

KNOWING GOD: LESSON 4: BEHOLD YOUR GOD! THE UNCHANGING GOD!

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Thus far our first three lessons on **KNOWING GOD** have been introductory in nature. This introductory material has been necessary in establishing:
 - A. The importance of this study by noting that the absolutely **MOST IMPORTANT** determinant of our faithfulness, steadfastness, zeal, dedication, and happiness as Christians is directly related with the **depth of our knowledge of God**. In establishing this premise, we cited several key scriptures (Hos. 4:6; Jn. 17:3; 2 Thes. 1:7b-10a).
 - B. ****** From the book of Daniel we learned four important characteristics that the people who ***know their God*** display:
 - (1) ***Have a great energy for God,***
 - (2) ***Have great thoughts of God,***
 - (3) ***Show great boldness for God,***
 - (4) ***Have great contentment in God.***
 - C. **3** Last time we learned that **KNOWING GOD** involves our attitude, because ***Attitude is everything!*** We pointed out that knowing a “very important” person is parallel (in a very small way) to **KNOWING GOD**, because **KNOWING GOD** is calculated to thrill our hearts (Jer. 9:23-24). ****** We also pointed out that **KNOWING GOD** is...
 - (1) The source of the answers to all of life’s really important questions!
 - (2) **A matter of grace**: reconciliation, restoration, revelation.
 - (3) **A matter of personal dealing**: faith meets grace, God’s call, trusting God’s ability.
 - (4) **A matter of personal involvement**: faith meets obedience; to know God is to obey His word. **1 Jn. 2:3-4**: “Now by this we know that **we know Him, if we keep His commandments**. 4 He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”
 - ☛ **But obedience must be from the “heart”**: Rom. 6:17-18; Matt. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:22
 - ☛ **We must reshape our priorities to coincide with His priorities**: Matt. 5:6; 6:33; Lk. 9:23-24
 - ☛ **Must appreciate just how close God wants to get to us!** Rom. 8:16-17, 29
 - ☛ **And, we must respond to His invitation in love**: **1 Jn. 2:5**: “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”
2. **4** In today’s lesson we want to move into the “meat” of our material. In Lesson I we said that, in the course of this study, we would repeatedly consider certain themes concerning God:
 - A. **His Godhead** (i.e., His deity; the qualities that separate the divine from man): self-existence, infiniteness, unchangeableness.
 - B. **His Powers** (God’s abilities which prove His deity).
3. Today we begin a series of lessons we will subtitle **BEHOLD YOUR GOD!** This series of lessons will specifically deal with the qualities and attributes of God that address His divinity and power.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **5** **Why so important?** Why are these aspects of God so important in our quest to **KNOW GOD**?
 - A. To many the God of the Bible seems very far removed.

- (1) It is difficult for many to “relate” to the times, customs, lifestyle of ancient Israel, or even the world of New Testament times.
- (2) As a result, one of two things can happen:
 - (a) Knowing God unachievable: At best, the idea and possibility of **KNOWING GOD** seems unachievable in any practical sense. Many even claim that there is a “different” (primarily in terms of “quality”) God in the Old Testament versus the New Testament (some anti-Christians use this to denigrate God; e.g., Lev. 11:10-11).
 - (b) Misconception of God: At worst, people “invent” a “god” of their own imagination! (e.g., Doting Grandfather, Impersonal Scientist, Merlin the Magician, Cosmic Bug Zapper, or Celestial Santa Claus of Lesson 1).

B. ** Either conclusion is FALSE!

- (1) The God that we must know in the 21st century is the **VERY SAME** God known by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah and Malachi, Jesus and the apostles.
- (2) The God of Leviticus is exactly the same God as the God of the beatitudes; the same God we must come to terms with today!
- (3) God never changes, not even in the smallest detail.
- (4) This is a critical and fundamental truth.
 - (a) It is critical to dispel our false notions of God and dispel any feelings we have that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the relationship men and women in the Bible had with God and the relationship we can have with God today.
 - (b) To achieve this, we must understand and appreciate God’s **immutability**!

2. **6** God does not change!

A. **God’s life does not change!**

- (1) He is everlasting! Psalm of Moses: **Psa. 90:2**: “Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”
- (2) He is the eternal king! **Jer. 10:10**: “But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King.”
- (3) He is incorruptible! **Rom. 1:23**: “and changed the glory of the **incorruptible God** into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”
- (4) He is immortal! **1 Tim. 6:16**: “**who alone has immortality**, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”
cf. Psa. 93:2; 102:26-27; Isa. 48:12.
- (5) Created things always have a beginning and an end, they are prisoners of time; God isn’t! Psa. 90:2: He is independent of space, time, and matter!
- (6) God’s life does not “wax” and “wane”; He doesn’t have “good” days and “bad” days; He does not grow old; He does not gain or lose powers; He does not mature and develop; He does not get stronger or weaker, wiser or smarter. He **NEVER CHANGES!!!**
“He cannot change for the better, for he is already perfect; and being perfect, he cannot change for the worse.” (A. W. Pink, British theologian)
- (7) Contrast God to man:

Jas. 4:14b: *“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”*

Heb. 7:16: *“who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.”*; Phil. 2:5-8; Matt. 1:23

B. ** God's character does not change!

- (1) One thing is sure about mortal man...he can change! Stress, shock, adverse or favorable circumstances can alter the character of a person.
 - (a) Misfortune may turn a kind and optimistic person into a cruel pessimist,
 - (b) Tragedy may turn a “bubbly” and gregarious individual into a bitter recluse,
 - (c) Adversity may turn an empathetic person of good will into an individual characterized by cynicism and callousness,
 - (d) Good fortune may turn a frugal and wise person into a profligate fool.
- (2) But nothing can alter the character of God!
 - (a) God never becomes less truthful, less merciful, less just, less good or less severe in His wrath!
 - (b) The character of God is the same today, and will always be, exactly as it was in the days of Adam, Moses, David, or Peter!
- (3) God's name is more than a “label”; it is a revelation of **what he is** in relation to us.
 - (a) *“I AM WHO I AM”* (Ex. 3:9-14; Jn. 8:58):
 - (i) This name is not so much a “name” of God, but a declaration of His self-existence and His eternal unchangeableness (immutability, unchangeableness).
 - (ii) It is a reminder that He has life in Himself (self-existence), and that what He is now, He has always been and will always be (eternal).
 - (b) *“...the LORD”* (Yahweh, Jehovah) (Ex. 34): God proclaims his name...the LORD to Moses by listing the various facets of His holy character:

Ex. 34:5-7: *“Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 ‘keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.’”*
 - (c) God made these proclamations (Ex. 3 & 34) to Moses 3,000 years ago...proclamations that His moral character is **changeless**; His goodness and holiness is **timeless**, His generosity to men and hostility toward sin is the same as it was when He spoke to Moses. (cf. Rom. 15:4)

Jas. 1:17: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”*

C. ** God's truth does not change!

- (1) Have you ever said something you didn't mean?
 - (a) Have you ever had to “eat crow”?
 - (b) We sometimes don't know all the facts (In fact very rarely do we know all the facts!).
 - (c) We sometimes “engage our mouth before we engage our brain”!

(d) We sometimes change our mind, change our views, etc.

(e) The words of human beings can be very unstable things.

“Better to keep quiet and be thought a fool, than to open one’s mouth and remove all doubt.” (Mark Twain)

Prov. 29:20: “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

(2) The same **cannot** be said of the words of God.

(a) They stand forever, as abidingly valid expressions of His mind, thought, character, nature, etc.

I Pet. 1:23: “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,”

(b) No circumstances prompt Him to recall His words; no changes in His own thinking require Him to amend His words.

Heb. 6:17-18: “Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the **immutability of His counsel**, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”

Psa. 119:89, 151-152: “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. 151 You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth. 152 Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.”

(c) The word translated “truth” in the last verses carries with it the idea of **stability**.

(i) When we read the Bible, we need to realize that God still stands behind **ALL** His promises, **ALL** His demands, **ALL** His statements of purpose, and **ALL** His words of warning that are addressed to New Testament believers.

(ii) Nothing can annul God’s eternal truth!

Jn. 10:35: ...”the Scripture cannot be broken”

Matt. 17:5b: ...”This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”; Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17; I Pet. 4:11

Jn. 12:48-49: “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”

D. **7** God’s ways do not change!

(1) God acts the very same way today towards sinful men and women as He always has.

Gen. 2:16-17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 ‘but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (circa 4,000 B. C.)

Ezek. 18:20: “The soul who sins shall die.” (circa 590 B. C.)

Rom. 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death,” (circa 57 A. D.)

Still true today (2019)!

(2) God has always used His word as His “calling card”:

☛ **Old Testament:**

Heb. 4:2: “For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”

☛ **New Testament:**

Heb. 1:1-2: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”

Eph. 3:3-4: “how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”

2 Thes. 2:13-14: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(3) Disobedience to God’s word has always been “spiritual suicide”! Gen. 2:17

☛ **Old Testament:**

Deut. 8:1, 19: “Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.” 19 ...Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.”

☛ **New Testament:**

1 Cor. 10:1-12!! Vv. 11-12: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Heb. 4:11-13: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Heb. 2:1-4: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”; cf. Jn. 12:48-49

E. **** God’s purposes do not change!**

1 Sam. 15:29: “And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.” (NASV; Samuel to Saul)

Num. 23:19: “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”

(1) Repenting involves revising one’s judgment and changing one’s plan of action.

(2) God never does this, because He never needs to!

(3) His plans are always made on the basis of complete knowledge and complete control which extend to things past, present, and future. God works in “time” but is independent of time! (Wow!)

