

How Many Persons Are in the Godhead? – part one

by Heath Rogers

Oneness Pentecostals claim that the Godhead (the state of being God) consists of only one Person who has simply manifested Himself in various ways and with different identities (as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). What does the Bible teach about the composition of the Godhead?

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all referred to as "God" in the Scriptures (John 6:25; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 5:3-4). All of the attributes of being God are found in each One. That is to say, each One is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, holy, eternal, etc.

However, each One also displays a personality. Personality is defined as "the quality or fact of being a particular person; personal identity, individuality" (Webster's New World College Dictionary). All three display the qualities of being an individual. The **Father** wills (Matt. 7:21), speaks (Matt. 3:17), works (John 5:17), knows (Mark 13:32), sees (Matt. 6:6), hears (John 11:41), etc. The **Son** wills (John 5:21), works (John 5:17), knows (John 10:14), judges (John 5:22), reveals (Luke 10:22), etc. The **Holy Spirit** wills (1 Cor. 12:11), knows (1 Cor. 2:10-11), reveals (John 16:13), speaks (1 Tim. 4:1), appoints (Acts 20:28), etc.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate and distinct personalities. The Godhead is composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (that is, all three are identified as God). Therefore, the Godhead is composed of three separate and distinct persons.

A plurality of individuals being referred to as "one" is not unheard of in the Scriptures. Jesus prayed that all believers would be "one" (John 17:20-21). Paul said that members of a local church are "one" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). He also said that a husband and wife become "one" (Ephesians 5:31). Are we to understand that all believers give up their individuality? Do all members of a local church cease being individuals? When we look at a married couple, do we see one person or two? There is a sense in which these people are one, yet they are still individuals with their own personalities. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all one, but they are not one person. They are separate persons within the one Godhead.

Deuteronomy 6:4 is sometimes quoted as *proof* that there is only one person in the Godhead: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" However, the purpose of this verse is not to deny a plurality of persons in the Godhead. The word Hebrew word for "God" is itself a plural or group term, stating plainly that the Lord Jehovah is a plural being. The context of this verse shows that the children of Israel were being warned against adopting the gods of the nations that they are going in to possess: "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you." (verse 14). Israel had only one God. Their devotion was not to be shared with a plurality of different gods like the pagans around them. Anytime a verse is used to *prove* there is one person in the Godhead, look at the context and see if it isn't warning against idolatry.

Anyone can grab a few verses and attempt to make the Bible teach just about anything. However, if that teaching contradicts the obvious meaning of plain passages of Scripture, it must be rejected as false. Next week, we will show you a few of the many passages that contradict the Oneness doctrine.