

THE ONENESS OF GOD



Bird's Eye View of Lesson

The Lord appears to Moses in the burning bush, asking him to lead the children of Israel to freedom. Moses wants to know who he should say is sending him and is told, “I AM.” Interestingly, the name I AM reappears in the New Testament and is used by Jesus. Once, it makes a crowd of people so angry that they get ready to stone Him. Many different names are used for the Lord in the Word. Each name communicates a different aspect or quality of the Lord. Together, they give us a picture of one God. We can understand how these different qualities make one Lord by picturing Him as the angels see Him in heaven—as the spiritual Sun. Its heat pictures the Lord’s Divine love, its light pictures His wisdom. The Divine Proceeding or Holy Spirit are pictured by the light and warmth streaming out from the sun.

READINGS FROM THE WORD

In the Old and New Testaments the Lord is called by many different names. Each name presents a different picture of Him. As you read this lesson, reflect on how these different aspects of the Lord can be seen as one God.

The Lord Himself Appears to Moses

Moses is born while the Israelites are slaves in Egypt. As a young adult, he sees an Egyptian beating an Israelite, kills him and hides his body in the sand. Finding that this secret has been discovered he runs away to Midian.

[While tending flocks in the desert] the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.... God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said...“I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:2,4,6).

God asks Moses to lead the children of Israel to freedom. But Moses has a question:

“When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you....’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations” (Exodus 3:13-15).



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A Powerful Name

Jehovah, the Almighty, Lamb of God, Alpha and Omega, Lord, Father, Mighty God, are just a few of the names used in the Word for the Lord. When Jesus was in the world, people wondered who He was. What was His relationship with the God they read about in the Old Testament? When a man asks Him “Who are You?” (John 8:25) Jesus replies, “He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him... He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:26,29). The conversation ends when Jesus uses a powerful name, asserting that Jehovah and Jesus are one.

“Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them... (John 8:58-59).

The truth that Jehovah and Jesus are one provoked His listeners, but towards the end of His life on earth Jesus refers to the name “I AM” yet again. When Judas betrays Him by guiding a detachment of Roman soldiers to Gethsemane where Jesus is praying, He says:

“Whom are you seeking?” They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I AM.” And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, “I AM,” they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6).

How Do the Angels See God?

People of different faiths recognize the Lord by many names and in many forms. When people pass from this world into the spiritual world, the Lord gently leads them to see and understand Him as clearly as they can.

Newcomers to heaven are taught with utmost care that God is one (*Arcana Coelestia* 3704).

We can understand the Lord more completely when we know the three aspects of His life—His Love, His Wisdom and His Proceeding (Holy Spirit). These aspects are called the trine or Trinity, and together they make one Lord. (The word “trinity” means three similar things that are seen as one group or unit *e.g.* a *tri*-angle.)

The angels love the Lord above everything, and hold Him as the center and source of their lives. In the natural world, the sun is the source of energy and life. In a similar way the angels see the Lord as the Sun of heaven, the source of all spiritual life. The spiritual Sun gives us a wonderful way to understand how the three aspects of the Trinity make one God. The Lord’s love is the heat of the Sun, His truth is its light, and His Proceeding (Holy Spirit) is the eternal radiating out of the light and heat.

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Here is what the Word says about how the angels understand the Lord's Holy Spirit in relation to their own life:

The angels think that there is one God, and that He is the Lord; that His Human is the Divine Itself in a form; and that the holy proceeding from Him is the Holy Spirit; thus that there is a Trinity, but still it is One.

A notion of this is obtained from the idea that exists about the angels in heaven. An angel appears there in the human form, but still there are three things in him that make a one. There is his internal, which does not appear before the eyes; there is the external, which does appear; and there is the sphere of life of his affections and thoughts, which pours out from him.... These three make one angel (*Arcana Coelestia* 9303:4-5).

Do you see that our sphere (of influence) radiates from our life, affecting the people we meet and are close to? Although hidden from view, our sphere has a powerful influence on everything we do.

