

NUMBER

**Can  
a man  
know  
GOD?**

BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM

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## Introduction—Man Must Know God

Do you know God? Do you really know God? What difference is there between knowing God and knowing about God? A significant passage in the Scriptures is Jeremiah 9:23-24. “Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who glories glory in this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight’, says the Lord.”

Now of course Jeremiah does not mean that a man must glory in his knowledge about God, but in his very knowledge of God for such a man knows that riches, wisdom and might, in the end, are pointless and empty apart from God. He is deeply enriched when he experiences God’s steadfast love, and justice. He knows God!

Another prophet, Hosea, speaking for God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” He relates the immorality of the land of Israel to the lack of knowledge of God. He says, “There is no knowledge of God in the land: there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery: they break all bounds, and murder follows murder . . .” From this it can be seen that the knowledge of God is not for especially religious people. It is not a hobby, or an interesting pursuit like keeping stamps, or growing orchids, but is a dire necessity. No one can afford not to know God.

Or look at the more positive side. Not only will there be a decline in immorality, but Jesus says, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” He does not simply mean men will receive eternal life if they come to know God, but knowing God is, itself, eternal life. That is why John writes in his first Epistle (5:20) “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, to know Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

That is why He adds, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” He means “Don’t have experiential knowledge of idols. That is disastrous.” It is fairly obvious that if man is created by God, then he cannot be truly man if he does not know his Creator. He will surely be serene and complete if he knows the God who created him, and who claims that He loves him. Try to think of man divorced from the true God, and imagine what kind of a person this man must be.

### **Do You Know God?**

Hosea says to his people “. . . you have rejected knowledge.” It is probable that they didn’t see it that way at all. Of course they knew God, Yahweh, the God of their fathers. Why, however, should that limit them in experiments with other gods, other practices? Few people would say they did not know God. Yet volumes could be written concerning godly persons who having been trained in theology (the study of God) and being sincere in their practices, have suddenly discovered God as a real person. The experience has been revolutionary and transforming.

John, in his first Letter gives us a test for our knowledge of God. He says, “He who loves has been born of God, and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. “ ( See I John 4:7-8). He is not speaking about human love, but the very divine love of God Himself. He is saying that he who exercises this special love really knows God. If a man does not love in this way then he does not know God. Note however that a man can know much about God without actually knowing Him in experience. That is the whole point in writing this small book. So at this point be practical and ask yourself the question, “Do I really know God?” The answer may be very sobering.

### **Can We Know God?**

Yes. The Scriptures make it clear. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ quoted a pagan poet as saying “ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.” ‘Living’, ‘moving’, ‘being’ just about cover the whole of human experience. The same Paul told his audience which was pagan that God had “made from one (man) every nation of men to

live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel after Him and find Him. Yet He is not far from each one of us . . .”

Knowledge of God is possible. We will see that in fact God is constantly revealing Himself. The practical question is, “Do I really want to know Him? Can I stand being confronted by Him?”

### **The Nature of Knowledge**

As we have seen there are two kinds of knowledge. One is the material we gather for intellection, or the process of thinking. We try to compute that knowledge. The Greek idea of knowledge was what we call **noetic**. He sought to be objective and detached. The Stoic said that emotion conditioned your approach to knowledge. It is best to be objective, and not be influenced by feelings. Jonathan Edwards, a great Christian teacher took a different view. He said that any religion which was not seated in the affections was not true religion.

In practice we know people truly, not by analysing them, but by relating to them. We may gather much information about them, but we can only know them by personally relating to them. One of our problems today is that many teachers, preachers, and members of the Christian community have a great deal of knowledge about God, but do not necessarily know Him. As we will see, God is the God of action, and it is in His actions as well as because of His actions that we know Him.

James said in his Epistle, that “the devils believe and tremble.’ This knowledge cannot be said to be simply noetic. It is dynamic, for they tremble. Many people “know” God, but they do not tremble. They do not, then really know Him as the God of wrath and judgement, as the God of holiness, as do the devils.

