

Can We Really Know God?

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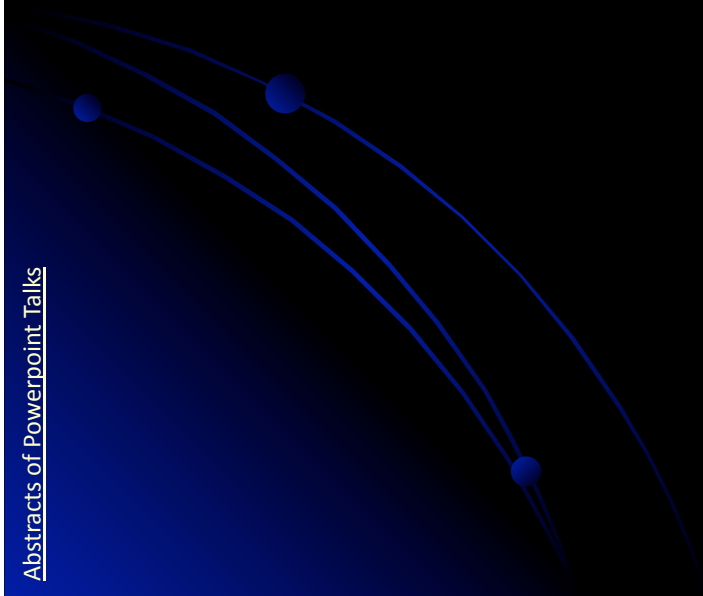
Does God Exist?

- For many today, the question of God's existence is an abstract philosophical problem with little relevance for everyday life.
- For others, it's a matter so confused by the variety of religions out there that they give up trying to find the right one, or figure they can pick whichever one they prefer.

All these responses are foolish

- If God exists, it makes all the difference in the world what life is about.
- If God really exists, we can't just pick the religion we like; they teach different, inconsistent things.
- If God really exists, it is possible that the confusion about what he is like is not his doing, but the result of wishful thinking & intentional deception.

We Can Know God Exists



We Can Know God Exists

We have evidence for this from:

- General Revelation
 - God's revealing himself in nature and conscience
- Special Revelation
 - God's revealing himself in the Bible
- Redemption
 - God's revealing himself in history

General Revelation

God has revealed himself in the origin and the nature of the universe.

- Origin – cosmology in the 20th century was an ever more frantic attempt to avoid a beginning in the face of ever mounting evidence.
- Nature – the increasing evidence for 'fine-tuning' in the universe has led atheists to postulate a larger & larger number of universes to make this likely by chance.

General Revelation

- The origin of life has become a nightmare for those who wish to think it happened by chance.
- The complex functionality of life at all levels is far beyond what we have any evidence that chance is capable of.
- Humans, though physically rather similar to the apes, are far beyond them in the mental & spiritual realms.

Special Revelation

The Bible is unique among the scriptures of the world's religions in its:

- Pre-knowledge of science
- Fulfilled prophecy
- Jesus

Pre-Knowledge of Science

- The creation account of Genesis is consistent with the best evidence of cosmology and planetology.
- The Bible's picture of the heavens and the earth is impressive in the light of modern science.
- The biblical material on handling diseases far outstrips that of other ancient writings.

Fulfilled Prophecy

The Bible gives us considerable information on the future of:

- The surrounding nations
- Israel
- Israel's Messiah

Much of this predictive material has already come to pass.

Jesus

In particular, the material about Jesus is most impressive:

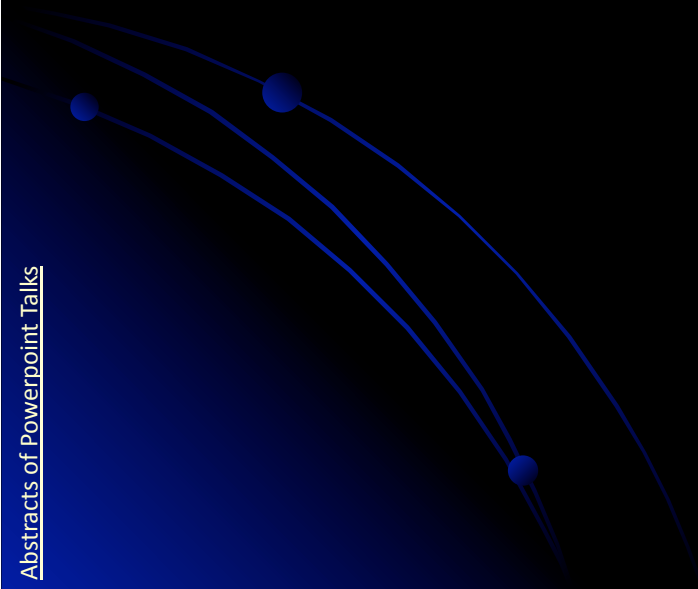
- Predictions about his ministry, death & resurrection
- Historical evidence of his actual ministry, teachings, death & resurrection.
- His impact on history.

