

END-TIMES ISSUES



#62 Commandment #3 – Knowing God

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1

THE BAD NEWS

NOT THIS → Now this is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.
John 17:3 (BSB)

BUT THIS → We once had this knowledge... but we threw it away.

⇨ **When God created us, we knew God.**

- We, the human race, chose sin and evil – trusting the devil – instead of righteousness and holiness – trusting the God who created us. *We did this, even though God warned us that we would bring horrible consequences upon ourselves.*
- Collectively, we did it in Adam; individually, we do it every time we choose to sin. It's like saying, "I approve of what Adam did. I stand in solidarity with him."

2

We chose to sin...

- ✓ Ever since that time...
 - Having become enemies of God, we lost the fellowship with God that comes from a relationship made possible by a *true knowledge* of God.
 - It has also become our natural tendency to *suppress* the knowledge of God that we *do* have. God created us... but we have chosen substitutes to take his place.
- ✓ Yet to this very day, knowledge about God is available.

... what **may be known** about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them**. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his eternal power and divine nature—**have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made**, so that people are without excuse.

Romans 1:19–20 (NIV)

But how do we respond to this knowledge?

3

- ✓ By nature, we *suppress this knowledge* of God... and we claim to be "wise" without it.
 - This knowledge – which existed even *before* sin entered the world – is not designed to *save* people, but to *teach* us about God.

... people, who **suppress the truth** by their wickedness,
... they **knew God**, [but] they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, ...
... they **claimed to be wise**, [but] they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images ...
They **exchanged the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator ...
... they **did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God**, ...

Romans 1:18b, 21a, 22-23a, 25a, 28a (NIV)

The consequences of this are horrible – yet deserved.

4

- ✓ We know we deserve *judgment* (specifically *death*) for all this.
 - Yet we continue to do such things.

Although they **know God's righteous decree** that those who do such things [= list of sins, in vs. 29-30] **deserve death**, they not only **continue to do** these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:32 (NIV)

❖ God has also embedded within us a *conscience* that testifies against us – Romans 2:15.

- ✓ Here is the end result of abandoning the knowledge of God:

[God] will **punish** those who **do not know** God and **do not obey** the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with **everlasting destruction and shut out** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ...

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 (NIV)

5

- ✓ Other things that Scripture tells us about our condition:
 - When we suppress our knowledge of God, *he gives us over to the sins we long for*. "You *want* it... you can *have* it!" (This is one of the ways God reveals his wrath – Romans 1:18.)

... their thinking became **futile** and their foolish hearts were **darkened**.
... God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to **sexual impurity** for the degrading of their bodies with one another.
... God gave them over to **shameful lusts**.
... God gave them over to a **depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with **every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity**.

Romans 1:21b, 24, 26b, 28b-29a (NIV)

❖ As *individuals*, people don't commit *all* the sins listed in this chapter. But as a *group*, these verses describe the end result – if God's restraint is fully rejected.

MORE

6

- Ultimately, we are storing up wrath that will be poured out on us at the Day of Judgment – because of our stubborn and unrepentant hearts – Romans 2:5-6 (see also verses 7-16).
- In the meantime, we have made ourselves slaves to sin – John 8:34. This slavery leads to death – Romans 6:16.
- **There is nothing we can do to change our condition. We can't save ourselves.**

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is **a slave to sin**."

John 8:34 (BSB)

Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as obedient slaves, **you are slaves to the one you obey**, whether you are **slaves to sin leading to death**, or to obedience leading to righteousness?

Romans 6:16 (BSB)

★ **OUR SITUATION IS SO HOPELESS, THAT ONLY GOD CAN CHANGE IT.** ★

7

THE GOOD NEWS

✓ **Surprise!** God has offered to change our hopeless situation!

- It will require **JESUS** to be willing to receive *our* deserved punishment. (*Mercy* cannot cancel the need for *justice*.)
- **WE** must be willing to repent of our sin and trust him for that change... and that will result in changes in *our* values and lives.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE!

God made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on our behalf**, so that in Him we might become **the righteousness of God**.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (BSB)

God has no obligation to save anyone. We must be willing to turn from our wickedness and turn to righteousness.

Not many choose to do this. But those who do so will discover the greatness of the power of God that is working in them, to bring about their salvation.

8

✓ In this "great exchange" – Jesus taking our sin and giving us his righteousness – we see **the power of God** at work in us.

... **his incomparably great power** for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:19a (NIV)

- We also see **the power of the Good News** – by which God begins to "re-introduce" himself to us!

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is **the power of God at work**, saving everyone who believes...

Romans 1:16a (NLT)

- We also begin to learn about many things related to our salvation – things that have to do with: God's knowledge; our knowledge; sovereignty and responsibility; religion and life; God's covenant promises, etc.

9

Some of the many knowledge-related things we learn:

① God's/Jesus' knowledge of us is directly tied to our salvation.

For **those God foreknew**, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30 (BSB)

② It affects our knowledge of him, as well as our conduct.

OUR KNOWLEDGE

"I am the good shepherd. I **know** My sheep and My sheep **know** Me, ..."

John 10:14 (BSB)

OUR CONDUCT

"My sheep listen to My voice; I **know** them, and they **follow** Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish."

John 10:27-28 (BSB)

10

③ We discover that God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together. (We might not understand how, but we learn to trust God to work out the details.)

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord **knows** those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord **must turn away from wickedness**."

2 Timothy 2:19 (NIV)

SOVEREIGNTY

RESPONSIBILITY

④ We discover how important knowledge of God is – and even more importantly, God's knowledge of us!

Formerly, when **you did not know God**, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that **you know God**, or rather **are known by God**, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Galatians 4:8-9 (BSB)

11

⑤ We learn that religious activities don't cause salvation. They can be done by evildoers! People can be very religious (see vs. 21-22), yet can actually be violating God's will by their religious activities.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you**. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

⑥ We learn that it's not merely a matter of us attaining knowledge. What we know cannot be separated from how we live.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and **all knowledge**, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing**.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (BSB)

12

- ⑦ We discover that this is the emphasis of the New Covenant!

KNOWLEDGE
+ CONDUCT

KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD

"I will put my laws **in their minds**
and write them **on their hearts**.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'
because **they will all know me**,
from the least of them to the greatest.

For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 8:10-12 (NIV)

- This is a knowledge that goes far beyond "fact awareness." It is a "conduct-influencing" knowledge.

13

YES! WE CAN KNOW GOD!

- ✓ In the Good News, we can learn about the God who became "unknown" to us (since we suppressed that knowledge).
- ✓ There is *power* in the Good News (Romans 1:16)! People who are willing to pay attention to it and obey it *can be saved*!

For as I [= Paul] walked around and examined your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN **UNKNOWN** GOD.

Therefore what you worship as something unknown, **I now proclaim** to you.

Acts 17:23 (BSB)

KNOWLEDGE
LOST.

THE GOOD
NEWS!

Our sinful nature places us in a precarious position. Our conscience reminds us that there is someone (or something) we need to know. Yet we work to *suppress* that awareness, because "the God who is there" is *not* the god we want.

14

- ✓ *How important is knowing this God? Consider this:*

NOTHING
THAT
PERTAINS TO
US.

EVERYTHING
THAT
PERTAINS TO
GOD.

This is what the LORD says:

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,

but let the one who boasts boast about this:
that **they have the understanding to know me**,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,"

declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NIV)

- If we pay attention to Scripture, we will realize that "knowing" God is not a boast about ourselves. It is a boast about the God, who introduced himself to people who *didn't want to know him*!

15

WHO is this God?

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- ✓ *He is the God who introduces himself as the LORD – "Yahweh."*

**The absolute self-existing and
unchangeable God, who is actively
present among us.**

"... that they have the understanding to **know me**,
that I am **the LORD**, ..."

Jeremiah 9:24b (NIV)

- This is the **NAME** by which he introduced himself. But it's not the *only* name he used to reveal himself.
- Down through the ages, he continued to reveal more about himself. *But it always included everything they needed in order to be saved.*

16

- ✓ *Even before sin entered the world, he was known as the LORD (Yahweh) – see Genesis 2.*

- After they sinned (Genesis 3), perhaps that name took on additional significance, after God made a promise about one who would conquer sin at its very source.
- They would learn that he was the God who could be *trusted*.

