

Do We Know God?

By Carl G. Hecker

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A basic understanding of the true nature of our God can come only from the Bible. Our ideas of him develop over years of spiritual growth. If our fundamental understanding is wrong, we will never come to an adequate appreciation of what he requires of us. The following simple thoughts seem helpful in searching for deeper insight from the scriptures. See if you agree.

The Godhead

A clear, simple concept of the God of the Bible is essential to the proper faith and practice of the religion of Christ. The Hebrew word translated God (*Elohim*) in Genesis 1:1 is plural in number. It shows plurality in the persons of God. The New Testament also presents the same idea (John 1:1-14).

We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:29). Material representations of the Divine Being are idolatry (Exodus 20:4-6). God is spirit and we must not allow ourselves to think otherwise (John 4:24).

God (*Elohim*) has revealed himself as three persons. Each one in the Godhead is a distinct person but always one in action, thought, and purpose with the other two in the Godhead. These three persons always moved in perfect unity, with each having a specific identity and work apart from the others.

The Father is the designer. The Son, (also designated the Word) is the executor. The Holy Ghost is the organizer. When we read of God in the Bible, it always helps to have these basic thoughts in mind: God, the Father, as Designer; God, the

Son, as Executor; God, the Holy Ghost, as Organizer.

We see these three in the redemption of mankind. A proper understanding of their individual roles in this divine plan is essential to overcoming the often confusing and always conflicting denominational doctrines so prevalent today.

Our God in Redemption

We would expect to see the same unity of purpose and the definite assigned work in the revelation and enforcing of the scheme of redemption. The Father is the designer, the planner (Eph. 3:11; II Tim. 1:9). It was his eternal purpose. It was his grace and it was to be expressed in his gospel (Titus 2:11).

The Son is the one who executes by taking the form of a man (John 1:14) and dying on the cross to save all mankind (I Tim. 1:15). The Holy Ghost then did his divine part by revealing the reasonable and orderly plan in the New Testament. He did this by inspiring the apostles of Jesus.

Jesus gave the promise of the Father (infallible guidance) to his chosen apostles just before returning to the Father (John 14:25-26; Acts 1:4-9). The Comforter was to guide them into all truth. This he did. He then confirmed the word with gifts of signs and wonders and with divers miracles (Hebrews 2:1-4). The person of the Holy Ghost is always in the masculine gender (he or him). He is always singular in number. He revealed the word of God but he is not that word. The Holy Ghost has great influence but he is not merely an influence. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of "glorified it."

The Holy Spirit possesses all the divine attributes equally with God, the Father and God, the Son. He is co-eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is a person of the Godhead.

The term *Holy Ghost* equates with the expression *Holy Spirit*. They mean the same. The two English words translate one Greek word. He is a person and always functions as a person. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is one person the same as God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son are individual persons (Eph. 4:1-4).

Just as one individual cannot dwell literally within another person, so neither God the Father, Christ the Son, nor the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally. Such divine indwelling is a beautiful expression pointing to the closeness of our relationship to them. When one misapplies these scriptures by making them literal, he not only comes up with conflicting and confusing denominational doctrines but deprives himself of the real beauty of the revelation! The indwelling of the Godhead can only be effected by the words of the Eternal One. When this word is in the heart of the sincere individual it is God dwelling in us and we in him!

God dwells in us. Christ dwells in us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. We dwell in them, that close! Such a close relationship is described by this beautiful and satisfying figure of speech. Other figures express the close relationship, such as we walk with him; he leads us; we are his sons and daughters. These physical, worldly images are descriptive of the spiritual. Our God is spirit (John 4:24). If any one of them is taken literally, that conveys an unreasonable idea leading to confusion and often unwholesome superstition. Do not allow this to happen to you.

Lord's Supper

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

I. Introduction.

A. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and

brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29).

B. The Lord's Supper was instituted during a Passover Feast.

1. Passover was observed with unleavened bread.

(a) "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Exodus 12:15).

2. The juice of the grape, or fruit of the vine, was also on the Passover table.

(a) "But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

3. The bread represents the body of Jesus; the grape juice represents his blood.

(a) It is basic to understanding language to regard every statement as literal unless the context requires a figurative application.

(b) Jesus said many things that are figurative: "I am the door...I am the vine...I am the bread of life...I am the water of life."

(c) When Jesus said of the cup containing the fruit of the vine, "this is my blood of the covenant," and when

he said of the bread, "this is my body," he obviously did not mean literal blood and literal flesh. He was present with them in the flesh. They had to understand he was saying the bread is symbolic of my body, the fruit of the vine is symbolic of my blood.

II. Essentials of the Lord's Supper.

A. The time of observance.

1. First century disciples assembled regularly on the first day of the week to worship.

(a) "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Heb. 10:25).

(b) "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2).

(c) "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

2. Since the first day of the week is the day of worship, and since the Lord's Supper is a part of worship, it follows that the Lord's Supper is to be observed on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7 shows this was the practice of the early church.

B. Who may partake?

1. "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be

guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body" (1 Cor. 11:26-29).

