

BEHOLD *your* GOD

BEHOLDING GOD: THE GREAT ATTRACTION! WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

In Psalm 113, the psalmist calls us to a duty:

*Praise the LORD!
Praise, O servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD!
Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down
The LORD's name is to be praised.
The LORD is high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens.*

Then the psalmist asks a question:

*Who is like the LORD our God, Who dwells on high,
Who humbles Himself to behold
The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?*

*What comes into our
minds when we think
about God is the most
important thing about us.*

— A. W. Tozer

We are setting out today on a twelve-week journey. Before we open the gate and take our first step, we must make sure we are headed down the right path. In a race, running fast is a bad idea if you're headed in the wrong direction. Not all religious effort is headed in the right direction. The Psalm above can be a spiritual compass to help us set the course. Our journey and our destination will be God Himself. We will give our time and effort to seeking a clearer understanding of the God of the Bible. His name or character is worthy to be praised from east to west, "from this time forth and forevermore." In this glory He is solitary; none are like Him. He is elevated above all else, yet He humbles Himself to take notice of the things of heaven and earth. This is the God who has called us to Himself, to be reconciled through His Son, and to walk with Him by His Spirit. It is almost too much to take in!

In light of these truths, we need to be clear about two things:

1. **This study will be about Him, not us.**

Throughout these weeks, we will have to examine ourselves and our responses to what we are learning about God, but He will be the ultimate object of our attention.

2. This study is not ultimately aimed at our good.

We will find ourselves benefitted by the time we devote to the pursuit of knowing God and the transformation which that knowledge brings. However, we are not hoping to use this knowledge of our Lord for some greater end. The goal of the study is not to relieve us of our emptiness, fix our families, grow our churches, or even to find our significance and sense of purpose in Him. The goal of this study is to see God's name lifted high above all else. Therefore our desire is not to use God for our advancement but rather to forget ourselves as we worship Him.

In truth, we cannot give ourselves to a more thrilling, worthwhile, or practical pursuit. If you are tempted to think that He might not be worth knowing, recall these words written by John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

God is the only desirable good; nothing without him is worthy of our hearts. . . . The life, the glory, the blessedness, the soul-satisfying goodness that is in God are beyond all expression.

The end of all learning is to know God, and out of that knowledge to love and imitate Him.

—John Milton

When Bunyan penned these words over three hundred years ago, he was not exaggerating—he was understating the matter!

This week you will be considering the significance of what you think of God—not your official beliefs about this Being, but your actual ideas of Him. The true knowledge of God, provided through the mighty labors of His Son, is the great treasure of Christianity. It has a beginning but will never end, enduring through the most desperate of times. However, even a believer can take this treasure for granted. We need a revolution in how we think of God. In seeking to know Him, we must guard against settling for a counterfeit Christianity that looks like the real thing but is of no value.

In the eleventh century, St. Anselm gave advice that is relevant to us today:

Up now, slight man! Flee for a little while your occupations; hide yourself for a time from your disturbing thoughts. Cast aside now your burdensome cares, and put away your toilsome business. Yield room for some little time to God, and rest for a little time in Him. Enter the inner chamber of your mind; shut out all thoughts save that of God and such as can aid you in seeking Him. Speak now, my whole heart! Speak now to God, saying, I seek Your Face; Your face, Lord, will I seek.

MEMORY VERSE FOR MEDITATION

Psalm 27:8

When You said, “Seek My face,”

My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”

▶ DAY 1: KNOWING GOD, THE TREASURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Are you willing to adjust your life to whatever God reveals of Himself in the coming days?

What is the one thing about you that you feel sets you apart? What is it about you that you feel is worth bragging about? It may sound like a strange question for believers because we certainly do not consider bragging as one of the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, a braggadocious person is ordinarily not the kind of person with whom we enjoy spending time. Yet the prophet Jeremiah tells us that there is something about which we should boast. In Jeremiah 9:23–24 we read:

Thus says the LORD: “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD. (NASB)

This command comes in the middle of a long indictment against Israel’s outwardly wicked behavior and inwardly idolatrous heart. It is not a passage that aims to promote arrogance in Israel. Far from it!

READ ▶ it over again and write below what you think is the purpose of these verses.

Wisdom (the ability to apply knowledge skillfully) and strength (the ability to accomplish tasks) are prized in every culture. In themselves they are beneficial. An unwise and incompetent person is not one you would choose as an

He is “rich unto all who call upon Him,” yet has no gift for them better than Himself. He gives Himself as prize and reward.

— Bernard of Clairvaux

employee, a spouse, or a close friend. But these qualities pale in comparison to another: a true understanding and knowledge of this living God.

The knowledge of God is not merely a generic idea that He exists “up there.”

It involves an intimate acquaintance with His character and actions. Below, list the things that God tells us about Himself in these verses.

- Is that the God you know?
- Is that the God you meet when you open your Bible, read, and pray?
- Is that what comes to your mind when you think of Him throughout the day?

This is the treasure of Christianity—God has done all that is necessary for you to know Him forever! You have been brought near by His Son’s life, death, and resurrection. He has placed His Spirit within His adopted children, giving them a heart to love Him, a mind to know Him, and a will to obey Him. Nothing can compare with this. In fact, how you respond to this reality is a real test of your profession of faith. When Peter wrote his first Epistle, he divided all humanity into two camps.

READ 1 PETER 2:6–7. According to this passage, what does the true believer think of Christ?

Delighting in God. Treasuring the real knowledge of God through His Son. Walking with God. These have always been the birthmarks of God’s people. Whether you read the life of Abraham (the Friend of God), or Moses (the man who met with God, as it were “face to face”), or David (a man after God’s own heart), or Asaph (the psalmist who wrote that God’s nearness was his “good”), you will find that religion’s great attraction for the believer is God Himself.

This happy fellowship with the Living God, this knowledge of His character, is not limited to biblical saints. Listen to what Paul wrote to people in an unhealthy church:

*I’ve found the Pearl
of Greatest Price
My heart doth sing for joy;
And sing I must for Christ is
mine,
Christ shall my song employ.*

—John Mason

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do we see what God, the faithful One, has called us to? To enter into the “fellowship of His Son” is to enjoy communion with the Father as the Son does. Every believer can have that kind of friendship with the Triune God.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

It is time to ask ourselves some questions in light of these passages. These are easy questions to answer “correctly,” but it would be good if you could slow down and ask God what is true of you.

Do you think that the most noticeable, the most distinguishing thing about your life is that you know the Living God?

Do you think that Jesus is the most precious thing about Christianity, or do you find that the idea of what He can *do for you* is more enticing than who He is?

Do you find those passages of the Bible which describe God most interesting, or would you prefer to read a description of how He can benefit you?

Do you substitute a one-time experience of salvation for an ongoing understanding and knowledge of the Divine Person?

Do you mistakenly think it a mark of ingratitude to want more than forgiveness of sin, to ask God to let you know Him better each day?

Take some time to consider what comes to your own mind when you think of the character of God. Of course, no library could hold the books that would be required to describe the infinite qualities of God; yet if you could write one paragraph, what are the things that you know to be true of Him? Below, write that paragraph as honestly as possible. Avoid merely writing what you think is a correct answer.

Only after a painful ordeal of self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually think about God.

— A. W. Tozer