

KNOWING GOD
Jno.17:3; 1Jno.2:3-5
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The N.T. says that to know God “is life eternal,” Jno.17:3. Also, that many people do not know God and thus have no hope of eternal life, 1Th.4:13; 1Cor.15:19.
2. The N.T. also speaks of some who claim to know God but, in reality, have a false hope, Mt.7:21a,22,23; Tit.1:16.
3. There are several N.T. passages that speak of knowing God, revealing who it is that know him, who does not know him, what it is to know him, how it is that one knows that he knows God, and why others do not know God in spite of their claim to the contrary.
4. But of all the passages of which we speak there are three primary passages which are keys to what it means to know God, who knows him, and how they know that they know him.
 - a. They are Jno.17:3; 1Jno.2:3-5; 5:20.
 - b. These we shall consider and develop in this study in connection with various other passages on the subject.
5. The who, what, when, where, why and how of this subject are what we seek by means of the following outline:
 - a. The Infallible Proof Of Who It Is That Knows God And Christ And How They Know That They Know It.
 - b. What It Means To Know God And Christ Whom He Has Sent.
 - c. Those Who Know Not God In Spite Of Their Claim To The Contrary.
6. Consider them with us.

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE INFALLIBLE PROOF OF WHO IT IS THAT KNOWS GOD AND CHRIST AND HOW THEY KNOW THAT THEY KNOW IT,1Jno.2:3-5

1. The connecting links or introduction to our proof text.
 - a. Consider 1Jno.1:5-10 – no fellowship with God if we walk in darkness or in sin rather than in the light or righteousness, if we claim no guilt of sin while walking in darkness, and refuse to confess our sins.

- b. Also 1Jno.2:1,2.
 - (1) The forgiveness of our sins which we confess is through the propitiation of Jesus Christ.
 - (2) The redemption effected by Christ as the propitiation for our sins restores the lost fellowship between us and God whereby we come to the true knowledge of God in Christ.
 - (3) And this true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which is life eternal, is constantly being verified by a life of loving obedience according to our text.
 - c. By revealing or declaring the true way of knowing God, and of our knowing that we know him, all three of the following false theses are thereby overturned: whether it be maintained:
 - (1) That we know God apart from a supernatural revelation of him.
 - (2) That we cannot possibly know God at all.
 - (3) That knowing is an end in itself.
 - d. The teaching of 1Jno.2:3-5 demolishes each and all three of these false theses.
 - (1) The first, that we know God apart from supernatural revelation of him, by showing that the true knowledge of God has been brought by the Son of God, the Word of life, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, whom we have seen, heard and our hands have handled (1Jno.1:1,2), who is the propitiation for our sins (1Jno.2:1,2).
 - (2) The second, that we cannot possibly know God at all, by showing that, even if we cannot see God or rise to God, God has come down to us in his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
 - (3) The third, that knowing is an end in itself, by declaring that God has come down to us in his Son in order to bring us into fellowship with himself.
 - e. But even beyond these glorious truths does John lead us.
 - (1) He shows us by inspired testimony from God himself not only that we can know God, but that **we can know that we know him**, V.3a.
 - (2) What an exalted spiritual attainment that is, as well as a comforting, consoling and encouraging one!
2. Now we examine Vv.3-5 which in a positive, emphatic manner tells us **HOW** we can know that we know God.

