

## **KNOWING CHRIST**

### **“That I might know CHRIST...” – Phil.3:10**

(Part 2 of 5 Messages)

Theme: Learning from the great apostle, Paul, and his life-long pursuit to know Christ (Phil.3:10). cf. Phil.3:8 – the SURPASSING greatness of knowing Christ – verse 8.

Paul’s loftiest pursuit, his highest priority.

“Follow me as I follow Christ....” Learn from Paul’s thirst after a deeply soul-satisfying knowledge of Christ.

Three levels: Knowing Him doctrinally, spiritually and experientially. Yet realising that because He is God, it will take all of eternity to know Him – and even then ....

Who is this God-Man, Jesus Christ? Do you know Him?

This is one of the most important questions man can ever ask or contemplate. Many books written, many paintings painted, at least 15 major movies made on His life – all seeking to capture this unique Man in real life drama.

What about the second commandment and these attempts to paint an image of Jesus, or to make a movie on His life? (Ex.20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.")

So who is JESUS? Who was He?

There are many pictures or ideas of who “JESUS” was or is among even Bible-believing Christians. All are incomplete, imperfect, faulty human pictures or portrayals of Jesus – of man trying to paint Jesus according to man’s own limited perceptions.

Some challenging questions to ponder:

- Is it possible for us to be born again but have thoughts of Jesus that are far from reality, far from the truth?
- Is it possible that there are some sincere Christians who have follow a Jesus of their own imagination?
- Is it possible that even we Christian missionaries could select some aspects of Jesus' Person and life that most appeal to us, but then pass over or avoid other equally true and important aspects of His life and character because we find them disagreeable to our feelings/senses or too difficult to understand?

Is it possible that we might not find the REAL Jesus so attractive?

Some mistaken pictures of Jesus among true believers:

- A Jesus who had the appearance of “Mr. Universe” – a macho man, handsome, attractive. See Isaiah 53:2 “There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.” (NLT) “Nothing about the way he looked made him attractive to us.” (CEV).
- A “nice” Jesus – “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” for children – a Jesus who would never hurt a flea, someone who is nice and kind and smiley et al – the picture of a Jesus who takes little children on to His knee and loves them – this Jesus appeals to our feelings and sentiments – it is far from the real Jesus.
- A human Jesus – still as the “Man of Galilee”, the Man from Nazareth, Jesus in His pre-glorified “limited” form – getting our understanding of Jesus from the Gospels and not the Gospels and the Epistles and the book of Revelation – hence an incomplete revelation of Jesus. The spiritual danger of seeing Jesus only as the Man of Galilee, still in His pre-resurrection form, and so relating to Him as if He is just another human being, not seeing Him as He is now in His risen and ascended glory.

Who is the GENUINE Christ? This is the question that the Holy Spirit most delights to answer and reveal to our minds and spirits – through the testimony of the apostles in the NT – to keep enlarging our vision of Jesus – “magnifying”, “glorifying” and “exalting” Jesus before our eyes. See John 15:26; 16:13,14.

The testimony of the New Testament apostles:

- John who knew Jesus personally – was very close to Jesus during His earthly ministry – he didn't "sentimentalise" Jesus. See John 1:1-5,14,18; 1 John 1:1-4; Rev.1:10-18.
- Paul who once had despised Jesus, who then had a face to face encounter with the risen Christ, was now totally captivated by the wonder and glory of the true Jesus – with his brilliant mind he could never even begin to fathom the depths of Christ and His glory: Col.1:13-20; 2:1-3,9; Phil.2:5-11
- The writer to the Hebrews – a book that declares the superiority of Jesus Christ above all other powers and beings: Heb.1:1-3

This study of God's Word helps us to know Christ doctrinally and spiritually (truth made know to us in the inner man by the Holy Spirit) and becomes the foundation for our knowing Him experientially.

As we allow these profound truths to take root in our minds and hearts, we will be changed by them in the inner man – we will "experience" a growing, ever-deepening, more intimate relationship with Christ.

Responses:

- We will experience a deep sense of AWE in His presence – if we are able to read through these truths and give no more than an intellectual response to them, then we need to ask the Father to impact us in our spirits on the deepest level with a clear vision of the living Christ as He is on His throne NOW.
- We will experience a deep sense of PEACE in His presence as the revelation of our supremely great God and Saviour begins to fill our minds giving us the picture of the One who is over all and who is working out all things to fulfil His eternal purposes.
- We will experience a foretaste of heaven's GLORY filling our hearts as we "see" the King in all His glory and fall down in worship before Him.

Oh, that we might all desire to know Christ on this level – that we might taste His preciousness. See 1 Peter 2:7 (4-8).

Illustration of the Spring: cf. John 4:13,14

Knowing Jesus on this experiential level may be likened to drinking from some spring gushing out of a mountain – cool, pure water – quenching one’s thirst – truly satisfying one’s thirst after wandering in a very hot place – filling one with delights and pleasure – enough for everyone and so much more – the more one drinks, the more one is drawn to come back for more.

To those who thirst after Christ, to know Christ more and more truly and intimately, to such, God through His Spirit quenches their spiritual thirst with a growing, ever deepening, more intimate knowledge of Christ and relationship with Christ.

Is that your heart’s desire? Then He will give it to you.

If it isn’t, then pray earnestly that God the Spirit will show you what you are doing to satisfy that God-given thirst drinking from other “springs” – and lead you to stop drinking at those fountains or from those springs so that He can satisfy your thirst only from Christ alone – and then He will fill you to overflowing.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians: “That I might know Christ....” his prayer and longing – on all levels – was to enter into the fullest measure of knowing Christ possible on earth – to know the Christ as He truly was/is – to drink from this life-giving Spring that alone quenches the thirst and deeply satisfies.

Let us fear nothing more than that we will be satisfied with something less than a deeply spiritual and experiential knowledge of Christ.

Let us fight against all attempts of the enemy of our souls to rob us of life’s greatest delight and pleasure, the treasure of all treasures – by filling our minds and our vision with a temporal pleasure or delight instead of Christ.

“ALL MY FOUNTAINS ARE IN YOU”: Psalm 87:7