

## How Does One Know God?

Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1990

### John 17:1-3

*These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

I'm going to be speaking to you today on this subject: "How Does One know God?" Can a person know God, and if so, how? I'll be reading from John Chapter 17: verses 1 through 3. I want you to listen very carefully to this message. I would like for you to first of all, find the scripture and read it along with me. I'm going to be referring to these three verses, almost word for word, at the beginning of the message. The subject again, is: "HOW DOES ONE KNOW GOD?"

In John 17:1, the scripture says; *"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."*

My friends, these words are taken from the Lord's Prayer. This is the Lord's Prayer. This is the prayer of the great Mediator, the great Intercessor, the great High Priest has come before the Father and He is praying for Zion. He is praying for His church and for His people. That is what He tells us in John 17:9, *"I pray for them; I pray not for the world."*

This prayer is not a general prayer for all mankind. He says, *"I pray not for the world. I pray for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine and all Mine are Thine and Thou hast given them to Me."* Do you see that in verse 9? In verse 20, He says; *"And I pray also for them which shall believe on Me through their word."*

We are listening in on the great High Priest as He prays to the Father on behalf of His church. I feel like Moses when he stood there on the mountain and saw the bush that burned but was not consumed. God said, *"Take off your shoes; you are on Holy ground."* This is indeed Holy ground. We are listening in on the Son of God as He speaks to the Father.

Let's look at these verses beginning with verse 1: It says, "*And these words spake Jesus.*" What words? The writer is talking about the preceding words in John Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16. Our Lord has been instructing and encouraging His disciples. If you would read Chapter 13, He met with them at the Lord's Table at the Passover. He washed their feet and began to talk to them about things that they would suffer and the things that would come to pass. He had been instructing them and encouraging them.

I'm talking about the preceding words in Chapter 13 through 16. "*These words spake Jesus.*" He had been warning them. He told them the sort of treatment that they could expect. He told them, "They will cast you out of the synagogue; they will kill you; they will think that they are doing God a favor." He told them that they could expect this; He said, "*Marvel not my brethren, that the world hate you. It hated Me before it hated you. The world hated Me without a cause.*"

Watch the next line. After He had instructed His disciples and taught them and encouraged them, He then "*lifted His eyes to heaven.*" He is getting ready to speak to the Father. He had been speaking for hours to His disciples and now the Son of God, the great Shepherd of the sheep, the great Surety of the Covenant, the great High Priest, speaks to His Father with praise on behalf of His disciples. He then "*lifted His eyes to heaven*" and He said, "*Father, the hour is come.*"

This is the hour of which He spake so often. Do you remember at the wedding feast in Canaan of Galilee when His mother said, "They have no more wine?" He said, "*Woman, what have I to do with thee; mine hour hast not yet come?*" On another occasion He said, "*For this cause came I to this hour. Shall I say, Father let this hour depart? No, for this cause came I to this hour.*"

On another occasion it says, "*He walked through their midst.*" He walked through the midst of people who were filled with hatred. They were seeking to kill Him. Nobody touched Him, why? "*His hour had not yet come.*" Now He says, "*This is the hour. Father the hour is come.*" This is the hour predestined from all eternity and from all ages. This is the hour in which all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, pictures and types would be fulfilled.

This is the hour of redemption. This is the hour God spoke about in Genesis 3:15, "*When the seed of woman would bruise the serpent's head.*" This is the hour portrayed by Moses when he lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. This is the hour that God told us about when the Passover Lamb was to be slain. This is the hour; "*the hour has come.*"

Then, He said; *“The hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may also glorify Thee.”* What does He mean here when He says, *“Glorify Thy Son?”* As God, He needed no added glory. All glory and majesty is His. *“He has a name above every name.”* He has all preeminence. Angels worship and adore Him. As God, He needs no added glory. But here, as I told you a moment ago; He’s not praying as God; He is praying as man and Mediator and Intercessor. He is praying as our Redeemer.

He prays as our High Priest. He is our Intercessor. Here, He is speaking on behalf of us. He is our Representative. Jesus Christ is identified with all of His people, the whole host of believers of all ages. He’s praying as a Mediator and He is saying, *“Father, sustain Me, and support Me and uphold Me in all that I must endure to redeem My people.”* As God, He needed no support. As God, He needed not to be upheld. *“He upholds all things by the Word of His power.”* But, as a man, the God-man and Representative, He prays; *“Now, glorify Me, sustain Me, support Me, and uphold Me in all things that I may glorify You, that I may accomplish your purpose.”*

You see; the Son came into the world to accomplish the will of the Father. He said in John 6: *“All that My Father giveth Me shall come to Me and him that cometh to Me; and Him that cometh to Me; I will in no wise cast out. For, I came down from heaven, not to do My own will; I came to do the will of Him that sent Me. And, this is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me; I will lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.”* So, here the Son is representing His sheep and His people.