- a. “Hereby” Literally, “in this” – refers to the clause “If we keep his commandments.”
- b. The sure, positive, infallible proof or evidence that we know him is when and “if we keep his commandments.”
 - (1) This necessarily implies that we can know what his commandments are, and whether or not we are keeping them.
- c. “To keep” means “to watch, to guard, to watch over protectively” – “guarding as some precious thing.” Thus it come to signify “to observe practically” – “observing to keep”.
- d. When this “keep” is used to express obedience, it is obedience because the commandments are esteemed as precious, and are regarded as treasures not to be broken.
- e. **This keeping is habitual.**
 - (1) This is indicated by the use of the present tense in V.3: “If we keep” – i.e., “if we keep on keeping” in the sense of habitual practice.
 - (2) He who knows God does not “walk in darkness,” but “in the light.”
 - (3) He walks as Jesus walked, V.6.
- f. **This keeping is the development of love, V.5.**
 - (1) “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”
 - (2) The keeping of God’s word is not only proof of the exalted spiritual attainment of knowing him and that we are in him, but also of the perfecting of our love for God.
 - (3) By understanding that “perfected” means “appropriately developed,” or that which has “attained its end,” we see how love is perfected in keeping his word.
 - (4) Our love for God is the effect of his love for us (1Jno.4:10,19), and his will is that we should express our love to him by keeping his word, his commandments, and when we do so, love is perfected.
 - (5) Love for God aims at obedience, delights in obedience, and is evidence of our love for God, as well as proof of our knowing God, 1Jno.5:3; Jno.14:15,21,23,24; 15:10.
- g. This claim of knowing God is not in word only, V.4.
 - (1) Where the obedience of Vv.3,5 is not, the profession of knowing God is false.

- (2) In fact, he who makes the claim of knowing God in the absence of keeping God's commandments "is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Cf. 1Jno.1:6.
3. This exalted spiritual attainment of knowing God must never be altered and weakened into simply knowing certain doctrines concerning him; it must ever be the knowing of God himself; knowing him by obedient faith and experience through that obedience of faith.
- One may be well versed in theology, may hold to a so-called orthodox creed, may be member of a church that professes to preach God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, his Son, but if he does not both preach and keep God's commandments, and or God's word, he "is a liar."
 - Paul said of some in Tit.1:16, "They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him."
 - Take notice of what Jesus said in Mt.7:21-27; Lk.6:46; Cf. Heb.5:8,9.
 - This knowledge of God is not merely intellectual, but moral and spiritual, by faith and obedience from the heart.
 - It is not necessarily the trained and vigorous intellect that sees God, but the pure in heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see (experience, have fellowship with) God," Mt.5:8.
 - This knowledge is that inward and spiritual acquaintance with God which arises out of our faith in him and our loving obedience to him.
4. If it be asked **WHICH** commandments constitute the test here submitted, the answer is, **ALL** of them!
- Any commandment of God we are disposed to violate or ignore or neglect because of our unwillingness to bend our will to his will provides the occasion which demonstrates the lack of full and full knowledge of him.
 - This, then, would be the "one thing" which we "lack" and which, like the young ruler's riches (Mt.19:16-22), will close the door of heaven in our face and deny us eternal life. See Jas.2:10.

B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW GOD AND CHRIST WHOM HE HAS SENT?

- Some preliminary thoughts before defining the term "know".
 - We must not suppose that knowing God is bare intellectual knowledge of God.

- (1) It is the conscious possession of God!
 - (2) Certain truths about God may be seen in many ways and everywhere; but the spiritual perception of God himself can only be reached in Christ.
- b. This knowledge involves spiritual submission to God by faith in and obedience to his Son Jesus Christ (1Jno.4:14,15; 2:22-25).
 - c. This knowledge involves fellowship and communion with God, which is life.
 - d. The knowing God here referred to is not limited to God's existence. That is self-evident. One may accept that God is, i.e., believe intellectually that God is, and still be destitute of that knowledge which is "life eternal." Cf. Jas.2:19.
 - e. Again, it comprises a knowledge of God's attributes; such as: his eternity, his omnipresence, his omnipotence, his omniscience, etc. But, then, all that, along with the knowledge of his existence, does not constitute the knowledge of which Jno.17:3 speaks.
 - f. Knowing God includes knowing his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.
 - (1) For one who does not know Jesus Christ, God's Son, can not know God, the Father; because to the Son is to know the Father.
 - (2) So we must answer the question: What does it mean to know the Son and/or what is involved in knowing the Son.
2. Defining the term "know" as used in Jno.17:3; 1Jno.2:5; 4:8; 5:20.
 - a. It is used especially of the spiritual fellowship between Christians and God and Jesus Christ.
 - b. It involves that spiritual relationship we enter when by faith we obey the gospel of Christ and are baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," as described by Mt.28:18,19.
 - c. W.E. Vine, Expository Dictionary Of N.T. Words, Vol.II, 298 defines it as follows:

"Frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is know is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship, e.g., especially of God's knowledge, 1Cor.8:3, "if any man love God, the same if know of him;" here the knowing suggests approval and bears the meaning 'to be approved'; so in 2Tim.2:19; Jno.10:14,27... (See Mt.7:21-23).