### **We Know God Because He Reveals Himself**

It is an axiom in Christian theology, that God reveals Himself. It is not, however, an axiom in all religions.

Most religions speak of seeking after God. The Bible says emphatically, “There is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11, cf. Psalms 14:1-2, 53:1-2). If any seeks God it is because God has stirred him to do so. Again the Christian Gospel speaks of God seeking after men and women. This is seen in the stories of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and even the Lost Son, in Luke chapter fifteen. It is also indicated in John 4:22-24, and Luke 19:1-10.

The subject of God’s revelation of Himself is immense. We will see the various means by which God seeks to reveal Himself. Yet surely what puzzles us is that God should have to reveal Himself if, in fact, we are His creatures, and if, as it is said, “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

The direct answer to this is that man does not want to know God. We do not deny that he may wish to know about God, but to know Him directly is another matter, a very demanding experience, and few want that. The Biblical picture is that man has in fact deliberately rejected experiential knowledge of God. It is at the same time both demanding and restricting. Man thinks that to know God will take away his personal freedom. In fact it would prove to be the opposite.

### The Loss of the Knowledge of God

Many, if not most people, will admit they do not know God. Some say it is impossible to know Him. Some shrug their shoulders and say it is simply undesirable. Others assert that God does not even exist. Some claim very warmly that they know Him. Romans 1:18-32 is so significant a passage for this subject that every reader should take it up at this point and read it thoroughly, trying to understand it. This passage says clearly that man actually knew God. His knowledge of Him came through the created things of the universe. The visible things of the universe have the power to communicate the invisible attributes or qualities of God, namely His deity and His eternal power. Man, knowing these facts, wished to rid himself of the knowledge of God. He wanted, to put it bluntly “to go his own way”.

His rejection of the knowledge of God had disastrous effects. Because he was created with the thrust or desire to worship, **he had to worship something**. He had to rework the rules or principles by which the universe operates, because the universe is functional. That is it works according to certain unchangeable laws. This is seen in various Scriptures. So man was forced to impose a new order on the universe. His natural practices were twisted to unnatural practices. However he said the truly natural was unnatural, and so reversed the order. That is why Paul says he became foolish, empty in his imagination, and wrong in his reasoning. Paul, of course doesn’t deny man’s ability to reason but simply says it has the wrong bent or bias to it. It is self-seeking and so God-rejecting.

Well, suppose it happened that way— would man want to know God? Not unless he found life horrible, and twisted and unsatisfying. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes describes man when he finds the whole thing empty, or as he says, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!” The theologian agrees, but goes on to say that man has permeated this beautiful world with his sin and selfishness. Paul finishes his description by saying “ Since they did not wish to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, and improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” As though that terrible list were not enough, he adds, “Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but approve those who practice them.”

Simply stated it means that when a man rejects God he must reject the universe as it is essentially constituted. Therefore he must reject its laws and principles, and even his own true nature. He comes to hate God, and tries to stamp out every bit of knowledge of Him, instinctive, intuitive, or otherwise. Such knowledge is too demanding.

### The Difficulty of Knowing God

It will be difficult to know anyone against whom you have a prejudice. You do not even allow him to present his true self. You interpret his actions wrongly. So man with God. Paul says (Colossians 1:21) “We were enemies of God by our wicked works.” He probably means that when we did not know God we broke His laws, and hated Him because we were guilty. In human experience we grow to hate persons we have harmed. We hate being guilty, and even (irrationally) blame them for our guilt!

David had plenty of experience of guilt, and the way it worked in a man’s conscience. He said on one occasion, to God, “With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the perverse thou wilt show thyself perverse.” (Psalm 18:26). He meant that a man sees God through the lens of his own conscience—one way or another.

Jesus knew the principle of knowing. He said, “He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.” He knew knowing was not so much a matter of intellect, as a matter of will. That is why He said, “Take heed how you hear.” On another occasion He said, “If any man wills to do the Father’s will he shall know whether the teaching is from God . . .” He meant that when the will is inclined to God a man will know.

