

Learning About God

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

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[2 : 18] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. some of the idols of that day, and he must have been an extremely powerful creature, because when this chapter opens, he is looking out a dungeon window on the banks of the Dead Sea, where he is searching to be put to death at the whim of a dancing girl, who asks that his head be given to her on a platter, because of some of the inletting that he had aroused by his preaching.

And as you must show, somebody has said with respect to John the Baptist, it's no wonder that Jesus has so many enemies, considering how he treated his friends, and obviously John the Baptist was one person who, humanly speaking, was very badly treated indeed.

And here he was in prison, and he's beginning to have some doubts about the whole mission to which his whole life had been given.

[3 : 41] And he sends word by his disciples to Jesus and says, Are you he that should come, or do we look for another? And that question comes to a lot of people in the course of their life.

A lot of people clounder at that question, because they decide that Jesus Christ is not sufficiently the answer from God. And I think that may come because we don't fully understand who Christ is and the claims he makes about himself.

But Jesus gives a reply to be taken by his disciples back to John the Baptist in prison. And he says that the blind see and the lame walk and the deaf hear and the dumb see.

Tell John the Baptist that. Because John will know that those are the signs of the Messiah. When those kind of things happen, they point unerringly to the person of the Messiah.

And then Jesus turns and scolds the people around him. Because they hadn't understood John. They hadn't understood what he had come to say.

[4 : 55] They hadn't understood the new part of his message. They hadn't understood the gigantic chapter of the man whom many of all the generations of history had been privileged to hear.

Jesus said to them, Do you know that there is not a man born of woman greater than John the Baptist? What did you come out in the wilderness to see?

Some natural phenomena? Like a reed shaking as though there was a wind when there is no wind? Indeed there is a wind blowing.

Or did you come out to see somebody frozen soft raiment? Not in the wilderness. Surely for someone clothed in soft raiment would be in clean house.

What you came out to see was a prophet. And the greatest of the prophets is one who preached to this generation in whose presence he has preached.

[5 : 58] And you of all the generations of our people have heard him who is the greatest of the prophets. And then Jesus goes on, somewhat in indignation and anger with the people.

And he says, What's to happen? John the Baptist comes to you, neither eating nor drinking, and you say we have some pale aesthetic.

We don't want a religion like that. And so you resist your love. And then the Son of Man comes, and he goes into your halls, and he eats, and he drinks, and he socializes with you.

And what do you say about him? That he's a wine-biggered and a gluttony. And surely he couldn't be the messenger of God. And so you successfully have the key possibility of anyone being able to speak to you.

And then Jesus goes on, and he recites a kind of condemnation of the cities that are gathered around the city of Galilee. And he says, Woe to the quiet men, and woe to Bethsaida.

[7 : 03] And these were just cities in which Jesus had performed some of these miracles, of dealing, of giving sight to the blind, and making the lame lost, and the deaf ears, and the dumb speak.

These were the cities into which the crowd had gone after the 5,000 had been miraculously fed. These are the cities where the people had gone back after they'd heard the Sermon on the Mount.

These are the people who had, in their very midst, seen the miracles of the healing of the centurion servants, and of the girl who was 12 to go and had died.

These were the very cities in which these events had taken place. And what happened was that they didn't pay any attention. They didn't understand.

They hadn't understood John the Baptist, and they hadn't understood Jesus. And Jesus says, It's like children playing in the marketplace. And somebody gets up and plays a tune on his piccolo and says, Come on, let's dance for the wedding.

[8 : 11] Nobody moves. It's possible. So what they do is they get out the dirt pipe and they play on this and say, Come on, everybody, let's have a wailing in the morning.

And nobody moves. Jesus says, You won't dance. You won't launch. What will you do when you've been subject to the precinct and been witnesses to the miracles of Jesus?

And then you have this strange event that's central to this chapter. And I want you to look at it. It comes beginning at verse 25. At that time, Jesus said, Father, Lord, in heaven and earth, I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned.

