to say so and to say human beings can become part of the God family. It is hard to grasp we can become members of the God family. Yet this is what the Bible specifically says is possible. This point will become clearer as you study through this series of Bible studies.

When we get to the end of this series and have put it all together then we will have a clear picture of the fundamental truths of God's Church.

The Bible teaches God is not a trinity. Yet in the world of traditional Christianity this is exactly what people are taught to believe God is.

Let's change gears for a minute and ask the following question: What is the purpose of God's Church? Christ tells the sixth era of His Church, now past, called Philadelphia:

Rev. 3:11 *Behold, I am coming quickly...*[Christ is telling this group of people My return is not far off] *hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown...*

This crown is the victory or "stephanos" crown, to be given to those of God's Church who fulfill God's calling. Anciently the winner in the Olympic Games was given a victory crown. Today, winners are given a gold medal. Members of God's Church now have to hold fast to God's Truth, so no one takes the victory crown away from us. To do this there are some important points we need to really understand.

It's very important to understand what the Restored Truths are; but it is also very important to know how to maintain these Restored Truths. In order to hold fast God's people must know what to hold fast to. If you are looking to grab hold of something to keep you from falling off the edge of a building or from falling into a raging river, you want to grab hold of something solid that is not going to give way. If we are going to hold fast to what Christ is telling God's Church to hold fast to, God's Church needs to know what it is they have to hold fast to.

What must be held fast to are the Restored Truths learned from the Bible when God called us into His Church. Who did we learn these Restored Truths from? We learned them through one man whose name was Herbert W. Armstrong.

Let's understand how these Truths, as originally put into God's Church by Jesus Christ, were undermined, and the problems which developed within God's Church. Breaking into the thought - Rev. 2:4 - Christ says: *I have this against you, that you have left your first love...*[This 'first love' applies to the attitude people had toward the truths Jesus Christ established in God's Church] (vs 5) *Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Repent and do the first works or else I will come from you quickly and move your lamp-stand from its place unless you repent.* This happened because Ephesus didn't repent. Clearly we see these truths have to be maintained, adhered to, and followed. How were these first century Christians influenced to leave their first love?

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints...*[Jude is speaking of the truths originally put into God's Church] (vs 4) *For certain men have crept in unnoticed...*[People didn't realize who these men were] *who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In other words, these individuals were denying the very family of God because the 'Lord God' is referring to God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. By the way, where is the Holy Spirit mentioned here? It's not is it? Jude does not recognize the Holy Spirit as part of the God family.

To earnestly contend for the faith once delivered one must know how to contend for the truth. To be effective contenders we must know what God's truth first. Know how to maintain God's truth in our lives. And always be ready to defend God's truth from all attacks. The Scriptures are pretty clear on these points. God's people must have the desire and ability to fight and contend for the truth to protect it. Do you know have this desire? And do you know how to defend it?

To help you evaluate yourself, consider the following questions:

First: Do you really know what happened in God's Church after the death of Mr. Armstrong? Do you really comprehend what happened and how God's Truth was undermined?

Second: Do you understand how Satan was able to come in and deceive people about God's Restored Truths?

If we are to retain the Restored Truths God put back into His Church through Mr. Armstrong, we must see how Satan worked to undermine those Truths. Satan did such a great job of undermining these Truths down through

history that Christ describes the Sardis era as alive physically, but dead spiritually. This occurred because God's Church did not hold fast to those Truths. Which is why God had to bring Mr. Armstrong along and restore these Truths back into His Church.

How was Satan so effective in undermining the Restored Truths? Jude 1:4 tells us how – *Certain men crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny our only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jude is very specific the undermining of God's Truth comes from men within the ministry. It is the ministry who attacks and distorts God's Truth. It is the ministry that leads God's people astray. The Bible is full of examples of these corrupt, self-serving individuals intermingle error with God's Truth to lead people away from God.

To help us better contend here is some information to illustrate how the demise of the Worldwide Church of God occurred. These are firsthand accounts which explain how God's Restored Truths were undermined. God's people need to know the process and methods by which Satan the devil works. Once this is understood, you can stand up against it and not be led astray by such foolishness.

First of all, it is very important to pay attention to terminology. Here is an example. The following statement comes from the 1993 'Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God' on the topic of God. This was the belief at that time.

*God, by the testimony of scripture is one divine being in three eternal, yet distinct, hypostases
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Well – is God, by the testimony of scripture three distinct hypostases? No! He is not. Scripture says there are two distinct beings that define who God is. Were you that confident in your belief in 1993? Could you speak that strongly about it in 1993? Remember to pay attention to terminology.

Second – Don't settle for deception and lies. Here is an illustration. In January/February 1991 from, 'Views You Can Use.' a senior WCG minister gave a lecture at the Trinity Evangelical School, in which he stated:

The Worldwide Church of God teaches the full divinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and affirms the oneness of God. The Worldwide Church of God teaches the full divinity of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions. The doctrine of grace is as fundamental to Christianity as the doctrine of the nature of God. Even

though the WCG considers some positions of the Trinity to be heretical, for example, all forms of Arianism (Which had been rejected hundreds of years prior) it seized the Eastern/Western Protestant and modernist views of the nature of God as genuine attempts to reach a deeper understanding of God's nature.