There is, of course, another difficulty. God, as God, must have areas of thought and action which man cannot understand. This will partly be because man is limited to some extent, and God is not limited. Yet we should not overplay this idea. It is said in Deuteronomy “The secret things belong to the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever . . .” (Deut. 29:29). It means that what a man needs to know is revealed to him. What he does not need to know God keeps from him. When God says that His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:10ff.) we should accept the fact that the Creator and Eternal Father must have, as it were, a deeper slant upon things as they are, than will the creature or the created son. We should also

remember that when a man desires to know God, God will reveal to him, all that he needs to know of Himself.

### God’s Ways of Revealing Himself

As we said, if God does not reveal Himself we cannot know Him. Not to reveal is to conceal. However God has set about revealing Himself in many ways. Summed up, they are all the one thing. God wishes to make Himself known to His creatures, but the experiential knowledge of Him will be either saving and healing to man, or it will bring him into judgement. We said that to know God — in a good way — is to experience eternal life, the very life of God. To have to know Him in judgement will cause pain and terror to man. On that day he will know God is, but he will recognise the rightness of God’s judgements, and yet be terrified.

Now as to the ways of God revealing Himself, they are all, strangely enough, indicated to us within the Scriptures. That is, the Bible tells us that God reveals Himself by His creation (or ‘nature’ as we often call it) by His Spirit, by His Word, by His Son, and by His prophets. In turn He reveals Himself by other means to His various servants such as the prophets, preachers and teachers. These ways are through dreams and visions, through His outward acts, and sometimes by visitations of angels, and what we today call supernatural happenings. We repeat that the Scriptures tell us these are His means of communication or revelation.

That brings us to the point that apart from the Scriptures we do not know the means by which God reveals Himself. Therefore if the Scriptures are wrong we are altogether without any certainty that God reveals Himself. Because of this man has turned away from the Bible (God’s Word) and the Church (God’s people) and has said that only what he can reason with his mind is safe to believe. This is called rationalism, and it, naturally enough rejects anything of the supernatural. Not everyone is convinced that the reasoning of the mind is a safe authority in which to trust. It is obvious that whatever a man thinks, he thinks according to his inner motives, whether they are

for God or against Him. It has also been pointed out that universally man experiences guilt, and guilt is a very powerful factor in determining how a man thinks, and even what he thinks. Some people, through guilt, build up a strong religious apparatus, and even defend God, whilst, possibly, hating Him. Others simply attack God, or the idea of Him, out of the same inner guilt. Some seem to avoid either wing of the argument. For these reasons we must be wary of accepting reason as a final authority, although of course we need the mind with which to reason.

### **Man, and God's Means of Revelation**

It would be difficult for a man to communicate with an ant. It is because a man is a reasoning creature, and because he has will and an emotional life. An ant does not move in these dimensions. Ants, however, we assume, communicate with ants. God made man in His image, and so, in a sense, like knows like, deep calls unto deep. God is Spirit, and man is derived spirit. God is Creator; man is a creature. God is Father; man is a son. God is Lord; man has been made for lordship, that is, over his universe. God is King, and man has been made to serve Him. All of these truths show us that God is Giver and man is recipient, but they also teach us that man relates to God, and is structured to do so.

When then man sees the creation, because he is a reasoning creature and a part of it, and it itself declares the glory and nature of God he should normally be able to understand it. Because God has acted in history in His creative act, in sustaining creation, and in His various acts by which He expresses Himself, then man ought to know and read that history. Man is quick to read the acts and motives of others; why then not understand God? For this reason we are going to trace each medium of revelation in order to know God. We trust that the reader will not rationalise away the means by which he may know God, and indeed that his heart will be set to respond.