Redemption

God has acted in human history.

- This shows up in the history of the nation Israel, in the history of the other nations around Israel, and in the history of the movement called Christianity.
- It also shows up in the changed lives and changed societies that have resulted from the coming and work of Jesus.

But God Does Not Guarantee Special Appearances



Stay Away from the Occult

- The occult (magic, divination) is our human attempt to control or manipulate the supernatural world to advance our agendas.
- God does not like this, and it will only result in wicked supernatural beings controlling or manipulating us.
- Instead God has chosen to send prophets who wrote the Bible for our benefit.

Deuteronomy 18

Deut 18:9-20 (NIV) When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you... 15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him... 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. 20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.

Matthew 5

Matt 5:3 (NIV) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

John 14

John 14:1-9 (NIV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

We Cannot Know God as Friend if We Remain His Enemies

Knowing God as Friend

- As long as we want to live our own lives, pursue our own agenda, we are really rebels against God, no matter how pious our words.
- God's two prime commands:
 - Love God w/ everything we are & have.
 - Love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

The Love Commands

Matt 22:35 (NIV) One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' {Deut. 6:5}

38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " {Lev. 19:18}

Let us not deceive ourselves

- By walking in darkness
 - 1 John 1:5-7
- By disobeying God's commands
 - 1 John 2:3-6
- By hating others
 - 1 John 2:9-11

Walking in Darkness

1John 1:5-7 (NIV) This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Disobeying God's Commands

1John 2:3-6 (NIV) We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

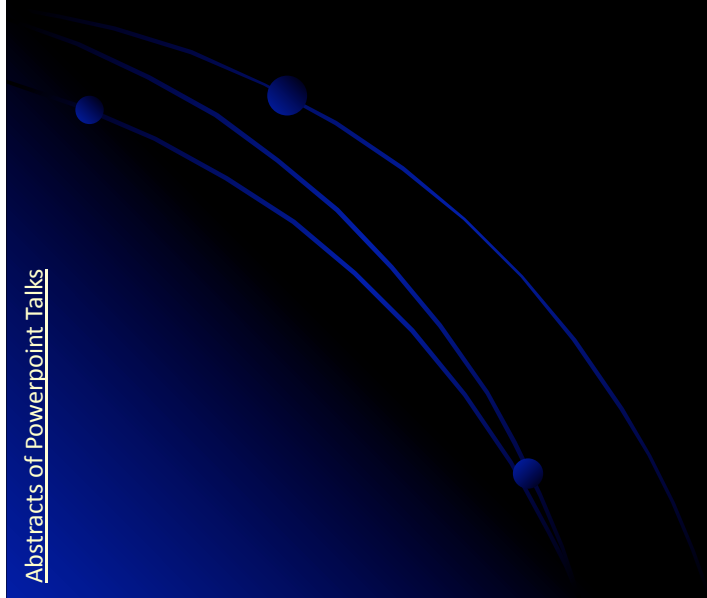
Hating Others

1Joh 2:9 (NIV) Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

Knowing God Personally



Knowing God Personally

We can know God personally (though not exhaustively) through the provisions He has made:

- His Word
- His Spirit
- Prayer
- Modeling by other Christians

His Word

- We can know God through His Word.
- His Word (the Bible) is His most detailed revelation of Himself.
- If we read and study the Bible, we can learn a great deal about Him.
- Many people have found it helpful to try to read through the Bible once a year.

His Spirit

- We can know God personally through His Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is the Bible's term for God as he indwells His creation, especially those who are trusting in Him.
- The Holy Spirit teaches believers to love the right things, to hate evil in themselves as well as outside, i.e., to have God's attitude toward reality.

Prayer

- Prayer is not just talking to ourselves, or telling God what He doesn't know, or giving Him advice on how to run the universe.
- When we pray according to God's Word, we begin to see God working around us.
- He encourages us with answers to prayer, and we begin to want what He wants.

Modeling by Other Christians

- Through fellowship with other believers, we begin to see God's character lived out (imperfectly) in human lives.
- We begin to see small-scale, imperfect replicas of what Jesus is like.
- In community with other believers, we are able to encourage one another to love and good deeds, and to hold each other mutually accountable.

We Can Know God!

May God help you to know Him
really & truly!