

Following On to Know the Lord

By Michael Clark

The other day as George Davis and I were talking, he brought up the following verse: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." (Hosea 6:3, KJV).

"Then shall we know IF we follow on to know the Lord." These words, like so often happens in a Spirit lead fellowship, totally seized my attention. How often do we truly pursue the Lord? The word in the Hebrew that was translated follow on in this passage means to pursue, like an army pursuing its foe. It was even translated persecute in the KJV. So many of us are content to just say, "I know Jesus," and then all our active pursuit ends as we sit there in our comfortable pews like we are watching a football game on TV and let the professionals do all the pursuing for us. The trouble is that most of the professionals in today's church are more than willing to do all our pursuing as long as we continue to pay their salaries and don't run out onto the playing field.



But as you can see, the above passage out of Hosea gives no place for this kind of shallow knowing. "We shall know (Hebrew word *yada*) if we follow on to know." This word *yada* is the equivalent to the Greek word *ginosko*. Both were used in the Old and New Testaments to describe an act of intimacy between a man and a woman (see Genesis 4:1 and Matthew 1:24-25). Interestingly enough, it is this very Greek word that Jesus

used describing the judgment of the Father in that final hour and what will make the difference.

Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?"

And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:22-23, NKJV).

When there is a statement in the scriptures that seems to be contradicted by another part of the scripture, I try to investigate it to find out why. How could it be that an all-knowing God would *not know* one of His own creation? He doesn't even say that He once knew and now no longer knows, but rather "I never knew you." We must conclude that this word means something more than mere knowing with the mind.

Jesus is saying to these religious goats with their religious works that He has never had an intimate relationship with them. The works they did --casting out demons, prophesying, and doing wonderful works--were never conceived by an intimate knowing between them. All works that are acceptable to God come from abiding in Jesus (see John 15).

So as Hosea says, "Then we shall know IF we follow on to know. . ." God expects that same pursuit of us that a young man has with a young woman. He is driven to pursue her until they fall in love, are engaged, married, and the marriage is fully consummated so the two become one flesh. It is in this total pursuit that you finally come to *know*. You cannot just sit and read the Bible and all the commentaries for years on end and say that you know God, anymore than I can read all the magazines and watch all the TV shows and movies about Julia Roberts and then say that I know her! I am not her husband and she is not my wife. If I am to know her, I must follow on to know her. Knowing her with my mind is not enough.

The New Testament

As George and I continued to talk that day, the Lord keyed me in on a couple other verses. What is the new testament? Most would say it is a book, the last third of the Bible that starts out with the Gospel of Matthew and ends with the Revelation to John. I disagree. Even the New Testament does not call itself the new testament. Now, many of you might think I am belaboring a point here. I am.

What does the New Testament say the new testament is? The same Greek word *diatheke* that was translated *testament* was also translated *covenant*. A testament is a covenant in which one is promised an inheritance, a gift linked with a promise. Jesus used this same word as He spoke of His ministry to fallen man for the remission of our sins.

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:27-28, NKJV).

We later find this same Greek word used by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, speaking of a last will and testament. Here he is contrasting the old covenant (testament) with the new:

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. (Hebrews 9:13-17, NKJV).

The words in this book we call "The New Testament" are nothing more than a pointer to a covenant or testament made by Jesus with those who believe on Him. The New Testament is *not* the inheritance. The cleansing of the blood of Christ and being brought into a perfect union with the Father and all that He has for us *is*. Many worship the Bible so much that it has taken the place of the Holy Spirit in the work of the Godhead. Jesus did not promise that He would send us a Bible and that IT would lead us into all truth, but rather that He would send the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) and HE would lead us into all truth. I believe that men would rather be lead by their Bible teachers than the Spirit of God. The mind of man can manipulate and control the meaning of the written words of God, but they cannot manipulate the Spirit of God. All they can do is quench Him.

What would you think of a man who was called by the executor of the will to hear the reading of the will of his rich uncle who died. As soon as he heard the will, he grabbed it out of the lawyer's hand and said, "Thank you for such a wonderful will. I shall bind this wonderful gift from my uncle in leather and place it on my coffee table for all to see, that they might know what a wonderful man my uncle was and see his wonderful words for themselves." At that, the heir headed out the door, will in hand!

This is just what many in Christendom have done. Bible churches, Bible schools, and Bible teachers abound. Just as Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, so it is today, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." (John 5:39-40, NKJV). Yes, it is one thing to know and a whole other thing to follow on to know. The first only takes a mental assent to the things learned. The second requires an active relationship with the One who is known. The Bible is a wonderful gift, but it is not the full inheritance.

Jesus said, "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Luke 11:9-10, NKJV). Jesus' words mean that we are not only to seek, knock and ask, but we are to keep seeking, keep knocking and keep asking.

Just before this passage, Jesus told a story of persistence. "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?" "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs."

God is looking for persistence in those who come to Him. He wants us to be fully changed into the image of His Son. THIS is our inheritance! We will know *Him* if we follow on to know.

The Holy Spirit

Have you ever read that the Holy Spirit is not our inheritance either? Yet many people in Pentecostal circles carry on as if the Spirit or even the gifts of the Spirit or the so called five-fold ministries are all that we need to walk out a full Christian life and have success as the church.. Some reason if we can just duplicate the form of the early church and reinstate the so called "offices" of Ephesians chapter four in that form, then we will again see the power that the early church once had. I thought this for years, but even HERE we can miss what is perfect by focusing on what seems good. Paul did say,

"Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His," but he went on to speak of the Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance, not the inheritance itself.

In Him (Jesus) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee (KJV--earnest) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14, NKJV)

The Holy Spirit only speaks of and glorifies Jesus as He points us to the fullness of Christ. "*In Him*. . .we have obtained an inheritance." Of the Spirit Jesus said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." (John 16:13-15, NKJV).

Over the years Dorothy and I have purchased many houses as we have followed the Lord and moved from place to place in the process. Each time the buyer required us to pay earnest money up front. We paid it as a guarantee on our part that we were earnest enough about buying the house that it could be taken off the market. If we backed out of the deal at the last minute, we would forfeit the earnest money to the seller. In the same way, God has given us who believe and are His an earnest money payment on our full inheritance. The earnest is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to us until the completion of our purchase has been made. What is that inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is only the earnest? Paul goes on to say,

". . .that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of (epignosis - to fully know) Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. . . made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in

Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 1:17-2:7, NKJV).

There is our word *ginosis* again, but this time it speaks of us fully (*epi*) knowing (*ginosis*) Jesus as the Father knows Jesus. "We will know if we follow on to know. . ." We are to be fully enlightened with full understanding in our hearts of Him and made full heirs of His inheritance in Christ, with the Holy Spirit given to us as the down payment or earnest of our inheritance.

In the above example, if Dorothy and I had just put down the earnest money and then asked for the keys to the house, we would have been thought fools. A deed of trust and promissory note are required to delineate the rest of the deal, i.e., a down payment and so many monthly payments until the house is paid for. Likewise, we see above that Paul goes beyond the Earnest of the agreement, the Holy Spirit, and speaks of the details, i.e., wisdom, revelation, understanding, enlightenment, hope of our callings, riches of His glorious inheritance in us, the exceeding greatness of Christ's power to raise us up together in Christ and make us sit together in Christ in heavenly places. Without these keys to the kingdom we would not be able to sit in our heavenly abode in Christ.

Summary

In summation, dear saints, let us not settle for just the last will and testament nor only for the earnest agreement in our pursuit of God and all that He has for us in Christ. Let us not only know, but actively follow on to know. Let us not be content like so many spectators at a ball game and allow a few professionals to stand in for us while THEY do all the pursuing. The Holy Spirit and the New Testament were give to the saints of God to lead them into all truth, a full relationship with the One who IS the Truth, Jesus Christ.

Paul spoke of the law and the Old Testament as being a shadow of the new and that they were written to instruct us in type of things to come. In the Old Testament there is a story of two ambitious men who divided up the kingdom of Solomon after his death. Jeroboam, the one that took control of the ten northern tribes of Israel, was afraid of the people being lost to the king of the two southern tribes as they went down to the temple feasts in Jerusalem numerous times each year. Not to worry! He devised a plan and a new religion so the people would not have to weary themselves with such a long

trip and strain themselves pursuing God. He constructed two holy places for them to worship that were much easier to reach. Here is the story:

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. (1 Kings 12:25-30, NKJV).

It appears that the churches of today have done the same thing. We now have two "golden calves" that have been cleverly designed to keep us from following on to know God in an intimate personal way. The one is the idolizing of those who intellectually pursue the scriptures and their teachings and the other is the pursuit of spiritual gifts and so called "offices" in the church. Neither of these is the goal. Just as the brazen serpent on the pole that once saved Israel from fiery serpents became an idol in Gideon's day and had to be destroyed, history has repeated itself. The gifts of the Spirit, church ministries and the scriptures were never meant to replace going up to Mount Zion, the city of God, for ourselves. Today, as it was in the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, we as His church have fallen short of the fullness of our callings. No man can do it for us. This is the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins. The foolish asked for their oil from other virgins, but the wise went out and got it from the Source, Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, before He came for them. Let us follow on to know until we are found sitting in the fullness of our inheritance in Christ, in heavenly places.

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12, NASB).