OPTIONAL READING

That there is in the Lord a trine, the Divine itself that is called the Father, the Divine Human that is called the Son, and the Divine proceeding that is called the Holy Spirit can be seen from...heaven. The Divine called the Father, and the Divine Human called the Son, appear in heaven before the angels as a Sun, and the Divine that proceeds from it appears as light united to heat. The light is Divine truth, and the heat is Divine good. Thus the Divine called the Father is the Divine Being, the Divine Human called the Son is the Divine manifesting from that Being, and the Divine called the Holy Spirit is the Divine proceeding from the Divine manifesting and from the Divine Being. This trine is the Lord in heaven. His Divine love is what appears there as a Sun (*Apocalypse Explained* 1111:2,4).

Throughout the heavens one finds no other idea of God than the idea of a person.... It is because God is human that all angels and all spirits are human beings in perfect form (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 11).

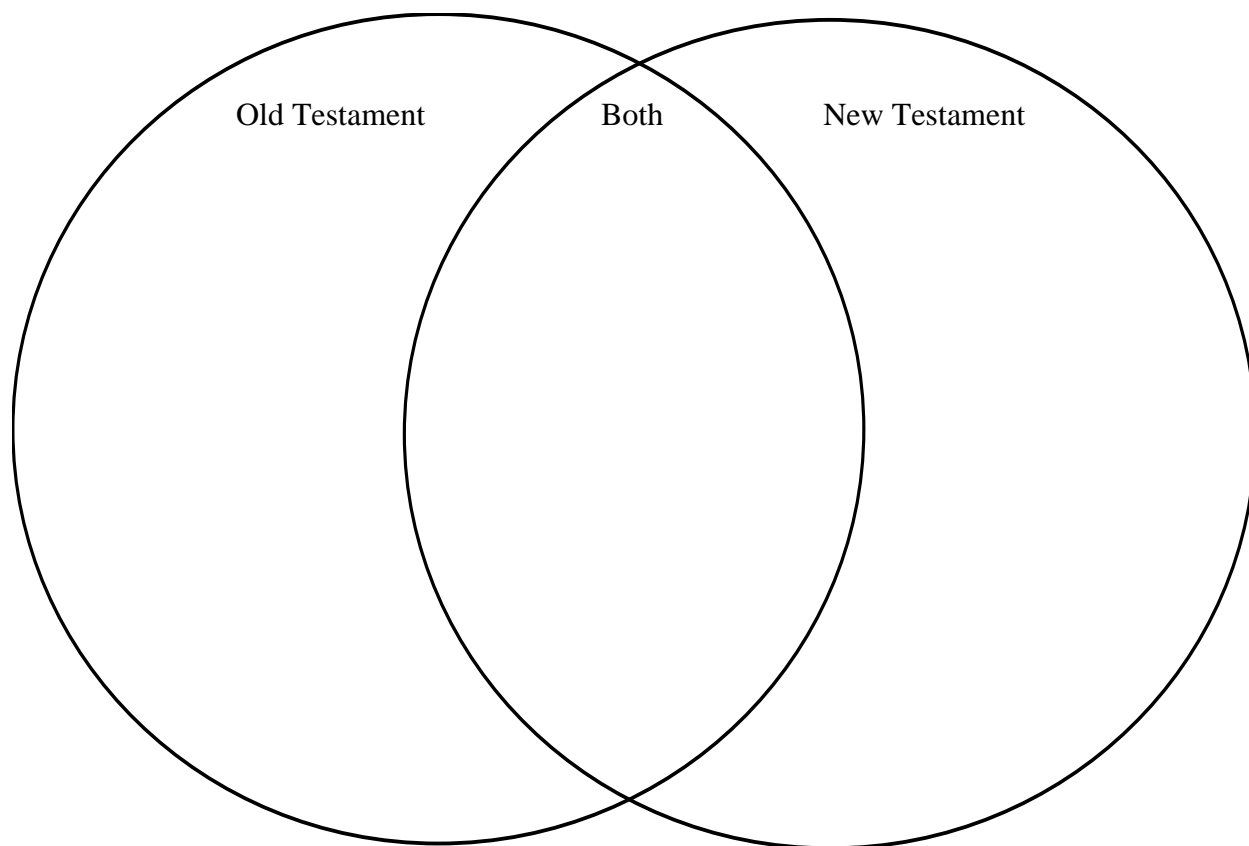
The Lord appears to the angels in heaven in an angelic form. For He fills an angel with His own aspect, and so with His presence afar off, and this in various places, but everywhere accommodated to the good of love and faith with those to whom He appears (see *Apocalypse Explained* 412:16).



