

Hear O Israel – The Lord Our God is One

Text

Deut. 6:4-5 ⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Mark 12:28-34 ²⁸ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” ²⁹ Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

³² So the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

CHAPTER 9

1 Cor. 8:6 *For us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.*

Isa. 45:5-7 (NIV) ⁵ *I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. ⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.*

Isa. 45:12 (NIV) *It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts.*

Isa. 45:15-25 (NIV) ¹⁵ *Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Saviour of Israel. ¹⁶ All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together.*

¹⁷ *But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting. ¹⁸ For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made*

CHAPTER 9

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. ¹⁹ I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right.

²⁰ Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. ²¹ Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none but me.

²² Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

²³ 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. ²⁴ They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’”

All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. ²⁵ But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him.

CHAPTER 9

Memory Verse ('The Shema')

Deut. 6:4 *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God,
the Lord is one!*

Introduction

Every debate about the Godhead starts here. Jesus Himself called 'The Shema' (Deut. 6:4) the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12:29). If we get "God is One" wrong, everything else gets twisted. The Shema was not meant to be a trivia verse. It was Israel's daily confession in a world full of many gods.

Objective

To establish from Scripture that God is One, explain the meaning of "one" in its Hebrew context, and show how Father, Son, and Spirit are the one God without confusion.

Presentation

1. What "One" Means in the Shema

a) The Hebrew word is 'echad' – unity, not solitary isolation. It is used for one cluster of grapes (Num. 13:23), one people (Gen. 11:6).

CHAPTER 9

b) Israel was surrounded by polytheism. The Shema was a line in the sand: Jehovah alone is God.

c) This is monotheism, not modalism or tritheism. One God, not three gods.

2. The New Testament Affirms the Same One God

a) Jesus quotes the Shema and agrees with the scribe: “You are right ... there is no one else besides Him” (Mark 12:32).

b) Paul: “There is no God but one ... for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live” (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

c) The New Testament does not introduce a new god. It reveals the identity of the one God more fully.

3. Father, Son, and Spirit as the One God

a) God the Father

God is called the Father by Moses in Deut. 32:6, and by Jesus in John 6:27:

CHAPTER 9

Deut. 32:6 *Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?*

John 6:27 *Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.*

In the Old Testament the Lord (YHWH, “the Father”) is the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 1:4), He is Our Redeemer (Isa. 41:14), He inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). He is God, and there is no other (Isa. 45:5).

In the New Testament, we learn through Jesus that “God is Spirit” (John 4:24) and “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). He dwells in the unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), “the only true God” (John 17:3).

God forms the light and creates darkness (Isa. 45:7). He created Jacob and formed Israel (Isa. 43:1). He is the “King of glory” (Ps. 24:10). He does not change (Mal. 3:6).

b) God the Son

The Son is called God (John 1:1, John 20:28). He is “the Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:8, Jam. 2:1). He is

CHAPTER 9

“the Word” and “the Word of God” (Rev. 19:13, and John 1:1-4):

John 1:1-4 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

He is the light of the world (John 8:12).

The Father forms the light (Gen. 1:3), creates darkness (Isa. 45:17), and divides the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4). The Son is the light that we could see and touch (John 1:14); the Son is manifested so that the Father can make that same separation in us (1 John 3:8).

The Son is the vehicle by which light and dark are to be separated: He is the vine, and the Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1). He bears witness to the truth (John 18:37).

The Father is the ‘Creator’; the Son, whilst existing from the beginning, is ‘created’ as the Son of Man. The Father has ‘made’ him as the Son of Man: He was made a little lower than the angels (Heb.2:7), made “perfect through

CHAPTER 9

sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). The Father has sanctified the Son (John 10:36). He is “formed”, the first and last God that is “formed”:

Isa. 43:10 *“You are My witnesses,” says the Lord, “And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.*

The worlds are made for the Son who will inherit all things and who is the ‘end’ (purpose / mission) – a sinless world, a world of light only. In Christ there is eternal life. We are called “out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The Father builds the temple, the Son is the foundation stone of the spiritual temple. The one who builds the temple is greater than the temple; “he who builds all things is God” (Heb. 3:4).

The Son compared His crucifixion to Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness:

John 3:14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*

The event to which He alluded is described in Num. 21:8-9:

CHAPTER 9

Num. 21:8-9 ⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

The children of Israel were not healed by the bronze serpent, they were healed by the Lord. The bronze serpent was the ‘visible sign’ that they trusted for healing, but the healing was of the Lord. The serpent became a stumbling block for them, an idol which they worshipped by burning incense to it (2 Ki. 18:4). Hezekiah destroyed it because the object designed to point Israel to the Lord, the Creator, had become an idol competing with the Lord.

We know that all things that happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness are for our warning (1 Cor. 10:11). When we put our faith in Christ as Son, the object of our worship is still the Father, as Creator. As we were taught in Matt. 6:9-13, we pray to and worship Our Father in heaven.

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

CHAPTER 9

We believe in the name of Jesus (meaning “He will save”), and we obey Jesus’s commands, trusting him for our salvation, and honouring Him, but our worship is directed to His Father and our Father.

We are “sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1). God grafts us into the tree, God translates us into the kingdom.

We come to the Father through Jesus; we, “as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Note that, as Peter bears witness in this important speech in Acts 3, made after Peter and John healed a lame man, Jesus is the Prophet promised by Moses in Deut. 18:18:

Acts 3:12-23 ¹²When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had

CHAPTER 9

decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'"

Just as Jesus testified to the woman at the well that He was the one that would “teach us all things” (John 4:26), Peter is saying that Jesus is

CHAPTER 9

the fulfilment of God's promise in Deut. 18:18, to raise up a prophet who would speak God's words. Anyone who will not hear and obey that prophet will be "required of him".

Deut. 18:15-19 ¹⁵ *The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,* ¹⁶ *according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'* ¹⁷ *"And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him."*

What does He mean by "I will require it of him"? Peter says the man that does not obey will be 'cut off'. The passage from Deut. 18 above echoes the contract made between Jacob and Laban in Gen. 30:25-43, which relates the story of how Jacob 'provides for his house' from Laban's flocks. Jacob is the hired shepherd whose wages are to be all of the blemished goats and lambs. Jacob

CHAPTER 9

says “every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if it is with me” (Gen. 30:33).

In other words, Laban (whose name means “white”) is going to keep all of the unblemished flocks, but give all of the blemished flocks to Jacob. By what might in some sense be considered ‘sleight of hand’ (putting ‘peeled rods’ of poplar etc before the strong animals when they were drinking), Jacob ‘siphoned off’ the strong flocks for himself, but left the weak animals to Laban. Thus did Jacob appropriate Laban’s flocks. But note that the weak are the white ones, the unblemished ones, the ones “unspotted by the flesh”. The strong are many but blemished. In Isa. 53:12 God says that He will divide His suffering servant “a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” Those who are Christ’s are not blemished. The ‘strong one’ gets the blemished; God chooses “the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1:27).

God tells us in Deut. 18:19 that whoever does not obey Christ – all the disobedient (“blemished”) -

CHAPTER 9

shall be required of Christ. God only wants the unblemished in the kingdom of His dear Son. Those outside the kingdom God judges (1 Cor. 5:13).

Our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son:

1 John 1:2-3 ²*The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

The Father put all things into the Son's hands and the Son acts as God. Just as the name "Israel" (who is "formed" – Isa. 43:1) means 'He will rule as God', so the Son rules as God. The model is similar to that of Joseph, who is 'second-in-command' to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:40). Pharaoh says to Joseph: "Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

The Son is at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19, Acts 7:56, Heb. 1:3). He has authority to forgive

CHAPTER 9

sins (Mark 2:5-7, 1 John 2:1) and makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34).

Note that in the Bible, ‘the right hand’ denotes the ‘place of authority, power, and favour’ (see for example Ps. 48:10).

The Father effectively tells the Son to take the position of full authority until everything is put under His feet, at which point he will hand the kingdom back (1 Cor. 15:25-28). Note verse 27: “But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted” – God is still supreme.

The plan of redemption being carried out by the Father, through the Son, is as follows:

(1) Eternity past: One God, Spirit, “YHWH”, No flesh.

(2) Incarnation: that One God sanctifies and manifests Himself as the Son of God in order to redeem us (Isa. 41:14, John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16).

(3) Now: that Man, Jesus, is seated at the right hand (meaning He has all authority - Matt 28:18). He is making intercession for us, ruling and putting enemies down. He is still under the Father’s authority.

CHAPTER 9

(4) Eternity future: When the job is done, the Son - the flesh, the Mediator role - delivers everything back. And “God may be all in all” again, i.e. God the Creator.

*Isa. 43:10 ...Before Me there was no God formed,
Nor shall there be after Me.*

Jesus represents God in the flesh, “the Word made flesh”. But while in flesh He was a servant in total subjection to the Father (John 5:19), sent by the Father. He prayed to the Father (John 17). He could of Himself do nothing (John 5:30); the words He spoke were not His words but the Father’s (John 12:49); he obeyed the Father unto death (John 14:31).

The ‘right hand’ picture (Ps. 110) shows us the relationship between Father and Son during the time of redemption.

The Father is the Lord of the Old Testament, God. He sanctified Himself in a Son-role to save us. He now reigns as that Son at the right hand of power. When all is restored, the Son gives the kingdom back so that the ONE God – the Creator - can be “all in all”.

CHAPTER 9

There are not two gods. There is ONE god, who sanctified Himself as the Son in the flesh, did the work, and is bringing us back to Himself.

The Son is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person (Heb. 1:3), and is called God by the Father:

Heb. 1:8 *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

In the Son dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). All things were created through Him and for Him.

In Revelation, the Son is revealed to be the “King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:16), the same as God in 1 Tim. 6:15-16: “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power.”

He “searches the minds and hearts.. and will give to each one of us according to our works” (Rev. 2:23). The judge in the Old Testament and the

CHAPTER 9

judge of Revelation are the same: vengeance belongs to the Lord (Deut. 32:35, Rom. 12:19).

Jesus does not change. He is the same yesterday, and today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

We wait for His appearing – “the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Tit. 2:13-14).

c) God the Spirit

“God is Spirit” (John 4:24), and that Spirit is holy, and that Spirit is Christ’s, and that Spirit is the Father’s. “The Lord is that Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17).

The great gift of salvation is the gift of Christ’s Spirit dwelling in us.

Note that Paul uses these expressions interchangeably to describe this indwelling:

- * “Spirit of God in you”.
- * “God dwells in you”.
- * “Christ dwells in you”.
- * “Christ in you, the hope of glory”.

CHAPTER 9

They all reference the same Spirit dwelling in us.

The Spirit is personal, not a force. Jesus calls Him “the Spirit of Truth”, but also “the Helper” or “Comforter” (depending on translation). He comes in person, bearing witness as well as the disciples. As the “Helper” in this world He is also in subjection in so far as He speaks what he hears:

1 John 16:12-15¹² *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”*

John 14:25-26²⁵ *“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”*

John 15:26-27²⁶ *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of*

CHAPTER 9

Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

The Father sent the Son. The Son prayed, and the Father and Son together send the Spirit. But it is still the ONE Spirit of God (Eph. 4:4).

d) God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit are ONE

The distinction is in person, not essence.

There is one true God, the Creator, who eternally exists as the Father, the “invisible God”, dwelling in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), who is manifested as His Son, Jesus Christ, and lives in believers by His Spirit.

He formed the light, He is light, and He is separating light from darkness in us right now.

Manifested in the flesh, Jesus is the image of the Father (John 17:3):

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9) and we can see the Father

CHAPTER 9

through Him (John 14:9). He fully reveals the Father, and is fully submitted in will to the Father. The Father works through the Son: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

The Spirit is not the Son (John 16:13-14); He is the Helper who dwells in us and guides us to all truth.

John 16:13-14 ¹³ *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.* ¹⁴ *He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

The Son glorifies the Father, the Spirit glorifies the Son. But all are called God, and all are One.

To obey Christ as we must, we pray to and worship the Father, the Creator, in spirit and truth.

The Father wills, the Son obeys, the Spirit applies. One will, one purpose, one God.

Eph. 4:4-6 ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

CHAPTER 9

Isa. 43:10 *“You are My witnesses,” says the LORD,
“And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may
know and believe Me, And understand that I am He.
Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there
be after Me.”*

4. Why This Matters Practically

- a) Worship: We worship one God through Christ in the Spirit.
- b) Stability: If God is one, His purpose and character do not contradict.
- c) Evangelism: We can answer Muslims, Jews, and sceptics clearly without backing into tritheism.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What does the Hebrew word ‘echad’ teach us about God’s oneness?
 - * ‘Echad’ means a compound unity, not solitary isolation. It is used for one cluster of grapes (Num. 13:23) and one people (Gen. 11:6). The Shema teaches that Jehovah alone is God, but it does not rule out a unity of persons within that one God.

CHAPTER 9

2. How does Jesus affirm the Shema in Mark 12:29-32?

- * Jesus quotes Deut. 6:4 word for word: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” He calls it the first and greatest commandment. When the scribe agrees and says “there is no one else besides Him”, Jesus tells him he is not far from the kingdom (Mark 12:32-34). Jesus affirms that the one God of Israel is the God He came to reveal.

3. Give one verse that shows God the Father, one that shows God the Son, and one that shows God the Spirit.

- * God the Father: “God the Father has set his seal on him.” (John 6:27)
- * God the Son: “The Word was God.” (John 1:1) Also Thomas says to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)
- * God the Spirit: Acts 5:3-4 – Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. Also 2 Cor. 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

CHAPTER 9

4. Why is it important to hold both “God is one” and “Father, Son, Spirit” together?
- * If you drop “God is one,” you fall into tritheism – three gods. If you drop “Father, Son, Spirit,” you fall into modalism – one person wearing three masks. Holding both keeps us faithful to Scripture: one God in essence, three persons in relationship, the Father above all. We worship the Father by His Spirit in the name of the Son.

Prayer

Lord, You are one. Help me to know You as You have revealed Yourself - Father, Son, and Spirit - without dividing You or confusing You. Let this truth shape my worship and my witness. Amen.