

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “KNOW” GOD?

A prophecy made in Jeremiah 31:34 concerning the kingdom (church) of the Messiah was... that there would be no longer any need to teach people to know the Lord for “they shall all know me”. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in Hebrews 8:11.

Under the Law of Moses one born an Israelite was automatically a child of God by virtue of their physical birth. As they grew, they had to be taught to “know God”, i.e., they had to be taught concerning the one true God and His law and the necessity to obey that law. However, under the Christian dispensation, one has to “know God” and obey His will before he can become a child of God. It is just the opposite of that law under which the children of Israel lived.

To truly “know God” is to know his will, His law, His commandments, and faithfully obey them. In 1 John 2:3-5 we read. “...and hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But those who keep his word; in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” We are told in 1 John 4:8, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” And then we are told in 1 John 5:3 “...the love of God is to keep his commandments.” Are you keeping His commandments?

When one does not know God, he does not keep his commandments. In Romans 1:21 and 1 Corinthians 1:21 we read of some who, by their own wisdom, “knew not God” and therefore did not keep His commandments. In Galatians 4:6-9 we read of some who wanted to turn away from “knowing God” and go back to their old way of life. A definite contrast is drawn between those who do not obey (know not God) and those who do obey (know God). The Lord’s for me and you is to obey His gospel--the plan of salvation. To do that one must believe in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9-10) and be baptized immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16).

Garland Robinson, Via Light for Living

WHERE IS SALVATION?

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QUESTION: Is there salvation outside Jesus Christ and His Church?

ANSWER: Absolutely not! All outside of Jesus and His Church are lost (Ephesians 2:12).

The blood of Christ washes away the sins of the alien sinner (Revelation 1:5) when he meets the terms God has laid down in the New Testament. These are: faith (Acts 15:9), repentance (Acts 3:19), confession (Romans 10:10) and baptism (Acts 22:16).

The erring child of God (i.e. one that becomes a New Testament Christian and then quits) is forgiven when he repents, confesses his sins and prays for pardon (Acts 8:22; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9). God will forgive every sin, regardless of what it is, if these conditions are met. Furthermore, Jesus is the only means by which we can gain fellowship with God (Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:3-6; John 14:6). Those who are baptized into Jesus (Galatians 3:27) are “added to the church” by the Lord (Acts 2:47). Since there is only “one body” (Ephesians 4:4, “body” = “church” Colossians 1:18) and that one Church belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23, 25), all those who obey Him are added to His Church (Acts 2:41, 47).

All those who have NOT been baptized by immersion, in water, for the forgiveness of sins, are in a lost condition (Luke 19:10) However, for those that have put on Christ in baptism, their sins have been forgiven (Acts 2:38). They have been added to the Church and “all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Those in Christ experience a “living hope” that heaven will be their eternal home (1 Peter 1:3-4). Salvation is ONLY in Jesus and His Church!

LOVE THE LORD THY GOD

By: Ray Varner, Member, Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA

There are basically four types of people in the world: (1) those who seek pleasure, (2) those who seek wealth, (3) those who seek wisdom, and (4) those seek and do God's will.

The Bible teaches that those who love pleasure shall be poor (Proverbs 21:17). Pleasure chokes out the word of God (Luke 8:14) and leads to destruction (James 5:5). The Bible also teaches that one's life consists not in the abundance of things he possesses (Luke 12:15), and that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Will we in America ever learn this lesson?

The Bible also says we can not find (know) God's will for our lives through human wisdom; *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom knew not God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21).

It was Solomon in the long ago who stated that man's purpose in life, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear (respect) God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

It was Christ, the Son of God and Master Teacher, who also affirmed man's purpose in life, *"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...soul...strength, and...mind and thy neighbor as thyself"* (Luke 10:27). *"Whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (Matthew 7:24).*

If we *are not* doing God's will, found in the Bible, then we have no real (true) meaning in life, and all is *vanity*. What is your purpose in life? I pray it is following the will of our Father in heaven.

Have a great life in the Lord, and be sure to let your light shine.