#### **[i] Creation**

We have touched on this, but it is necessary to read deeply into the Scriptures, seeing man has given

himself over to idolatries in so many ways, and cannot think clearly about the only true God. Paul, in Acts 17:24-30 tells his Greek pagan hearers that the very nature of the creation proclaims God. However his great point is that God is Father-Creator. That is why idolatry is foolish, for in fact when the true God is Father then to call an idol "Father!"—which is the logical thing — is in fact foolish. Jeremiah said the same thing to idolatrous Israel. He said, "As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed; they, their kings, their princes, their priests and their prophets, who say to a tree, 'You are my father', and to a stone, 'You gave me birth'." (Jer. 2:26-27).

God said His creation was very good, meaning not only that it had no flaw in it, but that it was a functionally harmonious one. Psalm 104 is a rich description of this functional harmony. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "Thou hast made everything beautiful in its own time . . ." I Timothy 6:17 says "He has given us richly all things to enjoy." I Timothy 4:4 adds, "Everything created by God is good." Proverbs 16:4 says " God has created everything for its own purpose. " That is why and how the universe speaks of a gracious and competent and loving Creator. Man today fails to realise that the resources about him, both in air, sea and land, speak of a resourceful and kindly Creator. These things declare His nature.

#### **[ii] The Scriptures**

This subject is a vast one, and we can only deal simply with it here. The Bible claims that all Scriptures are given by the out-breathing of God (II Tim. 3:16), and rightly understood the Old Testament is the revelation of God's plan, as well as the description of its working. Jesus accepted the entire Old Testament calmly and firmly. After His resurrection from the dead He affirmed its authenticity, and showed that it had all spoken of Him. The New Testament Scriptures continue in the same medium, and their writers claim their words are true.

Rightly understood the Scriptures give us the acts and intentions of God. It is by acts we understand people, and the Scriptures not only give us the acts of God but help us to interpret them. These acts fall, roughly speaking, into three groups:—(a) His creative acts. (b) His redeeming or saving acts. (c) His final restoring or renewing acts. By them we know Him as the God of creation, of grace and love, and of judgement. In these three aspects He is consistently one in His operations.

The reader is recommended to get a book which treats this subject widely, but whatever his conclusions he must remember that the most outstanding man of history, Jesus Christ, not only accepted it, but set about to obey it in every detail, especially as it referred to Him. He lived, died, and rose again by it, and insisted every detail of it would be fulfilled.

### [iii] Scripture's Media

We understand from II Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:1-2, I Peter 1:10-12 and II Peter 1:19-21, with many other passages, that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible, even though He used many very ordinary men to write His words. God's word therefore came through the Prophets. They constantly said, "Thus saith the Lord" or "The word of the Lord came to . . ." Often God Himself speaks, "I am the Lord thy God . . ." The prophets always speak in relation to God's Law, and this very law communicates the nature of God. This is seen in Romans 3:21 where Paul indicates that the righteousness of God is normally known through the law. The use too, of the names of God is another medium, for as God uses a name concerning Himself He is revealing part of His character in the name. These names provide a study in themselves, and a Bible Dictionary is helpful in this respect. The prophets and other servants of God often have messages indicated to them in dreams and visions. Readers should look up Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where the test of a true prophet is that his dreams and visions come to fulfilment. Other references are Jeremiah 23:25-27, Numbers 12:6, Joel 2:28, which should be related to Acts 2:14-17. We must understand that the prophet was the mouthpiece of

God, therefore when he spoke his words had to be obeyed. ( See Deut. 18:15-21 and Exod. 7:1-2). In the New Testament prophecy still continues. Indeed it will continue until the end, but from beginning to end — as Revelation 19:10 affirms — "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," It is in the last days that God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh and they will prophesy ( Acts 2:14ff cf. Joel 2:28) and they will in those days see visions and dream dreams.

### [iv] The Acts of God

It is primarily by His acts that God is known. We have pointed out that this is generally the way any person is known. Time and again God is called 'The living God'. Christ is called 'The Son of the living God' and the Holy Spirit is called 'The Spirit of the living God'. The term 'living God' means that (a) He is the originator or giver of life. In fact He is life, and from Him life comes to creatures in order that they may be living creatures. It also means (b) that God is in action. That is why the prophet said, "As the Lord liveth . . ." He meant, "God is present. He is living. He is active. Now I communicate what He is doing and will do."

