

The Nature Of God: Elohim

The God Family

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 03-Jun-95; Sermon #185

For almost sixty years the church of God has sailed along with very little controversy about the nature of God. There were always times during that sixty-year period that the world took potshots at us because of our stand on the nature of God, that God is not a trinity, but there was never any serious problem from *within*. Then about mid-1993 came the "*God Is ...*" doctrinal papers in which over a period of about a year the Worldwide Church of God changed its doctrinal position in regard to the nature of God from being a family to a Trinity.

I do not know how much you are aware of what a bombshell this was, but it created a bombshell out in the world at least, and was the single step that was most significant in turning the world's attitude from being antagonistic toward the Worldwide Church of God to one that was looking forward to making the Worldwide as part of them.

Now no less authority than the Catholic Encyclopedia calls the Trinity the central doctrine of the Christian Church. What they are saying is that the Trinity doctrine is the doctrine around which all other doctrines revolve, and it is the concept to which all others owe their existence. They say all other doctrines hang on, lead to, and exist to support this one doctrine.

For the past two years I have been gathering papers from church of God sources in order to distill from them truth on this very important subject. There is no way that I can give you an extremely detailed account in two sermons on this weekend, but this weekend is going to be devoted to this subject. I have gathered papers from the Worldwide Church of God both before and after the change, from the Christian Biblical Church, from individuals such as Keith Hunt, Ernest Martin, and also from the Philadelphia Church of God, the Church of God International, the Church of God Seventh Day, and from quite a number of groups as well, many of them quite small.

These sermons are going to be more like two Bible studies rather than sermons. Like I said, there is no way I can cover everything in detail, so what I have decided to do is to concentrate on two very closely related areas of this subject that I think are essential for us to understand, and are essential to understanding the doctrine.

In Part Two I am going to be quoting at the beginning fairly extensively from a couple of papers that come from the world, but in this sermon almost the entirety of this (95%) is going to be taken from the Bible. We will not be delving into the esoteric writings of some of the world's scholars. I want us to see very clearly what the Bible has to say on this subject. Today we are going to focus on *Elohim*, because it is central to the Trinity issue. This is not going to be a technical expounding of words.

Since I have been somehow or other put into this position, more and more I am beginning to appreciate Mr. Herbert Armstrong's scorn for biblical scholars, not that he was against scholarship at all, but he meant the scholars of this world who tangle people around on studies of words. The apostle Paul warned Timothy two different times—once in I Timothy and once in II Timothy—not to allow himself, as a minister, to get bound up in arguments about words. He said that they are not profitable to godliness, and he called them to be nothing more than vain jangling.

Understanding *Elohim* teaches us a great deal about the nature of the God family, and this is essential to the direction of our lives. We must be well-grounded if indeed this is the foundational doctrine of the church of God. Let us turn to Exodus 32.

Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said to him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.

Exodus 32:4 And he [Aaron] received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

Exodus 32:7-10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get you down; for your people which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation.

God was not faking His anger. To say He was mad is, I think, to underestimate the intensity of His anger. I think He meant exactly what He said. God does not mislead people and fake something. He was upset by what these people had done. This occurred pretty early in their journey, and it is important because it shows the concept of the nature of God that the Israelites brought with them out of Egypt. To them, God's nature—His very being—was conceived to be something no greater than an uncomprehending, non-communicating beast that had nothing in common with them, except that it was a mammal, and that it was alive.

Now what or who a nation worships is very important to the quality of life within that nation. It is going to pretty much determine the nation's morality, its kind of government, and the way that government is operated, its educational system, and its economics. It will determine much of its entertainment, music, literature, architecture, art, clothing fashion, and its vision of the future.

In our Western cultures we tend to look upon God in a very narrow way. I am telling you right up front here that this way is different from the Bible's approach on this perhaps the most important of all subjects. I say *most important*, because what an individual worships is going to pretty much

determine what he is going to do with his life, how it is going to be lived, and what is going to be big and important to him.

To understand what I mean, we are going to look right at this example. I will give you an illustration of what I am talking about, because as soon as they once again gave their mind over to the Egyptian bull-god, called in history "Apis," look what they did with their lives.

Exodus 32:6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. . . .

What happened to the God that brought them out of Egypt? Burnt offerings and peace offerings are symbols of worship. They started worshipping it. They started giving it honor, reverence, and respect.