“Such knowledge is obtained, not by mere intellectual activity, but by the exercise of one’s faith in receiving Christ through obeying the gospel of Christ and being born again, (i.e., being ‘born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,’ Jno.1:12,13; 3:3-6; 1Pet.1:22-25, ejd).

“Such knowledge (in its initial action, ejd) is not marked by finality, but is to grow, increase.” 2Pet.3:18 (2Pet.1:2); 1Jno.2:28; 3:2,3,7; Cf. Hos.6:3 (RV); Hos.4:6.

3. Emphasize: To know God is “life eternal,” Jno.17:3. But eternal life is obtained through Jesus Christ by faith in and obedience to the gospel, Rom.1:16,17; Mk.16:15,16; 1Pet.1:22-25; 2Th.1:6-10; 1Jno.2:22-25; Rom.8:24,25; Tit.1:2.

C. NOW TO THOSE WHO KNOW NOT GOD OR DENY GOD IN SPITE OF THEIR CLAIM TO THE CONTRARY. Cf. Tit.1:16.

1. The Jews of Jesus’ time on earth who were worshippers of God but denied Jesus Christ whom God had sent, Jno.8:19,51-55; 16:1-3.
2. The anti-christs of the time of the apostles on earth who had obeyed the gospel, claimed fellowship with God while walking in darkness, and denied the “Jesus is the Christ,” “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” 1Jno.2:18-23; 4:3; 5:10-12; 2Jno.7; 1Jno1:6.
3. Those of the world who do not believe in Jesus and who reject his apostolic messengers, Jno.15:16-21; 1Jno.4:6a; Cf. Mt.10:40; Jno.13:20; 1Th.4:4,5; Rom.1:21,28; 1Cor.1:20-24; 1Jno.3:1.
4. Then those who refuse to believe what Jesus taught and/or teach things contrary to and fail to abide in the doctrine of Christ, 2Jno.9-11. Examples from A to Z.
 - a. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Mk.16:15,16 and teach that baptism is not essential to salvation from past sins.
 - b. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Ac.2:38 and teach that baptism is not for or unto remission of sins, but “because of”.
 - c. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Eph.4:4-6; Mt.16:18 and teach there are many churches belonging to Christ known as different Christian Denominations, or many Faiths, of which you have your choice.

- d. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Eph.2:8 and teach that sinners are saved by faith alone and/or by grace alone. Cf. Tit.3:4-7.
- e. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Ac.2:47 and teach that one is saved then joins the church or the Denomination of his choice.
- f. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Rom.6:3-6 and Gal.3:26,27 and teach that one is saved and in Christ before he is baptized into Christ.
- g. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Mt.16:18; Ac.20:28; Eph.1:22,23; Col.1:18,24; Eph.5:23-27; and teach that one church is as good as another.
- h. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Jno.17:20,20,21; 1Cor.1:10-13 and teach that God pleased with all the divisions of Denominationalism.
- i. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Ac.2:47; 20:28; 1Pet.1:18,19; Eph.1:22,23; 5:23-27; and teach that the church is not necessary to salvation.
- j. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Mk.16:15,16; Ac.9:6; 22:16; 10:5,6; 11:14; 10:47,48 and teach that the alien sinner may pray through to salvation or for pardon or pray the sinner's pray to be saved. Cf. Prov.28:9.
- k. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 1Cor.9:27; Gal.5:4; Heb.12:14,15; 2Pet.20-21 and teach that a child of God once save can not so sin as to be lost.
- l. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Heb.2:9; 1Tim.2:3-6 and teach that Jesus died only for the elect.
- m. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Mt.7:13,14,21-27, who pervert Heb.2:9 and Heb.5:8,9 and teach universal salvation.
- n. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ that he died for all, offering salvation to all who believe by means of the gospel of Christ, and teach the Calvinistic **T U L I P** doctrine.
- o. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Ac.20:7 and teach that the Lord's Supper may be eaten on a day other than the 1st day of the week.
- p. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Mt.26:28; Ac.26:28; Heb.9:26; 1Pet.1:18,19 and teach that he shed his blood for our sicknesses (physical) as well as for our sins.