Focus Points

Brainstorm as many names of the Lord as you can. Use the Venn Diagram to sort names by where they are used in the Word: the Old Testament, the New Testament, or both.

Variation for Groups: Can be done as a group activity, using a white board or large piece of paper.



1. Why do you think the Lord has so many names? Do the various names make it easier for us to have a clear idea of the Lord?
2. In today's readings the Lord calls Himself "I AM." What do you think this powerful name means?
3. Compare how people see the Lord with how angels see the Lord.
4. Explain how the three aspects of the Lord are like the Sun of heaven.
5. What are the three aspects of a person or an angel?

Activity 1

THE LORD'S NAMES



When a person enters the world his or her birth is recorded with a name. We come to associate each person with their name and the qualities they have. As the person grows, other names become associated with him or her: nicknames, brother, wife, father, aunt, best friend, grandmother, *etc.* A new state in life can sometimes add a title to our name *e.g.* Mrs., Sir, Dr., Rev. The more names we know for a person, the more we know about who they are.

The Lord has many names too. Each of His names communicates a different aspect of His life. Together they tell us about His Divine Love, His Wisdom and His Holy Spirit. The more we know about His names, the more we understand and know about Him.

- Circle all the names of the Lord in the selections below.
- Using resources such as Potts' *Concordance* or www.heavenlydoctrines.org find out more about the Lord by researching the meaning of **one** of His names.
- *Variation for Groups: Share what you find out.*

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given...and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

I and My Father are one (John 10:30).

Jesus breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

God is one and indivisible, and the Divine and the Human are one, and in one person (see *True Christian Religion* 135).

The true Christian faith is that God is one in essence and in person, and the Lord Jesus Christ is that God (see *Doctrine of Faith* 35).

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals (Revelation 5:5).

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty.... He is the King of glory (Psalm 24:8,10).

A star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17).

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).



UNITY PROJECTS

Activity 2

Select one of the following projects to illustrate how the three aspects of the Lord make one God.

Unity Candle

Purchase or make three long *thin* wax candles (not regular commercial taper candles). If possible, select red candles (to symbolize Divine Love), white candles (to symbolize Divine Truth), and gold candles (to symbolize the Divine Proceeding—like the rays of the heavenly Sun). Soften the candles by submerging in warm water. Braid the candles together to create one unity candle.

Unity Word or Liturgy Marker

Using strands of red (Divine Love) white (Divine Truth) and gold (Divine Proceeding) embroidery floss, braid a book mark that you can use in your Liturgy or Word. For a special touch use shiny gold thread in place of gold embroidery floss.

Unity Tower

Provide each person with a piece of paper. Direct each person to use the paper to create the highest stable free-standing tower they can by folding the paper (no rolling). Students may cut and tape or simply fold the paper. Students will discover that they need to fold or cut and tape so that they have three sides, or a triangle at the base, in order to make the most stable tower.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

A Role Playing Activity



What would you say if a friend asked you, “Who is God?”

1. As a group, discuss what you think are the most important New Church teachings about who God is. Use the quotes from the Word below to help you.
2. Divide into pairs and take turns answering the question “Who is God?”
3. When David faced Goliath, he chose five smooth stones to defend himself. The stones represent truths that are loved and worn by use. Prepare yourself with some basic truths about the Lord by memorizing one or two of the statements below. Use them the next time you share your beliefs about God.

Note: You do not need to know *everything* that the New Church teaches in order to answer this question. Statements from the heart, *e.g.* “God is someone I can turn to when I need help” or “God loves everyone—no matter what they believe” can be powerful ways to share your beliefs.

Statements from the Word About God

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one! And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty...” (Revelation 1:8).

I and my Father are One (John 10:30).

I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58).

Jesus said..., “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him” (John 14:7).

Throughout the heavens one finds no other idea of God than the idea of a human being...
(*Divine Love and Wisdom* 11).

He who has My commandments and Keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John 14:21).

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him (Genesis 1:27).

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works (Psalm 145:9).

With God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).



Choose an activity to bring this lesson into your life.