Exodus 32:6 . . . and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

That is not put in there with a *clean* connotation to it. "They sat down to eat." This indicates gluttony. "They sat down to drink." This indicates over-imbibing and drunkenness. "And they rose up to play." This indicates fornication, sexual things that are beyond the pale of marriage.

Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked: (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.)

Here the word "naked" does not mean that they were without clothing, but rather that their spiritual condition had been exposed. It is very similar to "naked" as it is used in Revelation 3 in reference to a Laodicean. They are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." They did not have the righteousness of God clothing them.

Do you see what they did? They gave their mind to a different god, and immediately things began to take place in their life. That is the principle that

is involved here. You do that on a nationwide scale, and it is going to determine the direction, the morality, the government, the art, the literature, the education, the economics of the entire nation.

You already know about the record of the Israelites throughout the journey. There was a constant repetition of murmuring, of fornication, and a political and religious rebellion. That was the way of the bull-god, and that was what was driving them.

I am not kidding when I say to you that all one has to do is look at a person and see their style of clothing, and you are pretty well on your way to understanding what might be important in that person's life. The reason is that there is a very powerful drive within us to conform to what we respect. Why do you think all the little groupies, let us say, of rock stars, try to imitate and be like the one that they respect? "Birds of a feather flock together."

There are people who are always concerned about having the latest fashions in terms of dress. They always have to have the latest things. Those people have a problem with lust and with the respecting of a vanity. Where does the god tend to lie? Do you understand what I am driving at?

God is very concerned about the image that His children project, and this is called in the Bible "*our witness*." If we really are worshipping Him, we will be strongly motivated to be like Him, because we love Him, because we respect Him, and we want to—just like the rock star groupies—imitate, to live like, to dress like, to entertain like, to speak like, to act like, to do everything in the image of this one that we admire and respect. In this case that is exactly what our God wants. This is why He wants us to study His Word so deeply and so often. He wants us to get as much of an impression in our mind of what He is like as we possibly can, because it is going to profoundly affect what we do with our life; if we believe Him, that is.

Now here is a question that you can answer yourself. Are you a monotheist or a polytheist? Do you worship many gods, or do you worship one God? This is important in regard to Elohim.

Let us go to I Corinthians 8:5. Maybe you have never thought of this verse in respect of this particular subject. Notice the admission.

I Corinthians 8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many.)

An interesting thought, and from an apostle yet. I do not think that we would call Paul a liar. He said, "There *are* gods many, and lords many." In verse 6 he says, "But to us there is but *one* God." It looks to me like Paul is saying that God has some competition, that He is not alone among the gods.

Let us go back to the Old Testament to Psalm 86.

Psalm 86:8 Among the gods there is none like unto you, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto your works.

Now it begins to look like the Lord, the God of creation, is one God among many gods.

Psalm 135:5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

You begin looking this up, and you are going to find this appears all over the Bible.

Psalm 97:9 For you, LORD, are high above all the earth: you are exalted far above all gods.

Just so you do not think that this is something that is confined to the Psalms, let us turn to Deuteronomy 10.

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regards not persons, nor takes reward.

This is a concept that is shown throughout the Bible because it is true. There is a plurality within Elohim, and Elohim is consistently described as "the Lord of hosts." "Hosts" means *armies*. A little bit broader and clearer definition is, "He is Lord of many things."

We are also cautioned throughout the Bible not to let any of these lesser gods take the place of Elohim, who is revealed to us in the very first chapter of His book. The reason our culture has such a narrow view of this is because a false Christianity has dominated its religious thinking, and that false Christianity, for the past 1600 years, has taught a false god who is a non-biblical and inexplicable "three-in-one" Trinity. The reason that it is inexplicable is because they are trying to make the explanation fit into biblical context, and it does not fit, and so the final outcome is that it is a mystery that one has to accept on faith.

The following is a quote from *A Handbook of Christian Truth* by Harold Lindsell and Charles Woodbridge, Pages 51 and 52.

The mind of man cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. He who has tried to understand the mystery fully will lose his mind; but he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul.

Now wait a minute here! Did not Jesus say in both Mark 4 and Matthew 13 that it was given to the apostles to understand the mysteries of God? I am going to read to you exactly what He said to them.

Matthew 13:11, 16 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Did not the apostle Paul write in I Corinthians 2 that we were given the Spirit of God in order that we might understand the things of God, and yet these people try to tell us that the Trinity is a mystery, that we will go crazy trying to understand? No. You see, their concept of the God family is what is not able to be fit into the Scriptures, and so they have to go into the convoluted argument in order to try to convince others who are looking to the Bible that

their explanation is correct, and yet they themselves admit that nobody will ever understand the Trinity. What they are trying to palm off on us is not truth at all. It is an error, and it is beyond them, because they do not have the Spirit of God, and because they do not believe what the Bible says.