(4) God never has to make a “contingency” plan. He makes no plan “B’s”!! There are no sudden emergencies or unexpected developments to take Him by surprise.

“One of two things causes a man to change his mind and reverse his plans: want of foresight to anticipate everything, or lack of foresight to execute them. But as God is both omniscient and omnipotent there is never any need for him to revise his decrees.”
(A. W. Pink, British theologian)

(5) What God accomplishes in “time,” He planned in “eternity.” And all that He plans in “eternity,” He accomplishes in “time.”

Eph. 3:10-11: “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, I I according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,”

Eph. 1:4-5: “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,”

Psa. 33:11: “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.”

(6) All that God has committed Himself in His word to do will be **infallibly** done!

Heb. 6:17-18: “the immutability of His counsel ,...it is impossible for God to lie,”

F. **** God’s Son does not change!**

Heb. 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Heb. 7:25: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Heb. 5:9b: “ He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,”

3. **8 Some applications:**

A. It would be a most egregious error if we did not make some applications of God’s unchangeableness; so, what are some of the practical ramifications of an “unchangeable” God?

(1) **** Same requirements as first century saints:** If the God we claim to serve is the same as the God the first century saints served:

(a) How can we lay claim to His “fellowship” with a level of Christian conduct that falls short of theirs?

(b) If God is the same, this is not an issue that any of us can evade! (Heb. 2:1-4)

(c) Whatever people did in the New Testament to become “God’s children” and remain “God’s children” we must do the same! And, we cannot hold out even **ONE** shred of hope to anyone who is not willing to do as they did! 2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:3; Acts 4:12

Mark 16:16: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Acts 17:30-31: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the

world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (“righteousness” of God revealed in the gospel! Rom. 1:16-17)

- (2) **** Same blessings as first century saints:** Whatever blessings attended those who obeyed God’s will in New Testament times, attends those who obey Him today. And, conversely, whatever cursings attended those who did not obey God’s will in New Testament times, attends those today who do not obey God’s will!

2 Pet. 1:8-11: “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2 Cor. 6:16-7:1: “As God has said:

‘I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.’

17 Therefore

‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.’
18 ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

2 Tim. 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

2 Thess. 1:7-9: “and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

- (3) **** Same pattern as first century saints:** Whatever pattern the church followed for its work, worship, and organization during New Testament times is the same and **ONLY** pattern for the church to follow today.

(a) Work of the church:

☛ **Evangelism: Acts 8:4:** “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”; **1 Thess. 1:7-8:** “so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.”

- ☛ **Edification (spiritual): Eph. 4:11:** “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”; (incl. worship; e.g., Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 4:11; acts of worship)
- ☛ **Benevolence (needy saints): 1 Cor. 16:1-2:** “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”
- (i) Whatever method/pattern the church used by divine sanction to accomplish its work in New Testament times is the same pattern we must use today!
- (ii) God doesn’t change and His plan for the church has not changed!
 - ☛ **No Missionary Societies or Sponsoring churches:** Phil. 4:15-17
 - ☛ **Direct relief of “needy saints” vs. “benevolent institutions”:** Acts 11:27-30
 - ☛ **Limited benevolence (“needy saints”) vs. general benevolence:** 1 Tim. 5:8-9; Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:41-46, etc.
 - ☛ **Spiritual edification vs. “building up the whole man” through recreation and social activities:** Eph. 4:11-12
- (b) Organization of the church: in New Testament times...
 - (i) Every church with its own elders: Acts 14:23
 - (ii) Elders, bishops, pastor same office: Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:2
 - (iii) Oversight limited: Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2
 - (iv) Must meet qualifications to serve: 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9
- (4) **** Same seriousness as first century saints:** Whatever seriousness God placed on being a disciple in New Testament times; He places the same seriousness today!

Matt. 16:26: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Matt. 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”

Matt. 5:14-16: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 ‘Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.’”; Lk. 9:23ff

Matt. 6:33a: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,”

B. Need I say more for us to get the point?

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. Do you know the “unchangeable” God? In New Testament times the “unchangeable” God said...

1 Jn. 2:3-4: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”; Jn. 17:3
2. Are you keeping the commandments of the “unchangeable” God? Jn. 14:15 The “unchangeable” God said in His word that in order to be saved people **must**:
 - ☛ Hear: Rom. 10:17

- ☛ Believe (faith): Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24
 - ☛ Confess: Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37
 - ☛ Repent: Acts 17:30; 2:38
 - ☛ Baptized: **Acts 2:21**: *“And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.”*; Acts 22:16
 - ☛ Remain faithful: **Col. 1:21-23**: *“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”*
3. You will only receive the “unchangeable” blessings of the “unchangeable” God if you obey Him!
Heb. 5:9

Acts 2:41, 47b: *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

Some of the material in this sermon is
from *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer