

THE WORD 'GOD'

In several Biblical texts, Jesus was referred to 'god' and some people use that fact to suggest that it proves Jesus is God or a god on the same level of supremacy with the Father (YHWH). This booklet will examine verses found in Scripture and put them into context as they relate to Jesus and others in the Bible.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.” John 20:28. This text appears to suggest that Jesus is God. Thomas made that statement after confirming that Jesus who stood before him was the resurrected Christ of God. We need little explanation of the expression 'lord' since Jesus was the Christ or Messiah and he was called that various times during his ministry. But God? Thomas was in awe of the power of God and Jesus was the first ever to be resurrected so it is understandable if he stated 'my God', having witnessed the power of God. Remember, Thomas initially doubted that Jesus was resurrected since it would be such an unbelievable occurrence so for him to confirm that the once dead Jesus was risen by the power of God, it is easy to understand why he would exclaim as he did. In another aspect, Jesus was a 'god' to Thomas insofar that Jesus was the chief aspiration of Thomas' love, with the exception of his love for the heavenly Father. The statement made by Thomas was glorifying two entities in one statement: he was glorying in the fact that his leader was alive after having been executed by the Romans and glorifying God who brought his leader back to life. He did NOT say “My Lord is God Almighty”. Thomas' remarks were not blasphemous since he did not use the word 'god' in reference to Jesus being the supreme deity, God the Father. Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus never indicated in Scripture that he was God the Father but always spoke of the Father as a separate entity and often prayed to Him.

“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. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Hebrews 1:8, 9. There is no doubt this passage causes confusion given the popular belief among the mainstream Christian churches that Jesus is God. Note that this passage from Hebrews is a quote from Psalms 45:6, 7. One can easily see how the second verse applies to both King David and his descendant, Jesus of Nazareth. God the Father blessed both King David and Jesus and both were chosen by God to lead his people. King David was anointed by the prophet Samuel in accordance with God's instruction (1 Samuel 16:1 to 13) and Jesus was accepted by God at his baptism (Matthew 3:13 to 17; Mark 1:9 to 11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:29 to 34). Jesus, once accepted by God as His Son, had become the Messiah and was elevated to an esteemed position amongst his brethren by God but was nonetheless, not God. As explained for the verse from the book of John, Jesus was a 'god' to those that followed him seeing that he is the object of their faith and possessed the Word of God which is necessary for our salvation.

To assist the reader with understanding how one can be a 'god' without being the Eternal Father, we should examine examples from the Scriptures where individuals, other than Jesus, were considered 'gods' and not in the mystical sense. Let us first examine Genesis 3:5: ***“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof [that is, consume within the mind], then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”*** In this verse, Satan lured Eve by tempting her with a vanity wherein she imagined herself in a more elevated position than she had been created in at the beginning. Mankind was created to be gods in the sense that we are the custodians of this earth and have the ability to dominate and subdue it. We also have the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. In contrast to the animal kingdom, we can create purpose within our lives and live with self-direction. We can choose to be led by greed and selfishness or live a 'godly' life of selflessness and love. Man was the pinnacle of God's creation and was made in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). We are the gods of this earth and rule it until that time that God our Father redeems His created earth.

Now let's read Psalms 82:1: ***“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the gods.”*** This verse speaks of godliness in the sense of the authority of God's Word.

The children of Israel were the chosen, called-out people of God through Abraham. The nation of Israel is often referred to in the scriptures as a congregation and they were to be an example of righteousness to the surrounding heathen nations. The Israelites were considered gods in that they had within their grasp access to the Word of God. Let us read verse 6 of the same chapter: ***"I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most High."*** Even when conquered by other nations, the wisdom and knowledge of the Israelites were employed in the courts of their conquerors (eg. Daniel and his three companions). They were looked upon with awe and admiration for the power of God that was demonstrated through them. Despite this glory granted to them, they were obviously not on the same level as God Almighty.

We should be aware that 'god' is used to represent the supreme deity, the Father of the Universe, however, the word also applies to mortal or inanimate objects. Most of us are well acquainted with ancient history wherein many old civilizations created their gods of worship which they made out of stone, metal, wood, and so on. Mankind has also worshipped things in nature itself, such as the moon, sun, fire, trees, animals and even other men or women. As described previously, persons in authority or leaders who give inspiration to their followers can also be considered gods. Jesus as the Christ of God can instill within us love and inspiration for our Heavenly Father. It can be said that God the Father, Jesus the Christ and our biological father are all gods to us as we look up to them and devote ourselves in different ways to them. Naturally, God the Father should reign supreme over all other objects of our love and devotion.

If we return to Hebrews 1:8 having discussed the permutations of the meaning of god, we see that Jesus was glorified by God Almighty but was not God Himself. God promised King David that his kingdom would last forever and it did with Jesus' sacrifice on behalf of all mankind. Jesus was one of a kind, that is, the only one in human history to commit his entire being to the service of God the Father, therefore, he is worthy of our love, attention and focus since he represents the Word of God which can save us.

"For the LORD your God is God of gods..." Deuteronomy 10:17. Let us not become confused over the usage of the word 'god' as many people do. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians clarifies the hierarchy wherein Jesus is subject to God's rule: ***"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."*** I Corinthians 11:3. An even more potent verse clarifying that Jesus is in subjection to God can be found in I Corinthians 15:28: ***"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."*** Hence, we do not believe that Jesus is God but is deserving of our love and focus in our lives, being the representative of God's Word.