The Hebrew had little time for philosophical speculation. He also had little or no time for abstractions. For him love was not an abstract thing, but was known only in and by action. This is how it is for most of us. A God composed of abstract qualities or attributes may be something for the theological hall or lecture room, but most of us, in the practical arena of life want to know and see God in action or we are not, frankly, impressed. Is it, then, true that God is constantly acting in the affairs of His creation? Is He not detached, absent, ruling from a vast distance?

The Hebrew was always speaking about the acts of God. He did not speculate on what God **could** do, but simply described what God had done and was doing. The prophets even spoke of what He would yet do. Thus the truth of God is rooted in the events of mankind, or history as we often call it.

Briefly speaking God's acts as we have previously indicated, can be classified in three forms:— [a] **His action in creation**, and we must understand that

creation was dynamic, a vital bringing into being what had never visibly been manifested, with all the immensity and intricacy and marvel of its forms. **[b] His action in redemption.** Here we must understand that the fall of man made some difference in the operation of creation. True, God continued to act by sustaining creation, but some of its operations changed. We are told the creation was under frustration. It could not totally fulfil its functional nature. God had purposed to save man from the effects and outcome of his sin and rebellion, and so history, rightly understood is oriented to saving man. This is shown in the patient acts of God as He chose Israel, communicated His laws, and finally sent His Son and the Holy Spirit to perform the work of repentance and regeneration in man. **[c] His action in restoring His creation.** What He set out to do, He will surely accomplish. The universe is not intended to be temporary, and man He intended for immortality. We can call this the genius of His love. So He is acting to restore His whole universe to absolute purity, and to have it operate to its full capacity. To do this He must banish evil for ever, and this He is doing.

We see then that every event in history, however unrelated it may appear to be to these three great acts of God, is in fact part of God's purposeful action. To know God we must understand these events. The Bible is there both to describe and interpret them. From these acts we can know God. However if we do not read them we cannot know them, and if we do not understand them we cannot know God. Unfortunately the bias of man's mind helps him to dismiss the historical and predicted acts of God as so much folk-lore and religious poppycock. It was the action of God that the early church displayed with power to the world of their day. The church still needs to be the body of people through which God's action is in this world, so that men can know that God is in the midst of mankind.

### **Knowing God in Practical Fact by Practical Acts**

We now come to the crux of our study. It will not be a short one, but one important enough to look at in some detail. So we ask the question, "What importance have

God's acts for me? What are the acts He does which relate to me and affect me? What do they effect in me?" This, of course is the way we assess the nature and importance of other persons, and so it is with our assessment and understanding of God. Most people think of God as unrelated to them—as away in some other sphere, and not a bit interested. Let us see.

### **[a] God, Creation, and Us**

Many Scriptures show that God created man for a purpose. Others show that man rebelled, wanting to have his own will, and make his own destiny. It appears that man cannot fulfil his own destiny, without God. His creation is extremely important. As a cow has being as a cow, for "cowthings" so likewise a man has being as a man, for manthings. When man plays God he becomes either a monster, or a fool. He is not structured to be so.

It is interesting that when Job had an argument with God, God finally appeared and talked to Job about creation, asking him if he were there at creation, and whether he had a hand in things. Job as a result is both mortified and reduced to size. Strangely enough he really sees God through this revelation of Creation. Readers will do well to read Job chapters 38 to 42. Job says, "I heard of you previously with the hearing of the ears. Now I see you with the eye— **I really see you**— and I repent in dust and ashes." Job is renewed by this revelation. Notice, he is renewed and not destroyed.

