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A GOOD number of questions has been received, and we appreciate the interest that is being shown in this feature. However, owing to limitation of space, we are faced with the choice of either trying to deal with a large number of questions at one time, and giving brief and perhaps superficial answers, or dealing with a few questions each month, and trying to answer them more fully. We prefer the latter method. All questions will be answered in the order in which they are received (the Lord willing).

Q. Is the Godhead three distinct *persons*?

A. Most of the errors on this subject are due to attempts to bring the Godhead down to the level of the human mind. But if this were possible, and we could understand everything concerning the matter, then one of two things would be true: either we would be equal with God, or God would be no higher than man. Jesus said, 'And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' (Matt. 11:27, see also Job 11:7). We can go no further than God has chosen to reveal.

The scriptures reveal that '... there is one God' (1 Tim 2:5, see Mark 12:32), but in three Persons, each Divine, equally called God: Christ is called God (Heb. 1:8-9); and the Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4), eternally one in Being. There are not three gods (see Isa. 42:8) but three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the 'Godhead' (Col. 2:9).

*O.T. Indications.* In Gen. 1:1, the Hebrew word for 'God' is *elohim* (plural noun), while the word 'created,' is *bara* (singular verb). This unusual combination is used over 500 times in the Pentateuch alone, and suggests a multiple unity. Note the plural pronouns 'us' and 'our' (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). In Deut 6:4 the Hebrew word for 'one' is *achad*, which can be used to denote compound, and not singular oneness (see Gen. 2:24; 11:6). In any case, this passage is not speaking of the unity of God, but is saying that to Him alone belongs the name Jehovah, in contrast to the many gods of paganism (see R.V. footnotes on this passage). Other indications are Psa. 110; Eccles 12:1 (literally 'creators'); Isa. 6:3 (note the triple praise), 44:6; 54:5 (literally 'thy makers,' both plural).

*N.T. Indications.* Personal pronouns are given to all three Persons of the Godhead, including the Holy Spirit. Note that Christ speaks of the Spirit as a Person. We find 13 instances of this in John 16, R.V. alone. Also note Rom. 8:26 R.V. ('himself,' not 'itself,' as A.V.). It is as dishonouring to speak of the Holy Spirit as 'it,' as it would be to speak of Christ in this way. Clear indications of the three Persons are: at the baptism of Jesus (Mat. 3:16), (the voice of the Father and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit); and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19 literally 'into the name' of each Person). Other indications are John 1:1 (note, 'with God'—a Person, yet the Word 'was God'); John 17:22-23 (Jesus prays to the Person of His Father); 1 Cor. 12:3-5; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 21. Study also Rev. 21:22-23; 22:3-4; and notice that although two Persons

are mentioned in each case—God and the Lamb—the words ‘temple’ and ‘throne’ are in the singular.

*Illustrations.* All human illustrations of this great truth are necessarily limited, but they may help. We give two. Firstly, man himself: one, yet a triune being: body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). Secondly, the old illustration of the shamrock: one leaf, yet three.

Q. As it is the contents and not the container which we partake of during the Lord’s Supper, is it not immaterial how many containers there are?

A. This is a highly controversial question, but it is inevitable and proper in such a feature as this, that such questions should be asked. We must not attempt to gloss over the issues, but humbly seek to give a genuine answer, as we view the matter, leaving acceptance, or otherwise, to those who ask the questions.

There are really two parts to this question, the first dealing with the contents of the cup, and the second with the container itself.

(a) The Contents. Undoubtedly the scriptures teach that there is one cup. But what is the ‘cup’? Not the container, but the contents: the fruit of the vine. It is true that the Greek word for ‘cup’ in connection with the Last Supper is *poterion*, which was the usual word for a drinking-vessel. But the Lord used exactly the same word in relation to His suffering (see Matt. 20:22; 26:39; etc.). In what sense then is the word used in connection with the Supper? It obviously refers to the contents. ‘And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this (cup) and divide it (break up the container?) among yourselves, For I say unto you, I will not drink of the *fruit of the vine*, until the kingdom of God shall come.’ (Luke 22:18). Again in Matt. 26:27-28: ‘And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; *for this is my blood of the New Testament.*’ Yet again, Paul says, in 1 Cor. 11:26, ‘For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup.’ Now note, not ‘drink of this cup,’ but ‘drink this cup.’

Do we ever drink the container? Surely the word ‘cup’ there is equivalent to the word ‘bread’ and means the contents of the cup. Further Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:16, ‘The cup of blessing which we bless.’ Note, that he does not say ‘you,’ in the sense of the Corinthians alone, but ‘we’ including himself, writing from Ephesus.

Now some seek to resolve this by saying that as the Lord used one container at the institution of the Lord’s Supper, we must use one also. But this is not a safe nor simple answer, for in this we may be guilty of adding to the Word and making a law where the Lord has not made one. What has to be determined is whether the Lord used one container as an expedient to the carrying out of the ordinance, or as *part of the ordinance itself*. In view of the foregoing, the container is no part of the ordinance itself. That is fulfilled in the bread and the fruit of the vine. The container is merely equivalent to the plate on which the bread can be conveniently handed round. The analogy is in baptism. The water is a necessary part of the ordinance itself. The container, whether bath or stream, is of no consequence.

(b) In regard to the latter part of the question, as to whether it matters how many containers we use, if the foregoing is correct—and we sincerely believe it is—then it does not matter. The church at Jerusalem is an example. The church at a very early stage must have reached a membership of at least 10,000: 3,000 on Pentecost, plus 5,000 ‘men’ besides women (Acts 4:4). It was obviously impossible for them to use only one

container for the fruit of the vine at the Lord's Supper. The argument that they did not meet as one group, but in each others' houses, (though they may have equally met in the temple) only makes matters worse ; for if it were so, then we have *one church*, meeting in separate groups, therefore using many containers at the Lord's Supper, but still *one church*, under one set of apostles, later, one set of elders.

(c) But there is a third point, which, although not mentioned in the question, must not be overlooked ; and that concerns the unity of the brethren on this matter. This is far more important than any issue over one or more containers. There are those who genuinely believe that the use of only one container at the Lord's Supper for the fruit of the vine is essential. This conviction must be respected, even as they must respect the convictions of those who differ from them. (See the principle of 1 Cor. 10). It therefore seems to the writer that a proper and sensible compromise, where the issue ever arises, is to give thanks for the fruit of the vine while in the one container, afterwards distributing it in as many vessels as necessary. This is the practice of some of the churches.

This question has been answered at some length, to prevent any misunderstanding of the answer.