But really, the nature of God is not hard to understand at all. He gives His children the ability to understand it. If I can say it, it is so simple. You see, the world has a pattern of taking simple biblical truth and making it into a complicated and confusing false teaching. That is why Paul said do not get involved in these arguments over words.

That same Catholic Encyclopedia that I referred to before, very early in their discussion of the Trinity, admitted that the Old Testament has no teaching on the Trinity at all—I have to hand it to them for being honest—and that the New Testament had no clear statement affirming it. They admitted that the doctrine of the Trinity is developed by what they called "Christological speculation."

Speculation means we are guessing. When you speculate that something is going to happen, you are guessing. You may have a basis of fact in that, but you are still guessing. Now we will give them the benefit of the doubt and say that this central doctrine of the Christian church has been arrived at by deduction. We will change the word "speculation" into "deduction," but it is plain and simple human reason, and not clear scriptures in God's Word.

I will tell you something. It did not come easy into the church. It came in through very much disputing. It was first introduced at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. This is that famous Council that was presided over by the Roman Emperor Constantine, but it did not become firmly entrenched within the church until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. I am not talking here about the *true* church. I am talking about the false church.

I want you to compare that just briefly with the Council that was held in Acts 15, where it appears to have taken God only a couple of days to get a true teaching into the true church, as compared to 125 years for the false church to pick up a false teaching. You can see how confusing it was to them. It was not until, I guess, a majority of the people were finally argued into believing it that they were able to force it into the doctrines of that false church.

It is very important for the worshipper—the one who is seeking God—to identify God as accurately as possible. When we look to the Bible to identify God, to find out much about what God is like, we are confronted with a difficulty. It is a language difficulty, and it is a cultural difficulty. The cultural difficulty I mentioned before—how that for all these centuries the Western world has been under the domination of a false church teaching a false concept of God.

This has a way of picking up steam until it becomes like a tidal wave, and it is just something that is accepted, and you grow up with it from your earliest years of getting teaching on the nature of God. It had basically been on a trinitarian God, so the cultural difficulty is there.

The language difficulty is something that exists not just with those who speak the English language, but also for people who speak other languages than Hebrew as well. This has inadvertently played a part in the Trinity doctrine becoming a part of the fabric of this world's Christianity.

The English language translation consistently teaches us to identify God as a singular personality. It does this by referring to Elohim as "He" or "Him," or in the case of the Holy Spirit as a "He" or a "Him." We are monotheist, are we not, and so a monotheist would look to the God family and look for one personality, Supreme and unique, someone singularly different from everyone else. We would look for someone who would look like us, because right in the first chapter of His book He tells us that we are made in His image, and so we look for someone who is singular and unique. Nobody compares to Him in holiness or in power or intelligence.

Turn now to Genesis 1, and we will begin to get a handle on Elohim.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

If we are studying with any depth at all, even before we leave the first verse we are confronted with a problem of some difficulty unless one is willing to believe what the Bible consistently shows from the beginning to the end. The fourth word in the Bible, in English translation, is "God." Do you believe that? No, it is not. That fourth word is *Elohim*. Elohim is Gods—plural. "In the beginning *Gods* created the heavens and the earth." That is confirmed, for an English-speaking person, in verse 26, where the translators finally used plural pronouns to conform to the *plural* noun antecedent, *Elohim*.

Perhaps they were forced to do that, because they recognized that Elohim—God—was speaking to somebody, and He was speaking to someone who was just like Him—"Us"! They were forced into using a plural pronoun. "Let *Us* make man in our image." In fact Elohim is used 66 times in a row at the beginning of the Bible before any other Hebrew word is translated into the English "God." That occurs in Genesis 6:5 when finally another word is used for God.

If you were reading that in the Hebrew, I think that you would have to be impressed that the author of this book was trying to get something across to the reader that "Gods" (plural) did everything; not a singular individual, but at least two. Are you getting my drift? In fact, brethren, Elohim is used in the Old Testament 2,570 times, every one plural—"Gods."

Whoever, or whatever, this God is consists of more than one being, or more than one person, or we might say, more than one personality.

When Jesus preached, He clearly identified one in the God family as being *Father*. Let us go back to the New Testament to the book of Matthew. Toward the end of the first chapter in the Sermon on the Mount He makes this statement about loving your enemies. The reason that we are to do this is:

Matthew 5:45 That you may be the children of your Father.