Yes, Father, this is how you were pleased to have it happen. You have shown to the unlearned what you have kept hidden from the wise and learned.

The inadequacies of this translation are many. It's just that it's in a nice handy size for you to have. Well, you remember in the sort of classical words of this translation, it says, To the wise and learned, you have kept these things a secret and revealed them unto babies.

[9 : 35] And what Jesus is saying is that the simple believers understood John the Baptist. The simple believers understood the miracles of Jesus, but the wise and learned people didn't understand at all.

And that's why you have Bible studies in a church. The reason being this, you know that this congregation generally is frightened of Bible studies, and I'm not surprised that you're frightened of them, but I want you to get over your fears.

believers, the reason that you have them is this, that the simple believers know far more about God than they're prepared to admit that they know, and they need a Bible study to help them understand that.

And those who have all the answers and know all the chapters and verses know far less about God than they think they know, and they have to learn to understand that. And that's why you bring them together, so that the wise and learned can be taught by the simple believers.

And that's how it works. It's the man who's in the pulpit who's generally the wise and learned. He knows chapters and verses and references and can dazzle you with quotations and do such things as that, perhaps.

[10 : 58] But it's the consistent reality of the Christian faith for which Jesus in this chapter thanks God that the simple believers know and understand the faith far better than the wise and learned.

Because the difficulty with people who have a university education, for instance, is that one of the things they have learned to do with their university education is keep warding off the truth.

They know how to use all sorts of sophisticated means to hide from any kind of truth. They can pass anything off. And so they didn't understand the preaching of John the Baptist.

The Pharisees who were desperately looking for the kingdom of God mistook John the Baptist completely. And so it continues to be that the wise and learned don't understand while the simple believers tend to understand far more than sometimes they're aware of.

Jesus goes on and says in this verse, My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

[12 : 27] So that having gone through Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum and saying that these cities are going to be better off on the Day of Judgment are going to be worse off on the Day of Judgment than the great cities that were condemned in the Old Testament Tyre and Sidon and Sodom even.

Capernaum the judgment on Capernaum and Bethsaida and Chorazin is going to be worse than the judgment on those famous cities famous for their evil. And Jesus says but it's been the purpose of God that all things should be revealed through Him.

That is God makes Himself known through the person of Jesus Christ. And what this means practically for us is this that it's not a matter of using your philosophical talent to come to the knowledge of God because you can't.

It's not a matter of using your mystical awareness to come to the knowledge of God because you can't. It's not a matter of using your religious propensities to come to the knowledge of God because it won't lead you there.

the only way that you can come to the knowledge of God is through Jesus Christ. And that's why in this baptism this morning primarily what we are claiming in faith for those who are being baptized and what we profess for ourselves is that the way we learn about ourselves and about God is through a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

[14 : 15] It doesn't come through studying the books of the law. It doesn't come by establishing high moral standards which we exert tremendous energy in trying to maintain in our lives.

it comes through a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. There is no way you can argue anybody into the kingdom of God.

There is no way an astrophysicist or a nuclear physicist or a mathematician or anybody else can argue you into the kingdom of God. There is no set of proof there is no book of logic by which you can be reasoned and levered into the kingdom of God.

The only way it can happen is that you should be introduced to Jesus Christ by the Father.

That God will work in your heart so that you know who Jesus Christ is. And that Jesus Christ will be the one through whom you come to know who God the Father is.

[15 : 28] It's all very personal indeed. But that's the way it happens. And that's the setting to the most gracious invitation in the whole of the New Testament.

The invitation that I'll preach on next Sunday and read to you this Sunday as I conclude. verse 28 Come to me all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke and put it on you and learn from me because I am gentle and humble in spirit and you will find rest.

For the yoke I will give you is easy and the load I will put on you is life. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We'll sing hymn number 412. Our God and Father we ask that you will open our hearts to your word and open your word to our hearts and we ask it in Jesus' name.

[17 : 09] Amen.