### **[b] God, Sin and Us**

We feel like shouting, "This is the one! " that is "This is the revelation!" Paul said that God displayed His love to us by this then when we were sinners (not righteous men, or good men) Christ died for us (Romans 5:5-8). Man who had known God rejected that knowledge. God pressed on, against man's enmity and indifference, and showed him His love by destroying his sins through the death of His Son. Anyone who has not seen this has not really seen or known God. So we have to include in this section the fact that the Son came to show the Father. In the story of the prodigal son the father is waiting for the son to come home, even going some distance to see him, but in the full New Testament

teaching, the Son is sent out to tell all prodigals that God loves them. How does He tell that? — by taking their sin and failure, their moral pollution, and their guilt burden and bearing it to extinction, by His suffering, so that it is no more. In this way He shows the love of the Father.

We can say then that the Son is the greatest revelation of God, for He shows God not only to be Creator, but Father. He is not only Judge, but redeeming Father. That is why John says, “No man has ever seen God. The Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” He meant He was (is) the way to the Father, the truth of the Father, the life of the Father. He also said that no one could come to Him unless the Father drew him, and that He alone knew the Father, and only the one to whom He would reveal Him would ever come to know the Father. (See John 1:10, John 14:6, John 6:44-46, 65.)

### **[c] Coming to Know the Father through Love**

The reader should pause here, asking himself the question. “Do I know God?” We saw previously that “He who loves has been born of God and knows God, for God is love. He who does not love does not know God.” It is very simple. God reveals Himself as love, at the Cross, through the death of His Son. John says (I John 4:9-10), “In this the love of God was manifested (displayed) that He sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

What does this mean? Summarised it means this:—We were dead. We were under God’s wrath. We could do nothing about our sins and failures. All sin and failure is serious. It is serious enough to warrant God’s wrath. God’s wrath, whether consciously felt and understood or not, plays a large part in the whole experience of man, both in this world and the next. In some act (called propitiation) God has, Himself, dealt with man’s sin, the cause of His wrath. In fact, whether

we like this or not, the Son has borne the wrath—as a man!

We have to admit that this subject—God’s wrath—enrages a man more than any other. There is a reason for this — man’s guilt works in him to keep him in terror or enrage him to scorn. Yet he cannot escape the presence or power of his own guilt. Not until Christ takes it upon Himself. The Scriptures show us that the Father takes the initiative in the matter of His Son’s suffering. The following Scriptures should be studied closely:— Romans 3:24-25, II Corinthians 5:19,21, Romans 8:32, Isaiah 53:4,6,10. “God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Now we know God is love, but we do not know Him personally as love until we receive this propitiation and its benefits for ourselves. The reader should stop, think, and see God as deeply loving him. Then he should receive the benefits of that love, the destruction of his guilt, and his resultant freedom from condemnation. Paul said, “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1). It is true. A man may immediately be freed from his guilt, when he comes in repentance to God.

### **[d] Knowing God Through Forgiveness**

There is a significant passage in Jeremiah 31:31-34, and we quote the whole here:—”Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” We note that the Old Covenant was one of law and sacrifices. Sins could be

forgiven through the sacrifice of an animal. The process, was continual, and painful. God promised a day when that whole (bloody) system would be swept away. Then He spoke of a personal and inward knowledge of Himself. "I will write my law in their hearts and I will put it in their inward parts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." Now notice the new state of relationship. "They shall no more teach every man his neighbour saying 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, says the Lord, from the greatest unto the least, says the Lord, for I will forgive their sins, and their iniquity will I remember no more.

Look at the text closely. It is in and by the forgiveness of sins, that men will know God truly. God says He will remember their sins no more. He does not mean by this that He will forget their sins. He means there will be nothing to remember! That is exactly what Jesus meant when He took the cup at the last supper and said: "This is my blood which is shed for you, and for many for the remission of sins." He meant He both heralded and executed the New Covenant. "Remission" means to bear away until there is nothing left. That He did on the Cross. Peter said, "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

Notice in Luke 7:47 says, ". . . he who is forgiven little, loveth little." He means, "When a man sees the immensity of sins, and knows that I have borne them all on the Cross, then he knows he is forgiven, and he loved God. He sees God is love." When a man sees God is love, through forgiveness, then that man knows God. That is why John cried, "We have known and believed the love that God has for us: God is love" ( I John 4: 16), and so he adds, "Perfect love casts out fear for fear involves punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love."