Now hang onto this term "your Father," because it is going to mean something in just a bit. Now to whom is He speaking? He is speaking to His disciples, and we are His disciples today.

Matthew 5:48 Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 6:1 Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Now who is in heaven? God is.

Matthew 6:4 That your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly.

Matthew 6:6 Pray to your Father [Do you pray to God? Sure.] which is in secret: and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which art in heaven, . . .

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

With that thought in mind, turn to John 5. The discussion here is in regard to Jesus' use of the Sabbath.

John 5:17-18 But Jesus answered them, My Father [now instead of being *your* father, it is *My* Father] works hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because [according to them] He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

You do not have to go any further than that and two of the God family are identified. And now they have titles: the Father, and the Son. They understood what He was driving at, because He was saying in a fact, "I am God," and He was placing Himself within Elohim. They understood it. They

knew, and they were ready to jump on Him for blasphemy. Now Jesus came right back with an answer:

John 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do.

That is pretty clear. Where would He see the Father do it? He would have had to have been with the Father.

John 5:20-23 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that Himself does. For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them: even so the Son quickens whom *He* will. [Now He is asserting Himself as having the powers that go with the divine nature: to raise the dead.] For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son [in the same manner, with the same reverence, with the same respect], even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent Him.

That is pretty clear. He is clearly asserting, affirming to those people that He is one of the God family. One is called the Father. The other is called the Son. Now the plural "Elohim" is beginning to become much easier to understand.

John 14:6-13 Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father: and how say you then, Show us the Father? Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, he does the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you,

He that believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Now I am going to show you something else that is in some ways rather shocking. Turn to Romans 8 and we will read a series of verses here.

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

We are talking about human beings in whom the Spirit of God dwells.

Romans 8:11, 14 But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwells in you. . . . For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Are you with me? Are you beginning to follow the drift? If Jesus, as a human being, having the Spirit of God without measure, was still considered to be part of the God family (and that is very clear), now what if God begins to give His Spirit to others, and they become the sons of God? Let us chase this out a little bit. Turn to I John 3. This is another very familiar scripture. You ought to be able to see what I am heading for here.

I John 3:1-2 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.

Let us put a cap on this principle. Go to Ephesians 3:14.

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Now we see that the Family of God is located both in heaven and on earth. In heaven we know that there are two who are spirit who are part of the God family. This flies right in the face of monotheism. But even more startling brethren, is that *God considers you and me right now to be part of the God family already!*

Mr. Armstrong used to say that we are the Kingdom of God in embryo. Does that begin to make some sense? Now we have two who are spirit, but if you are with me, you can begin to see what is occurring from the beginning of the Book right till now. He said, "Let us create man in Our image," and what we see from the beginning of the Bible all the way to the end is that *Elohim is expanding!* God is increasing what Elohim is. God is increasing the number who are in the God family. That is not hard to understand. We are already children of Elohim. We are in His Family.

To us monotheism indicates that one is worshipping one distinct and unique almighty personality, and if anyone claims anything more than that, that person is considered to be a polytheist—worshipping many gods. This is very hard for us to accept here in this Western world, and I think that the resistance to accepting what the Bible clearly reveals about the God family has in large measure led to the introduction of the "Trinity" because people just cannot accept the simple truth that is in the Bible—that God is expanding. He is increasing His number. We are going to be a part of that God family.

So powerful has the belief in the Trinity become that it is the litmus test for whether or not a person is considered to be Orthodox. I do not know how many of you have heard any of those broadcasts by The Watchmen Foundation, or have read any of their material. That is at the head of their list as to what they consider to be a cult. If a group does not believe in the Trinity, they consider them to be a cult.

It is also true that there were ancient pagan trinities, and that those things were undoubtedly drawn upon by those who forced this doctrine upon the church. However, these people still had to deal with the Bible, and so ways had to be devised to make this pagan doctrine appear to agree with it.

What they have done with the Trinity is that the Holy Spirit has been elevated to divine status as a personality, just like the Father and the Son. In fact "co-equal" is what they say—"co-equal and eternal with them"—and yet at the same time they make the "three" also to be "one." The result is this incomprehensible mixture, "a mystery," that a true child of God—one who believes the Bible—cannot accept.

We are going to read the scripture, that along with Judaism, forced these people to do this.

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

The word "God" there is "Elohim." It says, "The LORD our Elohim is one LORD." What we have here is a phrase that is not normally grammatically correct—a plural noun (Elohim) with a singular verb, "is." Elohim is the plural of both "El" and "Eloah." El and Eloah mean "mighty one." It means "strong one" or "powerful one" according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs. Now Elohim, being those two words plural, therefore means "strong ones" (plural); "mighty ones" or "powerful ones."

Just from the definition of the word, it means then that Elohim consists of at least two powerful beings. But as we are beginning to see, Elohim is not limited to two. It can actually signify an unlimited number, and so what it means then is a group or assembly of powerful beings.

It may sound jarring to your ears to say "Gods *is*," where you have the plural noun and a singular verb, but I am going to give you several words in the English language, some of which you may use every day of your life. You may use at least one of these words several times a day. If you are paying any attention to world news, if you are paying any attention at all to things

that are happening in America, and you use this, it does not sound grammatically difficult or unusual to you at all. You have just grown accustomed to it.

Do you know what that word is? It is the "United States of America." States is plural. Now use United States in a sentence. "The United States *are* going to do this." You do not say that! You say, "The United States *is*." Singular. You are using a singular verb with a plural noun. You say, "The United Nations *is* going to do this or that." That is exactly what Elohim is. It is plurality in one, and because the sense is singular, it calls for a singular verb; but everybody using it knows that it is plural, and represents many in unity. Is that not simple? But you see, our culture forces us to look for a singular being, and Elohim is not singular.

In the New Testament it becomes *very* clear that Elohim is a *kingdom*, consisting of many, many, many! Did I not tell you this is so simple? But let me tell you this. Elohim never acts in anything but in a singular way. That is how in agreement Elohim is. There is never any divisiveness.

The analogy kind of breaks down, because the United States is 50 states going in the opposite direction it seems, and we have a hard time doing anything in a singular way. We think of the United States as a singular institution consisting of over 260 million people. There are multitudes of towns, cities, counties, 50 states, each with its own government. There is a Federal government over them with its three branches. There is an infrastructure within it in order to support life. There is an army to act as defender, and an economy to produce income, and so forth and so on, and yet we always speak of it in the singular.

We have no problem at all saying or hearing that "The United States is bordered on the north by Canada," or "The United States is bordered on the south by the Caribbean and by Mexico," or that "The United States is in the northern hemisphere," or "The United States is in the western hemisphere," or "The United States delivered a sharp memo to the Japanese today." We always speak of the United States in the singular. We speak of it as an institution rather than a singular individual.

When Moses wrote what he did, it was no more discordant to a Hebrew-speaking person, no more grammatically wrong than it is for us to say, "The United States *is*." Elohim, "the powerful One," is a family of at least two divine beings, and besides that we are beginning to see many sons and daughters coming into the divine Family, and the family, whether human or divine, is both joined in one. It is an institution created by the institution itself—Elohim.

The Bible gives us a very clear revelation that a nation is nothing more than a family grown great. That is why we have the table of nations there in Genesis showing the forebears. They began with one man and one woman, and they grew great; and so it is that Elohim is one institution—the family—growing ever-larger and more complex until it becomes a nation—the Kingdom of God. We see then that this is what Elohim is developing.

Let us begin to expand out from this. Jesus very clearly established that there is government within Elohim.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

The first thing that Christ does in this prayer is establish that He was *with* the Father. In this case the word "with" means "beside" or "alongside of." This is in agreement with John 1:1 where it says, "In the beginning was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with [alongside of] God, and the Word *was* God."

So the first thing that He does in this prayer is establish that He was with the Father. Let us begin to watch how this expands out.

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these [His disciples] are in the world, and I come to you, Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one as We are.

Remember, "The Lord our God [Elohim] is one Lord." In verse 5 He established that there was a time when He was alongside the Father, but now He says that He is *with*, He is *alongside of* His disciples—His apostles. He is

not alongside of the Father, and in this context He asks the Father "that *they* [the apostles] may be one as *we* are." What kind of oneness is this if it is not being "alongside of"? We will see.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.

We are reading right now *their word*; that is, the word that the apostles wrote. And so Jesus' prayer is that those of us who now believe through the writings of the apostles, that *we* may be one with the Father and the Son, and that oneness may come through the reading of the word that the apostles have written.