Talking to the spiritual force that empowered the Serpent,
God said...

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.

**He will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."**

Genesis 3:15 (BSB)

Did Adam and Eve understand everything about this promise? Probably not. *But they could trust God*, who, in later centuries, would reveal more about how he planned to do it.

17

- ✓ *As the centuries progressed, God revealed more about himself and his plan.*

- Again, the people needed to *accept* what God revealed to them. But they also needed to *trust* God to do what he promised... and to *live* based on that trust.

The book of Hebrews (chapter 11) is filled with examples of people who did this. They did not receive the final fulfillment of what God had promised them, because that fulfillment came in Jesus. But they were convinced that God would keep his promise. *Today, we get to share in that fulfillment!*

These were all commended for their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised. God had planned something better for us, so that together with us they would be made perfect.

Hebrews 11:39-40 (BSB)

(This "something better" is probably the New Covenant and the salvation that is now available to Gentiles all over the world.)

18

- ✓ *Now, Jesus has come. He is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. Everything that may happen in the future (end-time prophecy, etc.) is connected to him.*

- It's *still* our duty to accept what God has revealed to us, to trust God to do what he promised, and to live based on that trust.
- What changed? In Jesus, we have a clearer and fuller revelation about God that we must accept and live by.

Today, we do not follow a different "religion," than did the people of the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophesied about Jesus Christ; and anyone who truly accepts the Old Testament will accept its New Testament fulfillment!

"For **Moses said**, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet [= Jesus] like me from among your brothers. **You must listen to Him in everything He tells you.** Everyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from among his people.' "

Acts 3:22-23 (BSB); based on Deuteronomy 18:15, 19.

19

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

- ✓ *In the New Testament, God reveals himself as "Jesus," who co-exists with "the Father" and "the Holy Spirit."*

- If you want to *know* God in his *clearest and final* revelation, you need to *know* Jesus, who is...

"... the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature ..."

Hebrews 1:3b (BSB)

- This "Jesus" is "God with us." He has been given the name "Jesus," because he came to save a people for God.

"... they will call Him **Immanuel**" (which means, "God with us").

Matthew 1:23b (BSB)

"... you are to give Him the name **Jesus**, because He will save His people from their sins."

Matthew 1:21b (BSB)

"JESUS" MEANS
"GOD SAVES."

20

- ✓ *How important is knowing Jesus? Consider this:* The difference between saved and unsaved is based on whether or not we *know* Jesus.

- The religious leaders** did not know Jesus – i.e., they did not recognize him for who he was. (They rejected him.) This means they did not know the Father, either.

"You do not **know** Me or My Father," Jesus answered. "If you **knew** Me, you would **know** My Father as well."

John 8:19b (BSB)

- The apostles** accepted who Jesus was; and so, Jesus enabled them to recognize the Father – by making known his name.

"Righteous Father, although the world has not **known** You, I **know** You, and they [= apostles] **know** that You sent Me. And I have made **Your name** **known** to them and will continue to make it **known**, so that the love You have for Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:25-26 (BSB)

21

"And I have made **Your name** **known** to them and will continue to make it **known**, so that the love You have for Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:26 (BSB)

- ✓ *This brings us right back to the connection between knowing God and knowing his name. This is God's way of revealing himself to us.*

- ✓ Proclaiming God's name was part of Jesus' mission – and the Old Testament anticipated it *before it happened*.

I will proclaim **Your name** to my brothers;
I will praise You in the assembly.

Psalms 22:22 (BSB)

[Jesus] says:
"I will proclaim **Your name** to My brothers;
I will sing Your praises in the assembly."

Hebrews 2:12 (BSB)

22

Your MISSION

WHO is God?
WHO is Jesus?

"The TRUE God!"

➡ **Get to know him better**, and let him rule your life!

"The TRUE God"

– a name that teaches an important truth about him!

- Old Testament: Jeremiah 10:10 (the LORD – Yahweh)
- New Testament: John 17:3 (the Father) and 1 John 5:20 (the Son)
- (Also the Holy Spirit – who quietly works in behalf of the Father and the Son.)

23

Credits

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24