Ray Varner

A FAITH OF OUR OWN

There comes a time in all our lives that we need to believe something because we find it to be true. Many Christians are Christians because of the upbringing of their faithful parents. This is both good and right. We are admonished by the Word to teach our children (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 4:9), and bring them to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). When one is taught the truth, so he can be saved, then that person must be able to see for himself the truth that will save him. This is a time in our lives when “we” must become the “they” that we have been relying on all of our lives. In other words, we must grow up spiritually (1 Peter 2:2).

In John 4, after Jesus had His conversation with the woman at the well, she was convinced that He was the promised Christ (verse 29). She immediately went and shared this valuable information with the men of the city with whom she came in contact. Because of this woman’s willingness to share this good news, *“Many of the Samaritans of the city believed on him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that ever I did”* (verse 39). These Samaritans were not satisfied with a belief based on the report of the woman only; they wanted a faith of their own. Here is a perfect example of how our faith grows (Romans 10:17). The text tells us that the Samaritans *“besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days”* (John 4:40). One can only imagine how great it would be to listen to the Savior of the world in a setting such as this. What all did Jesus tell them? We can only imagine. One thing we do know is that His Word caused them to have faith; *“And many more believed because of his own words”* (John 4:41). This growth in their faith caused confidence, trusts, courage, and hope in their own words; *“and they said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world”* (John 4:42). These individuals now had a faith of their own, based on God’s Word, not the word of someone else.

When we study God’s Word we not only increase our faith, we gain confidence in what we believe, trust in what we know, gain courage in our ability to share this same good news with others, and most of all we obtain the *“grace and peace”* that is multiplied unto us through the *“knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”* (2 Peter 1:2). No one can do it for us. We must increase our faith by our own diligent effort, through God’s inspired Word.

By: David Harris

GOD'S REVELATION

When Sir Walter Scott was lying on his death bed, he turned to his son-in-law, Lockhart, and said, "Give me the Book." Whereupon Lockhart questioned, "Which book?" as he was looking around at many shelves, containing numerous volumes, Scott replied, "Which book", there is but one book!" Of course Scott was referring to the book of books, the Bible. I wonder what book you and I will be most concerned about when we are laying upon our deathbed. I do know which book we will be most concerned about on Judgment Day. "The Book" is:

1. GOD'S DIVINE REVELATION: The Bible is our chart and compass for life. It gives purpose and meaning to our lives. It is our roadmap from earth to Heaven. It gives hope after death. The Bible claims to be God's Word. Over 2,500 times Scriptures claim to be "God's Words." Expressions such as, "The Lord said," "God spake," and "These are the words of the Lord" are found at least 1,300 times in the Old Testament. We would also point out that Jesus upheld the claims of the Old Testament writers. The Bible is God's revealed Will for us. We should treat it as such (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; I Corinthians 2:10-13; I Thessalonians 2:13-14).

2. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S FULL REVELATION: Jesus made a promise to His apostles. He said He would guide them *into all truth* (John 16:13). This means, "Into all parts of the truth." Did He keep His promise? I believe He did!

3. THE BIBLE IS GOD FINAL REVELATION: When the final book of the New Testament was written down, God's revealed Will to man was complete. All who have claimed divine revelation after the first century are false prophets! (Jude 3-4). The authority of the Bible is final. The Bible should be the standard to which we turn to settle all religious and moral questions. There is no higher authority to which any of us can appeal. The Bible is God's final and complete Word.

4. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT: Those who lived during the time of the Patriarchal system will be judged under that system. Those who lived and died during the time when the Law of Moses was binding on the Jews will be judged by that Law. We today live under the time of the New Testament system, and will be judged by the New Testament (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; II Corinthians 5:10). Let us thank God for "the Book"—our Bible