He prays that the Father will glorify Him, that He may glorify the Father. He is praying to accomplish the will of the Father and the purpose of the Father in redeeming us. You see; the glorious work of redemption was given to Christ Jesus. It was laid upon His shoulder. In performing that work of redemption, the Son honors the Father. He reveals and He honors and manifests the Father’s attributes, the law, the justice, the holiness, the mercy, the love and the grace of God. All of His attributes are manifested and glorified. In redeeming His people, Christ glorified His Father; it enabled the Father to be just and to justify us.

Notice this in the next line: *“Thou hast given Me authority over all flesh.”* My friends, Jesus Christ is not an impotent, weak, frustrated Reformer. Jesus Christ is God. He is a man on a mission. He is the God-man on a mission. *“He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”* And as God He is the creator and He is King of the Kingdom, He has all the authority. He has all power over all creatures in the entire universe.

Isaiah 9:6 tells us that, it says; *“Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be on His shoulders.”* He said, in Matthew 28:18; *“All authority is*

*given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” In Philippians 2, “God has given Him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. In Acts 2, “God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ.”*

Don't feel sorry for Jesus. Don't pity the Son of God. He has all authority and all power. He has all majesty and all glory. He will do what He will with whom He will. He is King! The Jesus that is being preached today is *“another Jesus.”* The gospel that is being preached is *“another gospel.”* The Spirit that people are talking about is *“another spirit.”* God does what He pleases. *“He works according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth.”*

He told one of the old prophets, “I'll show you something. You come with Me down to the potter's house.” The prophet went to the potter's house and God said to him, “Do you see that potter working on that clay?” Christ said, *“I'm the potter and you're the clay. If it pleases Me, I will make out of the same lump one vessel unto wrath and another unto honor. The Son quickeneth whom He will.”* Jesus Christ is God.

He said, *“Thou hast given Me authority over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me.”* My friends, eternal life is not an offer; it is a gift. Nowhere in God's Word is eternal life pictured as an offer; it is a gift. *“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the record, God hath given us eternal life.”*

Eternal life is not an offer. It is not a reward for service rendered; it is a gift. *“Thanks be unto God for His gift.”* Eternal life is not a prize that is auctioned off; it is a gift. It is a gift given to the Son by the Father. That is what He said. *“Thou hast given Me authority over all flesh that I should give.”* He didn't say “sell” *“But give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me.”*

If you will read John 17; (this prayer of the High Priest, this prayer of Jesus Christ), you will find that six times He uses this phrase, *“Those whom Thou hast given Me.”* He uses that phrase, if you want to jot it down; it is verse 2, verse 6, verse 9, verse 11, verse 12 and verse 24. He says, *“As many as Thou hast given Me. Thou hast given Me authority over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me.”*

Watch the next line: *“And this is life eternal, this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, (that these people might know Thee), the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”* Here, the Son of God is defining eternal life. Do you want to know what eternal life is? Well, Christ defines it here by saying; *“I have power to give eternal*

*life to as many as Thou hast given Me.*” This is what it is, that they might know God. That they might know the true and living God, *“the only true God.”*

Eternal life is not to get religion. Eternal life is to know the only true God and the Redeemer. Eternal life is not just to reform a person’s life or life style; it is to know the true and living God. Eternal life is not just to attend church and adopt some traditions and doctrines. It is not to do what some preacher or church says that you are supposed to do; it is to know God. Eternal life is to know God, to love God, to trust God and to believe God. This is life eternal, *“That they might know Me.”*

My friends, I’m reading from the scriptures and a hallowed part of the scriptures. The Son of God is speaking to the Father and now the question comes; “How does one know God? How can a person know God?” I’m not talking about some god that is a god of his own imagination. How can a person know the living God, the true God, the only wise God, our Saviour?” David said, *“As the thirsty deer panteth for the water brooks, so panteth My soul after Thee, the living God.”*

How does one know the living God? Well, would you let me answer that for you? I believe that I can. First of all, I will answer in this fashion; “How can one know God?” I’ll tell you where I would start; I would start by reading God’s Word. Would you know the true and living God? The Bible must become your textbook.

If you want to know the Baptist God, then buy you some Baptist material. If you want to know the Catholic God, then buy you some Catholic material and read it. If you want to know about the Methodists, the Church of God or about the Mormon God, even Buddha, buy yourself some material that these people put out. They will tell you all about their God. If you want to know the living God, the true and living God, buy you a Bible. That’s true!

We must dismiss our thoughts pertaining to God because; we by nature do not know God. We are born strangers to God. The scripture says, *“Your sins have separated you and your God. No man hath seen God at anytime. No man knows the Father but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* So, we are going to have to dismiss our thoughts and the opinions of others, our own opinions and let God speak for Himself.