John 17:21-23 That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me [We are beginning to see this is not "alongside of," but "inside."], and I in you, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

They most assuredly were not in the same location, alongside of, beside of, and so the request that Christ made has to be a oneness in unity, a oneness as a unit. The oneness that He is asking for consists of agreement. There ought to be a verse that may come to your mind in reference to this. It is not directly on this subject, but the principle applies to this subject. This is in Philippians 2:5 where it says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."—to be one in mind, one in heart, one in spirit.

Matthew 11:29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.

Again, it is the principle that is involved here. The way we become *one* with Elohim is to learn of Christ until we have the knowledge of Christ. That is what Peter said there in II Peter 3:18, that we "grow in grace and in *the knowledge* of Christ." It means "Christ's knowledge." It does not mean knowledge *about* Christ. It means "the knowledge *of* Christ.

The entire purpose of this is that we become in the image of Elohim, and the primary example is Jesus Christ, and the primary teachings are those of Christ.

Let us go now to John 11. We will continue to develop this thought here. This was actually a prophecy that was uttered by Caiaphas. He, of course, was used by God to utter this, but it is very interesting in light of this.

John 11:51-52 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. [Now why?] And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in *one* the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Why did Christ die for our sins? It is for the same reason that we are talking about, that the children of God can be gathered in one. One what? One Family. One Kingdom. It begins with the one church; that we all have one Spirit, that we are in one body that becomes the Kingdom of God that is "Elohim"—the God family.

Let us go back to that scripture in Ephesians 3, and we will complete Paul's thought where he mentioned the Family of God, because that thought was a prayer. In order to really fully understand this, it actually has to be connected with the very end thought of chapter 2 where he is talking about the body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:20-22 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord [It is one temple.]; in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause [for this *very* cause, that we are being built together], . . .

Ephesians 3:14-19 I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is

named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

That is mind-boggling! That blows your mind! The whole purpose of everything that God is working out is that *you* (Put *your* name in there!) *might be filled with all the fullness of Elohim!* Boom! That blows your mind to think of that!

Is Elohim one? Yes! It is *one* institution. It is *one* family. It is *one* kingdom in which everybody agrees. It acts as one, and because it acts as one, even though it consists of many, it takes a singular verb. We have to change our thinking so that we understand that "Elohim" consists of more than one, even though individual members of Elohim acting *in the name* of our God, because they are part of the God family.

Jesus tried His hardest to help us to understand this by using family terminology: father, son, children, brothers, sisters. Brethren, is a family one, even though it has many members? Of course it is, and Elohim *is* that family.

Even in the Old Testament, brethren, there are two Yahwehs identified. Does that astound you? There is one verse that you are so familiar with. David said, "The Lord said to my Lord," clearly showing that there are two in Elohim. But that is not the only place it appears. In Daniel 7 you will find, "One like the Son of Man was brought before the Ancient of Days." There are other places as well where two Yahwehs are clearly shown.

I think most important of all for us right now is to get our minds straightened out to be in harmony with the Father and the Son. He tells us in this section right here that Christ may *dwell*—live, abide—in our heart. It means to settle down, as if in a house. Even there is a family reference, because that is where families live. They live in a house. He is telling us that we might be strong, to grasp, and to know by experience the vastness of Christ's love. This is something that cannot be adequately explained, and Paul never really

attempted it. Of course, the purpose of all of Paul's request there is that we might be filled with the fullness of God.

Colossians 1:13-19 Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated [transferred] us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: [Now listen to this description in verse 16. We are going to be brought to this kind of fullness.] For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

We are being brought to the fullness of God. I am not saying that as soon as we are changed and inherit the Kingdom of God that we are going to be like that, because I am sure we have a lot of growing to do afterward.

Colossians 2:8-9 Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the [divine nature] bodily.

The enmity against God is so powerful that people would rather devise a scripturally non-supportable doctrine than accept what the Bible clearly reveals the God family is.

What we have seen today is that if one allows the Bible to interpret itself, it clearly shows that Elohim is an institution consisting of more than one person. We did not look at the Old Testament, but it, like the New Testament, also shows that Elohim consists of two divine beings. The New Testament adds that we are being *drawn* into that same institution to be one with those who are already there.

It is true that Elohim is also used in many places to indicate a singular divine being. This is because Elohim always acts as one. They are in perfect harmony, in perfect agreement. We did not examine that because of a lack of time, but it is so easy to determine I think that just about any son of God can figure that out.

We also did not examine whether the Holy Spirit is God, co-equal with the others, forming a triune "Godhead." But the elements are already in place to show the fallacy of that. When one considers that almost everybody on earth is going to be part of the same God family that now consists of two, how could there only be three?