SEVEV ATTACKS ON OUR FAITHFULNESS

1. PERSECUTION, Matthew 24:9-10: It is hard to keep getting up just to be knocked down again. Jesus told the church at Smyrna, *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, and then he said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). I suspect that Paul would say that persecution which comes from without, but from that which comes from our own brethren.
2. TEMPTATION, Luke 8:13; Hebrews 3:13: In interpreting the meaning of the seed which fell on the rocky ground, Jesus said, *“these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”*
3. WORLDINESS, 2 Timothy 4:10: As Demas forsook Paul, having loved this present world, so will our zeal for the Lord be diminished if we love this world.
4. A MORAL LAPS, 2 Samuel 12: Psalm 32: When we feel unclean or when our conscience is bothering us, it is hard to get excited about serving the Lord.
5. FORSAKING WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL LIVING (Hebrews 10:25-31). When we miss worship, we must be careful that a slow, progressive callousness is not setting in. Many who would not defiantly blaspheme and repudiate their faith find themselves slowly doing just that.
6. NOT SEEING THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. The Book of Job!
7. THINKING THAT YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE. 1 Corinthians 2:3, *“And I (Christ) was with you in weakness, and in fear, and much trembling.*

Adapted from “The West Side Epistle” West Side Church of Christ, Salem, VA

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

“There’s a great day coming,” are the words to a familiar and favorite song. Christ’s return is a reality. It is not some riddle to be solved nor a code to be broken, but a day to be anticipated. When that day will occur however, remains a mystery to all except God (Matthew 24:36). Therefore, it should not be when that day will come that concerns us the most, but how we live until that day arrives. Consider very seriously, the following:

1. We should live a Christ-like life. Christ is our example (I Peter 2:21). We should consider His “steps” (I Peter 2:21, mind (Philippians 2:5) and His deeds (Acts 10:38). Jesus’ life and teachings were in perfect harmony. He cared enough to die. He loved unconditionally. He did the Father’s will.
2. We should strive to save our family. One man said, “I’ve gone the world over saving souls and lost my own son.” Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) and yet he saved only his wife, three sons and three daughters-in-law (I Peter 3:20). Joshua was a busy leader, but he said, “... *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*” (Joshua 24:15). The world needs more fathers like Noah and Joshua, (cf. Genesis 18:19; Ephesians 6:4).
3. We should be supremely committed to the Church of Christ. Never be ashamed of the “Church of Christ”. It is the Church of the New Testament. Christ died for it (Acts 20:28) and He reigns over it (1 Corinthians 15:25). When Christ returns, it will be delivered unto God (1 Corinthians 15:24)
4. We should strive for unity, peace and harmony within the Church. In Ephesians 4:1-6, we find the disposition and doctrine for Christian unity. The pulse of the Church must beat in unison. With the Bible as our guide in faith and practice, we should never allow false doctrine, opinion or supposition to lead the Church into error, liberalism or legalism. Let’s stand foursquare on the Bible; not swaying to the left or right (Acts 5:29)!
5. We should live so that our name is always in the Book of Life. Right now in Heaven there is a Book of Life. Moses was aware of this book (Exodus 32:32), so was Paul (Philippians 4:3). Jesus told the disciples, “rejoice because your name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20). In the Book of Life are names of the redeemed. Is your name in that book right now? Your name remains there when you become a Christian. Your name remains there by living a faithful life. When the Book of Life is opened (Revelation 20:11-15), will your name be there? Life’s most important thing is having your name in heaven!

DEALING WITH LIFE

To deal with what life gives us is a challenge you see, the actions we take in meeting our responsibilities will determine what happens to you and me.

The advice and help we get, affected with enthusiasm, along the path of life, is the strengths we use to build quality of life in our plight.

We will be judged by the diligent application of how we choose to do our thing, because it's very true...not everything is what it seems.

Some time we have to lose in order for us to win, but to lose or win will never happen if or unless we never begin.

There is opportunity for improvement, therefore a better way; this should be the attitude we take at the beginning of each and every day.

If we are going to see the rainbow we will have to put up with a little rain, the seasoning of strong character includes, among other things, considerable pain.

Dealing with what life gives us must be influenced by emotional control; there are rules, which must be followed fearlessly and bold.

To deal with what life gives us there are the right choices we have to take, the rewards of dedication, perseverance, and determination doth' a noble life make.

It has been said, "a man's character is his fate, and victory comes from skill," our prayer should be, whatever life gives us, we are with God's help, willing to deal! In Jesus, name....Amen!

By: W. T. (Bill) Richardson, Jr.