(a) Each person is to examine or prove himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

(b) The fruit of the vine or the cup is Jesus' blood of the covenant. A person who is not in a covenant relationship with Jesus is not a proper candidate to partake of the cup or eat the bread.

2. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we are all partake of the one bread"

(1 Cor. 10:16-17).

(a) No person can discern the body of Jesus who has not obeyed the conditions of pardon given in the New Testament.

3. To discern the body and blood of Jesus and, therefore, to partake in a worthy manner, one must have the right attitude toward the supper. A part of that attitude is to know ourselves to be unworthy; only then can we partake in a worthy manner.

4. Still, each person is to prove himself, and then eat and drink.

C. The communion is not the most important part of the worship (one of God's commands is not more important than another) but it is the centerpiece of our worship.

1. In all worship we must have proper feelings of piety and devotion.

EIGHT STEPS TO GREATER SENSITIVITY

EIGHT STEPS TO GREATER SENSITIVITY

By John Dobbs

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Jesus was the most sensitive person who ever walked the face of this earth. There have been many great heroes, great debaters, great scholars, and great orators, but how many people do you know who are great in their sensitivity? Many a church split, fuss, or wrangle would be solved were everyone more sensitive to each other. Jesus exhibited his sensitivity in at least eight ways.

He considered the physical needs of others:

And Jesus called unto him his disciples, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat: and I would not send them away fasting, lest haply they faint on the way. And the disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so many loaves in a desert place as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few small fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves and the fishes; and he gave thanks and brake, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. And they all ate, and were filled: and they took up that which remained over of the broken pieces, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children. And he sent away the multitudes, and entered into the boat,

and came into the borders of Magadan (Matt. 15:32-39).

Jesus taught that we should be willing to forgive others of their shortcoming seventy times seven:

Then came Peter and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was

wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts (Matt. 18:21-35).

Jesus considered the spiritual needs of others—even when they were not interested:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:37-39).

Jesus taught that we should do what we could to solve the obvious problems of others:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and

thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:25-37).

Jesus taught that sensitivity is often met by insensitivity:

And it came to pass, as they were on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, Have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was

healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole (Luke 17:11-19).

Jesus taught that we should accept those who were unacceptable to much of society:

And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way (Mark 10:46-52).

Jesus was blind to social restraints, and treated all people as real people:

So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and

ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he (John 4:1-26).

Jesus said to always put God and others first; that way, we'll never get in our way.

But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets (Matt. 22:34-40).

These eight steps are simple, yet profound. Brethren, be more sensitive to the needs of those around us, try to be like Jesus!

The Marks of Jesus

By Owen Cosgrove

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Early Christians in the area of Galatia caused some consternation to the apostle Paul as they drifted away from the purity of the gospel that he had preached to them. He wrote to them and told them that he was amazed that they were so quickly departing from the truth that they had received.

The apostle warned them that if anyone, even an angel from heaven, taught them any other gospel than the one he had taught and that they had received, that the false teacher would be accursed. He wrote of his concern that he may have bestowed labor on them in vain and told them that those who sought justification except through the gospel of Christ would fall from grace. With all of his rebuking these wayward disciples he then asks, "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

Paul closes the epistle to the Galatians rather abruptly telling them, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Some have preached lessons on "The Marks of Jesus" using such topics as the mark of love, the mark of sincerity, the mark of honesty, etc. This may be an interesting way to develop a topical sermon, but it stretches the meaning of the original text.

Here the Greek word for marks is "stigma," referring to marks or brands put on slaves and sometimes on criminals in order to identify them in some special way. It is very unlikely that Paul put any tattoos or other body markings upon himself,

since such were strictly forbidden by the Mosaic law under which he had grown up (Lev. 19:28).

Some commentators think that Paul is here referring to scars left by the severe persecutions that he had undergone as a preacher of the gospel of Christ. He had been scourged and abused at various places. In 2 Corinthians 11, he speaks of being imprisoned often. Five times he had been beaten with 39 stripes, and these were not mere spankings. Three times he was punished with "rods," a device used by the Romans to inflict severe punishment. Once he was stoned and left for dead. All of these things were written about in about A.D. 58 ten years before his death in Rome in A.D. 68, and so it is reasonable to believe that he could add many other sufferings to this list before his martyrdom.

Probably Paul had scars all over his body to remind him of places like Philippi and Lystra and Jerusalem where he had been physically assaulted for his faith.

Someone has said that Christianity has come to us on rivers of blood and sweat and tears. How could those early disciples bear the crosses of persecution put upon them? What made them endure when it would have been so easy to give up?

There were two great incentives and ideals that drove people like Paul and other early Christians. One was the persistent remembering of Jesus and his magnificent sacrifice at Calvary. The other was the hope of going to haven and being with God forever. Paul wrote at about the same time he wrote Galatians, on his third missionary journey, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:11).

Some day, the faithful Christian will be privileged to trade his cross of suffering for the crown of life. "Oh, for such a faith as this, and then whate'er may come, we'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss of