

From the beginning of creation, God wanted a people who would come to know Him. Before the fall, it was much more straightforward – Adam and Eve walking with God in the Garden of Eden. But afterwards – it was complicated. Man had to perceive his Creator in more indirect ways. God always wanted us to search Him out and promised that if he did so he would find Him¹.

Moses had a personal encounter with God, but when he tried to figure out what he could tell his people to let them know who had sent him to deliver them, God said,

*“I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’ Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.”*²

The message of the prophets was essentially to come and know God, and be a part of His people, His Kingdom. Jeremiah, for instance, wrote,

*“I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.”*³

It is interesting to see who knew Jesus as the Christ, and who wanted to know who He is. The disciples wanted to know who He is when He calms the storm⁴, but Legion has the answer directly afterwards in the next passage⁵. Similarly, a man with an impure spirit knew⁶. Herod wanted to know who He was, and tried to get an appointment with Him⁷, and then shortly after this Peter makes a great confession that Jesus is the Christ⁸. Later, Peter denies knowing Jesus⁹.

In a somewhat similar way to Moses, Jesus asked his disciples who the people thought that He was. Various possibilities were offered, such as John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other prophet. Then He asked his disciples who they thought He was, and Peter made that great proclamation – that Jesus was the expected Anointed One¹⁰. Jesus then told them all that having this intimate knowledge of His identity was the key to citizenship in God’s Kingdom.

The Great Teacher spoke many times of His realization of broken relationships. The stories all had to do with someone asking Him for favor, and His reply to them was “Depart from me, for I never knew you!” But in a greater sense, I think, He was really saying, “Depart from me, for you never knew me!”

For instance, many would claim that they had prophesied as well as cast out demons in His name and should thus be treated specially¹¹. Those who wish to enter the kingdom must do more than speak His name as though they knew Him. Though He told us to knock and He would open the door for us¹², He also said that there would be those even there who would not gain entrance because they did not really know Him¹³ or had not taken the time to prepare for Him¹⁴. And they would claim that they had eaten with Him and followed Him, and thus supposedly knew Him, but again He would reject them because of their insincerity. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets would enter, even prostitutes and tax collectors¹⁵, but these posers would not. God has proclaimed that He will gather those from around the world who treat Him with respect and the proper perspective¹⁶.

Jesus certainly was equal to God, but relinquished that equality for a time to come to earth and sacrifice Himself for us. In another sense, though, He tried to make us see our fellow man as equal in a certain way to Him (and thus to God). When the disciples began to think of themselves as something great, He took a little child beside him and said,

“Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”¹⁷

On another occasion, He went even further by offering a parable of sheep and goats¹⁸. Here He clearly set forth that being Good to the people in need around us was the same as being Good to God. It was interesting that neither the sheep nor the goats really knew that they were really in the Presence of God. But the sheep knew God so well that they acted like God. The goats who did not help those in need arrogantly thought that they knew God and they deserved His acceptance, but they did not love Him as the personification of Good.

Jesus understood those who really knew Him, and spoke of them as sheep who followed the shepherd that loved them and protected them¹⁹. Those sheep listened to His voice and followed Him because they knew Him²⁰. It becomes clear that we know Him if we live in obedience to Him²¹. And if we know Him, we know His Father also²².

We must draw close to God, so that we don't hear those terrible words, “Depart from me, for you never knew me.”

1. Deuteronomy 4:29; But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.
2. Exodus 3:14-15
3. Jeremiah 24:7
4. Luke 8:26
5. Luke 8:28
6. Mark 1:24
7. Luke 9:9
8. Matthew 16:13-20
9. Luke 22:34
10. Matthew 16:13-30
11. Matthew 7:21-24
12. Luke 11:9-10
13. Luke 13:22-30
14. Matthew 25:12
15. Matthew 21:31b
16. Luke 13:29 – last shall be first, etc.
17. Luke 9:46-48
18. Matthew 25:31-46
19. John 10:14-15
20. Luke 10:27
21. 1 John 2:3
22. John 8:19

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