- q. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 1Cor.9:21; Rom.4:15; 5:13; 3:23; Gal.3:22; Ac.8:22; Heb.5:8,9; Jas.2:10 and teach that we are not under any system of law.
- r. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Jno.4:24 and teach that we may worship God in the way and manner we choose if sincere.
- s. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Eph.5:19; Col.3:16,17; 1Cor.4:6; Rev.22:18,19 and teach that we may use mechanical instruments of music in worship of God today.
- t. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 1Tim.1:3,10; 2Tim.3:16,17; Tit.1:9; 2:7,10; 2Jno.9-11 and teach that doctrine doesn't matter as long as one believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
- u. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 2Tim.3:16,17 and teach that the Holy Spirit inspired written word, the Scriptures, are not complete and all sufficient to guide us spiritually, nor can we know and understand our sins by means of them and them alone.
- v. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 1Jno.1:7,9; Lk.13:3 and teach that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse the child of God of sins of which he is not aware (i.e., sins he doesn't even know he has committed) if he is otherwise "a worker in the Lord's vineyard and his life as a whole is one of obedience to the law of Christ." (E.M. Zerr , Com. 1Jno.1)
- w. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in Col.2:14-17 and teach that the 7th day Sabbath must be kept holy or observed as a holy day in this the N.T. dispensation.
- x. Those who deny the doctrine of Christ taught in 1Cor.13:8-10 and teach that God is performing miracles of healing today through human agency, as well as enabling people to speak in tongues, i.e., by miraculous power to speak languages of people they have never studied to learn by normal means.
- y. Those who deny Mt.19:9 and teach:
 - (1) One may divorce for any cause without sin.
 - (2) One may divorce for any cause without sin as long as he does not marry another.
 - (3) One can never have a right to marry another, not even with a Scriptural divorce, or even after the death of a spouse. Cf. Rom.7:1-3.
- z. Those who deny 1Cor.7:39; 7:1-5; 7:10-15 and teach:

- (1) That the widow who marries again must marry a Christian.
- (2) That Vv.1-5 allow legal separation.
- (3) That if the unbelieving spouse departs, the believing spouse is free to marry another.

III. CONCLUSION

1. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love,” 1Jno.4:8.
 - a. It is by love that we know him.
 - b. Love of him as well as knowing and keeping his commandments are inseparably connected, 1Jno.2:3,4; 5:3.
2. Yet, fully and perfectly, we can never know him.
 - a. The ocean cannot be contained in a tea-cup.
 - b. The finite such as we are cannot fully and perfectly comprehend the Infinite such as God is.
 - c. So to the most advanced of created intelligence, such as man is, God must ever remain incomprehensible.
 - d. But we may know him truly, savingly, and blessedly, and even experience eternal life with him.
 - e. In other words, we can know God as he wants us to know him. But the secret things belong to God, Deut.29:29.
3. Note the contrast between the recompense meted out at the final judgment to those who know God and those who do not, 2Th.1:6-10; Mt.25:46; Jno.5:28,29.
4. This attests the fact that those who know God are known by God and have his approval, Psa.1:6; Jno.10:14; 1Cor.8:3; Gal.4:9; 2Tim.2:19.
5. Finally, be reminded once again that to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent “is life eternal,” or to have eternal life, Jno.17:3.
6. But one cannot have eternal life without having a knowledge of or being taught of God and Christ through the written word, and thereby coming unto Christ, Jno.6:44,45; 1Jno.5:13; 4:6; 2:24,25; 5:18-20; Heb.5:8,9.