What this minister is discussing goes beyond God being a trinity, but: what does God look like, who is God, what is He made of. This lecture was given in 1991, but notice in the July 22, 1991 edition of the Worldwide News in the Personal section, Pastor General Joseph Tkach said this in responding to a person's question:

How are we any different from the Protestant churches? What makes us unique anymore? At the risk of sounding silly let me remind you of just a few ways in which we differ (Referring to the WCG). We do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity.

Here is a minister, under Mr. Tkach's authority, in God's Church saying the WCG teaches the full divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and affirms the oneness of God. In other words, the WCG believes in and teaches God is a trinity. Yet to a person's question in the Worldwide News which went out to the brethren, Mr. Tkach said specifically: "We do not believe the doctrine of the trinity." This is deception and lies in action.

At this point it would be wise to remember what James said, "a double-minded man (or organization) (is), unstable in all his ways."

Were you aware of this information? Do you know in 1991 a WCG minister was telling the world the WCG endorsed the trinity while the Pastor General was telling the WCG membership, no, we don't? Upon giving this lecture this minister should have been removed from the congregation. Unfortunately he was never removed. Don't settle for deception and lies.

Third – Don't assume any teaching as biblical truth. The following example comes from Mr. Tkach written in the August 24, 1993 Pastor General's Report. This was a publication sent out to God's ministers.

Speaking on the trinity notice what Mr. Tkach said. This is two full years after his comments in the 1991 Worldwide News that the Church did not believe in the trinity. To the ministry he wrote:

In this letter I want to focus on why we have chosen hypostases over the word persons. (Remember: pay attention to terminology.) When we express the biblical truth that God is one and at the same time three, we need to use words that do not imply three Gods, or three separate God beings.

Let's highlight Mr. Tkach's words when he says "when we express the biblical truth that God is one". God is one family, but that is not what Mr. Tkach is talking about. Mr. Tkach is talking about God as one God. So, what Mr. Tkach is talking about was not a biblical truth as established in the scriptures. How many people pick up on what Mr. Tkach wrote? How many ministers shared what he wrote with their congregations? Don't assume any teaching as biblical truth. PROVE IT FIRST (I Thes. 5:21).

Do not assume anything presented to you in regards to the Bible immediately as biblical truth or even the examples given here. These sources, which have been presented in this Bible Study, are out in the public domain so you can check them out for yourself.

Don't assume anything! Find it out! Study it out! Prove it to yourself to be true! Once you have done this first, then you can accept it. This approach takes work. Satan the devil knows we are mentally lazy, that we just want to accept what people say. If we are to become members of God's ruling family, we cannot be lazy!

Fourth – Know what your Bible says. The following comes from Mr. Tkach again, this time in the August 3, 1993 edition of the Worldwide News from the Personal section. Mr. Tkach writes the following:

I was first challenged on this point when I put in the Personal in the Plain Truth in which I set forth the traditional arguments against the Trinity. In response I received a letter from a priest (it is believed this is from an individual not part of God's Church) who said he had respected the Plain Truth but now realized we had no idea of what we were talking about. I put several men to work on it. What we began to find after a short time was that most of what we had written on the development and history of the Trinity Doctrine was at best superficial and based on misunderstanding and at worst just plain false. Mr. Armstrong, as I said, was simply never formally challenged on this point or I am confident he would have changed it himself.

Would he?

From Mr. Armstrong's sermon Mission of the Philadelphia Church Era delivered on December 17, 1983, in speaking about the Restored Truth of 'Who and What God Is' Mr. Armstrong said:

No religion on earth knows who and what God is, no religion on earth. Billy Graham doesn't know it. Jerry Falwell doesn't know it. Roman Catholics don't know. God is not a trinity. God is not a single person. God is a family of persons and the family began with God and the Word. You read of that in John 1:1-5. You read of it in Genesis 1 beginning with verse 1. You should learn about God first.

This is why this topic has been chosen as Restored Truth #1 in this series. It is based on Mr. Armstrong's recommendation. God is a family. Mr. Armstrong said: *It began with the two and we can be born into that family.*

In holding fast to God's Restored Truths there are four things you need to do:

1. You need to be able to understand and explain each restored truth.

This does not mean to explain in conversation. You need to be able to explain by turning to the places in our bibles which specifically state who and what God is.

2. You also need to understand the major points of false doctrine which contradict each Restored Truth.

This is why getting the booklet '*Is God a Trinity?*' will be helpful. It provides you the history about the trinity. It will explain the false teaching. It will help you better understand this idolatrous teaching Satan has pawned off on the world.

3. You need to understand how Satan works to undermine God's truth.

Satan doesn't usually come at people with a full frontal assault. He starts by nipping at your heels. He works subtly in ways he hopes you are not aware of and can't pick up on. Once you have slightly accepted something he's put forth, he allows your human reasoning to kick in. This leads you to accept what he has put forth eventually convincing yourself 'oh, that's not too bad.'

4. You must understand it is your responsibility to protect and defend these Restored Truths.

How can you do this if you don't know what these Truths are? How can you do this if you don't know what false counterfeits are out there? How can you defend these Truths, if you don't recognize the subtlety of Satan the devil? The answer is you can't. You can't protect them! You can't defend them! And you can't build on them!

Hopefully, after going through this Bible study, you better understand Christ's words in Revelation 3:11 when He tells remaining Philadelphian Christians alive during the Laodicean era: *Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown.*