

Knowing God

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”
—John 17:3

To know God is the most important thing in the world. It is essential to salvation (John 17:3). It is the basis of all other knowledge. If we do not know God we cannot know ourselves. We are not what we imagine we are. We are what He says we are—His creatures made in His image, dependent on Him for every breath, and hopelessly darkened without His light. As David put it, “With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:9).

Thus to know ourselves, we need to know God. John Calvin grasped this clearly: “No man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself, without first having contemplated the divine character” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1, chap. 1, sec. 1). The same holds good for the study of any subject. We cannot accurately study or properly understand any part of God’s creation if we do not recognize its relationship to its Creator.

From this we gather that for our welfare in this world and the next it is vital for us to know God. The good news is that it is possible for us to know Him. We cannot comprehend Him, for that would bring Him within the limits of our finite minds, but we may know Him.

God clearly intends us to know Him. He has revealed Himself in every part of His creation. Only wilful, wicked blindness—the sinful determination not to see—stops any man from recognizing His “eternal power and Godhead.” Those who stubbornly refuse to see are therefore without excuse (Romans 1:20).

However, we are all sinners. We cannot read the book of nature aright—and even if we could, we need to know more about God than it reveals. It has nothing to say to us about pardon for sin, atonement, and how we may be saved. It was never intended to speak of such things. We need another, fuller, revelation of God. That is what He has given to us in the special revelation of redemption in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the revelation that He has committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures. From beginning to end their purpose is to reveal God in Christ (see Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39, 46).

It is in Scripture therefore that we learn what God tells us about Himself. Remember that this knowledge is essential to our well-being in this life and in the next. That makes our theme in this issue of the *LTBS Quarterly* particularly important. We are studying what God says about Himself. Let us make sure that we get to know the facts of that revelation. Better still, let us not rest until we are assured that we not only know the facts about God but that we know God Himself.

To know Him is more than holding correct views of Him. Correct views of God are important, but truly to know Him is to be so captivated by what God has shown us of Himself that we acknowledge Him as our Lord and sovereign, that we love Him and set our hearts on Him. Such knowledge produces unspeakable blessings. Francis Bacon said, “Knowledge itself is power.” The Bible is a lot more exact when it says, “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32).

The world is in desperate need of men and women who really know God. When his new minister visited Thomas Carlyle and asked him what the parish most needed, the famous writer replied, “Sir,

this parish most needs a man who knows God other than by hearsay.” That is what the world needs still.

The ability to shine as lights of gospel hope amid the darkness of sin, to stand when others are falling, and to withstand the pressures of sin and Satan when others are succumbing, comes from knowing God. Only the man who knows God knows how to live, how to serve, and how to die in the victory of Christ’s cross and resurrection.

Let us make sure that we know God. ■



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