What does God say about Himself? There is only one place that He speaks. I’ve never heard Him speak out of the wind have you? I’ve never heard God speak from the sky, have you? The only time that God speaks is when He speaks through His Word. We are going to have to let God speak for Himself. What does He say about Himself? He says in His Word, *“Let the wicked forsake his thoughts, and the unrighteous man his ways and*

*let him return unto the Lord. For, My thoughts are not your thoughts and My ways are not your ways."*

Moses is an example for us here. Moses says, "Lord, show me Your glory; show me your way." God spoke to Moses and showed him His ways. He showed him His glory. He said, *"I'll cause My glory to pass before you."* On another occasion, (as I mentioned before), as Moses was standing by that burning bush and asked, "Lord, who are You? When I go down to the children of Israel and they ask me, 'Who sent you,' what am I going to say; who are you?" God answered him, *"I Am that I Am."*

I will tell you this; the scriptures are the final authority on the character of God Almighty. The scriptures are the final authority on the purpose of God, the ways of God, the Majesty of God, and the Holiness of God, the mercy of God and the grace of God. People may say, "Well, I think that God does things this way." You can be sure it is not that way if you think it or if I think it. *"Our thoughts are not God's thoughts."* We are going to have to find out what God says. *"God spoke to our Fathers by the prophets."* The scripture says, *"Let God be true and every man a liar."*

Would you know God? That is the first question. You are going to have to get into the Book. Find you a preacher who is in the Book and is preaching the Word verse by verse, *"line by line, precept upon precept."*

Secondly: How can a man know God? The answer is by regeneration. When Nicodemus came to the Lord, he was a very religious man, but he did not know God. He knew religion; he knew the law and the traditions of his fathers. He didn't know God. When he came to Jesus Christ to discuss the things of God, our Lord said, *"You must be born again."* He said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God"* (he cannot understand it). *"Except a man is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."* So, you must be born again.

Here is the only way that you are going to know God. Christ said, *"Nicodemus, I've told you earthly things and you don't understand, how are you going to understand when I tell you heavenly things?"* You are going to have to be born again to understand, to hear and to see the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. You have to be born again.

Nicodemus said, "Well, how can a man be born again? Does he enter into his mother's womb to be born the second time?" Christ said, "If that would happen, you would be just as you are now. *"That which is born of flesh is flesh."* Your flesh may be born a dozen times but it is still flesh. It is still fleshly and lives fleshly. It exposes flesh and has

fleshly ways. Flesh is flesh and that is all. A man has to be born of the Spirit of God, the Word of God and by the power of God.

You see; we are born with a mind. We have mental powers. People think but they don't think straight. Our minds are twisted and warped. They are out of kilter and out of focus and are an enmity against God. So, we are going to have to have a new mind.

Everybody has a will. You have a will and I have a will. Every human being has a will. That is one of the characteristics or attributes of the creature; he has a will. Our will is in bondage. Our wills are out of whack. The scripture says, "*You will not come unto Me. The natural mind is enmity against God*" and the will is crippled. We will not come to Him.

Not only that, we have affections. We love all sorts of things. What do we love? We love ourselves. We don't love God. We love darkness. "*This is condemnation; light has come into this world. Men love darkness.*" There is something that has happened to our affection.

Do you remember what happened in the Garden? God made a perfect man, an upright man, a holy man. That man sinned and that man represented all men. When he died; we died. When he died, something happened to his mind. Something happened to his thoughts, his will, and his affections.

We have a soul too! We have a heart also, but "*It is deceitful above all things and is desperately wicked.*" So, with this fleshly mind and will and affections and heart, we cannot know God. We have to be born again. We have to have a new mind, and a new heart. God said, "*I'll take that stony heart out and give you a heart of flesh.*"

God gives a new mind, a mind that thinks on God and causes him to love God. He is given a new heart to love God and a will to submit to God. Only with that new heart, new mind and new will; will a man come to God.

You might say, "How does this happen?" I don't know. Our Lord described it to Nicodemus this way, He said; "*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" The Lord quickens and saves whom He will.

I know what I would do. There was a man called Bartimaeus who was completely blind. He sat by the wayside begging. Christ came by. He said, "*Jesus, Thy Son of David, have*

*mercy on me.*” Christ said, *“What do you want?”* He said, *“That I may see.”* If I wanted to know God, I say this to myself and to you, I would get into the Word. Secondly, I would ask God to give me a heart to love Him, a will to choose Him, and a mind to lay hold upon the mysteries of God.

How can a man know God? He can know God by His Word, by regeneration, and thirdly, by revelation. What do you mean when you say revelation? In First John 5:20, it says; *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”* Did you hear that?

Let me repeat it, *“And we know that the Son of God has come.”* That’s right; He came into this world. The disciples said to Him one day, *“Show us the Father.”* He said, *“He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; I and the Father are one. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”* The Son of God has come. *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true.”* What did He say? *“Eternal life is to know the only true God.”*

He said, *“I’m the way, the truth and the life.”* You have to know that He is the truth and He is the way to know God. He is the truth of God and He is the life of God. *“No man comes to the Father but by Me.”* Do you see that? *“He has come and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and that we are in Him that is true, even in His Son. This is the true God and this is life eternal.”* We have been talking about God’s power, God’s purpose, God’s righteousness and God’s love. These are seen in Christ.

Do you want to know what God thinks, what God proposes and purposes? Do you want to know what God’s actions and attitudes are toward the things that you encounter every day? Then, study Jesus Christ. Learn about Jesus Christ. Look to Him and in Him you will see all that God has for you and all that you need to see.

Would you know God? Get into the Word. Ask for eyes to see and then, *“He that seeth the Son and believeth on Him, hath eternal life.”*