

The One True God

Deuteronomy 6:4 NIV Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

John 17:3 NIV Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

People say many religious things that are no more than ideas or opinions. For example, some suggest that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. Once the human mind is involved in explaining God, or understanding God, all kinds of false things enter in to the world of faith. We can know God through the Lord Jesus Christ but understanding God is another matter. The Bible warns us that it is possible to serve another God, a false God; we can end up serving another Jesus, a different Jesus. We are warned that even Christians can become diverted from the true faith. We know that Israel as a nation became confused about God.

Judges 2:11 NIV Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.

BAAL = lord, master, "sir", ruler.

All the words describing the Baals could be used of the One True God. However, the people had several Baals. The unspiritual mind needed to bring God down to a human size. Baal worship appealed to the immediate and physical. The Baal was worshipped as lord of fertility, prince of the world, lord of heaven, and so on.

1 Kings 18:21 NIV Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

Elijah was almost a lone voice for the One True God. The people were confused by the religious leaders. The attributes of Yahweh and Baal had been mixed up. The priests and prophets of Baal were performing the "magic" that appealed to most. It was easy to believe and did not challenge their moral lives. So Elijah was permitted to perform an amazing sign in order to confront the people and turn them back to Yahweh.

Jeremiah 2:8 NIV The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols.

This verse sums up a great deal of the prophets "war" against idolatry in Israel. Jeremiah picks up what Elisha called out when he took up Elijah's cloak. So, the religious leaders were not seeking the One True God but were indulging in the mere physical religion of idols and human invention. Worthless could be translated as "vain", "unsatisfactory", or "empty".

1 Thessalonians 1:9 NIV for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

The people of the first century world followed idols. Both Greek and Roman civilisations had complex deity systems. Pagans had their own idols and superstitions. We read the judgement on all this in Romans Chapter One. In Thessalonica, people had heard and received the message about the Lord Jesus Christ and repented about all their idolatry and turned to the One True God. Paul makes the distinction that the true God is "living" - idols are dead - they do not exist anywhere but in the human imagination.

Galatians 1:6 NIV I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel

It does not take much deviation for a moon rocket to miss its target. The believers in the Galatian area to deviate from the true Gospel to something that missed the mark. It has been a consistent fault that Christians become misled about the nature of God's grace. Things are added to the message that make works, ceremonies and traditions so important that grace is no longer grace. Things are taken out of the message such that the Gospel is no longer good news, no longer gives hope and joy.

2 Corinthians 11:4 NIV For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Even in Paul's day there were people preaching about a different Jesus. The apostle John called this "antichrist". We do need to be on our guard. Just because someone speaks the name, "Jesus" does not guarantee that they are speaking about the Person revealed in the Bible. We need God's Holy Spirit. He does not speak about Himself but directs us to the True Jesus and glorifies Him. A good question to ask is, "Who is this man or woman glorifying?"