Ideas for Journal Entries *(choose one)*

Use one of these journal ideas to help you develop a deeper understanding of the Lord:

- Think about one of the Lord's names. What special meaning does this name bring to your idea of the Lord?
- Just as we can sit down and visit with a friend and get to know him better, we can get to know the Lord better by reading about Him in His Word. Make a plan to get to know the Lord by reading His Word. Write down your reading plan for the week.

For Reflection

- What we know about our friends and family deeply affects how much we love and care for them. The same is true about our personal relationship with the Lord. Reflect on what you know about the Lord, and how this knowledge helps you have a relationship with Him.
- How do you picture the Lord in your mind's eye? Does your picture of Him change when you think His qualities and His actions?

"I AM..."

These "I AM" statements in the gospel of John can help us understand the Lord's mission on earth. Take time to reflect on a different statement each day this week.

I AM...

the bread of life *(John 6:35).*
 the light of the world *(John 9:5).*
 the door of the sheep *(John 10:7).*
 the good shepherd *(John 10:11).*
 the resurrection and the life *(John 11:25).*
 the way, the truth, and the life *(John 14:6).*
 the true vine *(John 15:1,5).*

Further Reading

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Excerpted from an Article by the Rev. Robert H. P. Cole

The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that there is a universal influx from God into the souls of men, teaching them that there is a God and He is One (*TCR* 8). God is a being of Infinite Love, Wisdom and Power. As Jesus Christ, He clothed Himself with a human form and a human life on earth.

The Heavenly Doctrines teaches that the Divine cannot be separated from the Human nor the Human from the Divine, for this would be like separating our soul from our body (*Lord* 29). Or to put it another way, the Divine is in the Human of the Lord, just as our soul is in our body. But the Holy Spirit is everything that comes about as a result of the Lord's inmost-self being within His glorified Human. With us, our entire active life on earth is the result of our soul being within our body, and it is similar, but on a Divine plane, with the Lord, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now, let us consider each of these qualities of the Lord. By “the Father” is meant the Divine Itself. This aspect of the Lord created all things and continues to create all the time. The Father created His own earthly body that He could inhabit while on earth. This is the Human. It is called, or the Lord on earth was called, the Son of God because He Himself was the Divine soul in His own earthly body. The Holy Spirit is the Lord's presence and guidance everywhere.

One reason the Heavenly Doctrines give us for people thinking falsely about the Lord—imagining Him to be three persons—is that they think about a person from his material body, and not from his spiritual body; when the truth is that all the angels are spiritual and are also men and women in a complete form that is like our human form but more substantial and which lasts forever.

Besides this, everything that is Divine that comes from the Lord, from its beginnings in heaven all the way down to the most outward things in this world, has a tendency to be in a human form (*Lord* 32). Also all the heavens when seen together by the Lord appear in an ever more perfect wonderful human form. And this is because it reflects the happiness and usefulness of the angels, fulfilling the Lord's purpose of creation, which is a heaven from the human race.

From these things we can perhaps begin to see more clearly how the Lord is one Divine Person, how He is at the same time, or within His Person, a Divine loving Father who created a Divinely wise Man who lived on earth, and the Spirit of all that is Holy and Useful. This is why the Heavenly Doctrines say that Jehovah God is Divine Love, Divine Wisdom and Divine Use and has the new name—The Lord God Jesus Christ, the one God of heaven and earth.

This is also why we are to shun all of our evils as sins against Him, love our neighbor, or all that is good in others, more than ourselves and pray to the Lord alone that He will lead us through an orderly, good and useful life on earth and on into heaven after death.

The Lord works unceasingly to bring this about in each one of us, just as He worked unceasingly throughout His life on earth fighting one temptation after another brought on by the devils in hell. It was in this way that He made His earthly Human completely one with His inmost heavenly Being and can now work directly with each one of us as one person to another, helping us with the fight against our own temptations, regenerating us or making us a better person in His sight.

The Word of the Old Testament treats of the Lord as the Father of all, the New Testament describes how He came on earth, and what He did here, and the Heavenly Doctrine, which is His Second Coming, reveal the origin and purpose of creation, the meaning of the Lord's life on earth and the essential truths of religion. All of these descriptive New Church teachings, then, are true of the one God Jesus Christ that we worship who is King of Kings and Lord of all.

Text: *True Christian Religion* 8