We should note here that if a man will not receive the forgiveness of sins, then he can never know God. He can never know Him as love, and since God is love, he cannot know Him. When he actually practically receives the forgiveness of his sin, and is cleansed ( See I Corinthians 6:11), then he knows God.

### [e] Knowing God through the Holy Spirit

This part of our subject needs a more thorough treatment than we can give it. Briefly we must say that the Holy Spirit has always been in the business of communication. He is said to be the author of Scripture (Cf I Peter 1:10-12, II Timothy 3:16), and the One who moved in the prophets. Indeed He moves, though often unseen, in all the acts of God. He was present in the birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Then He was sent to tell the acts of the Father, and of the Son.

He did this very effectively on the day of Pentecost when the people cried out, "We hear, every man in his own tongue, the wonderful works (acts) of God!" Jesus said He would convince the world of their unbelief, and sin, and would reveal righteousness and true judgement to them. And He did.

Jesus also said He the Holy Spirit would take the things of Christ and reveal them unto them. He was certainly to be the Revealer or Revelator, for Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:9-10 that there are things which man has not experienced, conceived, which he calls "the deeps of God". These deeps of God, he says, the Holy Spirit, who searches God Himself, has revealed to us. That is why he can claim that "No man can say that Jesus is Lord", but by the Holy Spirit. To see, to say and to know that 'Jesus is Lord' is not a simple proposition of theology, but even more is a dynamic experience of the human mind, spirit and personality, for one experiences the release from sin and guilt, and thus all the darkness that has gripped the human spirit. One knows one is released; one knows that God has worked. Indeed one knows God!

Another way of saying this is that the work of the Father who sent the Son, and the work of the Son to liberate man, is made practical and effective by the inner work of the Spirit, bringing to man, what in one sense was previously outside him. Whereas Christ, in His death and resurrection identified with man in order to redeem him, now the Holy Spirit effects the present

union of man with the Father and the Son. Man comes to the Father through the Son to whom he has come by the Holy Spirit. Now man knows God.

### **Conclusion, The Continuing Knowledge of God**

On the day of Pentecost Peter said (Acts 2:38) “Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. Both the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit {the Revelator} guaranteed the continuing experience of the knowledge of God. Also God’s promise to the believer is, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5).

As we have seen, the experience of eternal life is the very knowing of God Himself. Hence one continues to know God, and we can also say, at an ever deepening level. Paul in Philippians 3:8 says he counts all things but loss for the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. “ In 3:10 he goes on to say, “That I may know Him”. He does not mean he does not know Him, but that what knowledge of God he has drives him to want to have further knowledge of Him.

We have seen that the Scriptures give us a fine account of God’s acts in history, and often these acts are also interpreted. Time and again teaching regarding the nature of God is given. So in the Bible we have a treasure house of information. Indeed the more we read, and understand it, as the Holy Spirit reveals its truths, the more we know God. Yet, of course, this is not all. John writes (I John 2:3) “By this we may be sure that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him’ but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Or again, “He who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.” Simply, then, we conclude that the continuing knowledge of God is (a) God constantly imparting Himself and His life to us, as we relate to Him, day by day. (b) Living in obedience, for this is the actional experience of God’s life in His universe. (c) Walking and living in the Spirit by whom we know the Father and the Son continually.

Not one of us should hesitate to have this marvellous experience of the living God, His Son and His Spirit. Having to face up to the enormity of our sins and the failure of our past should not deter us. The wonderful and fully effective work of the Cross should tell us that we can be free and know God. Equally we should not hesitate to have the rich experience of the Spirit coming to us with forgiveness, and cleansing—so making us sons of God. His coming upon us with power will not only aid us to live in the knowledge of God, but also enable us to share this liberating truth with men and women who still live in bondage.

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