



# What it means to Know God





# Introduction

We have maintained throughout our study, that knowing a person implies disclosure and is a way of seeing. This knowledge has an element of acknowledgement, our admission that God has spoken and acted in human history. Through Isaiah the prophet, God said, “I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, **that they may see and know**, may **consider and understand** together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it” (Is. 41:18-20).

# Introduction

The knowledge we have of God is not speculative but is an obedient acknowledgement of the will of God. Thus, it carries with it a corresponding way of life. A reflective inquiry is certainly involved (intellectual), but real knowledge is also covenantal (relational) and grounded in love. The Apostle John wrote: “And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (I Jn. 4:16). As such, it leads to right and obedient action. “He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him” (Jn. 14:21).

# Jesus *On Knowing*



“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:14-15).

“It is no more possible for Him to be oblivious of us than for the Father to reject or neglect Him.”

John Calvin





# Introduction

The self-disclosure of God – as we saw last week – was not given in one moment in time, but was bestowed organically and progressively in history. “Revelation occurred when there was a revealing of what was in the mind of our Triune God...There is advancement; there is development; there is growth; there is increasing richness as revelation continues from one stage to another or from one scene to another, or from one active situation to another” (Van Groningen).

Today, we will continue our study of Biblical Theology, after which we will consider how we may truly grow in our knowledge of God, “to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God’s attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are” (Packer).

# The Requirement of Self-Disclosure



“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”

- I Cor. 2:11



“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Romans 11:33-36



# Blaise Pascal's Personal Reflection

“When I consider the brief span of my life absorbed into the eternity which comes before and after – as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day – the small space I occupy and which I see swallowed up in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I know nothing and which know nothing of me, I take fright and am amazed to see myself here rather than there: there is no reason for me to be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who put me here? By whose command and act were this time and place allotted to me?”



**Blaise Pascal**  
1623-1662





# The Nature of God's Thoughts

“God’s thoughts, when taken together, constitute a perfect wisdom; they are not chaotic but agree with one another. His decrees constitute a wise plan. God’s thoughts are coherent; divine thinking agrees with divine logic. That is not always true of our thoughts, and we have no reason to suppose that even as we deal with revelation we may not run into truth that our logic cannot systematize, that it cannot relate coherently with other truth. Therefore, we may find in revelation what Van Til calls ‘apparent contradictions.’”

- John M. Frame

# Knowing God: Not Exhaustively...But Truly

“It has been said that the Bible is like a body of water in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim. The youngest Christian can read the Bible with profit, for the Bible’s basic message is simple. But we can never exhaust its depth. After decades of intense study, the most senior Bible scholars find that they have barely scratched the surface. Although we cannot know anything with the perfection of God’s knowledge (his knowledge is absolutely exhaustive!), yet because God has disclosed things, we can know those things truly.”

- D.A. Carson





# Do We Really Want To Know God?

“God’s acquaintance is not made by pop calls.”

E.M. Bounds

# Exegetical Theology = Careful Reading

- What does this text actually say?
- It is a process in which God speaks and man listens attentively.
- It involves the study of the actual content of the Scriptures.
- It inquires into the original origin of the biblical writings (writers, time, occasion, dependence on sources, etc.).
- It addresses the question of how these writings were collected into a unity (the canon of Scripture: 39 OT books; 27 NT books).
- It studies the actual self-disclosures of God in time and space which lie behind the writings of the biblical documents (biblical theology).

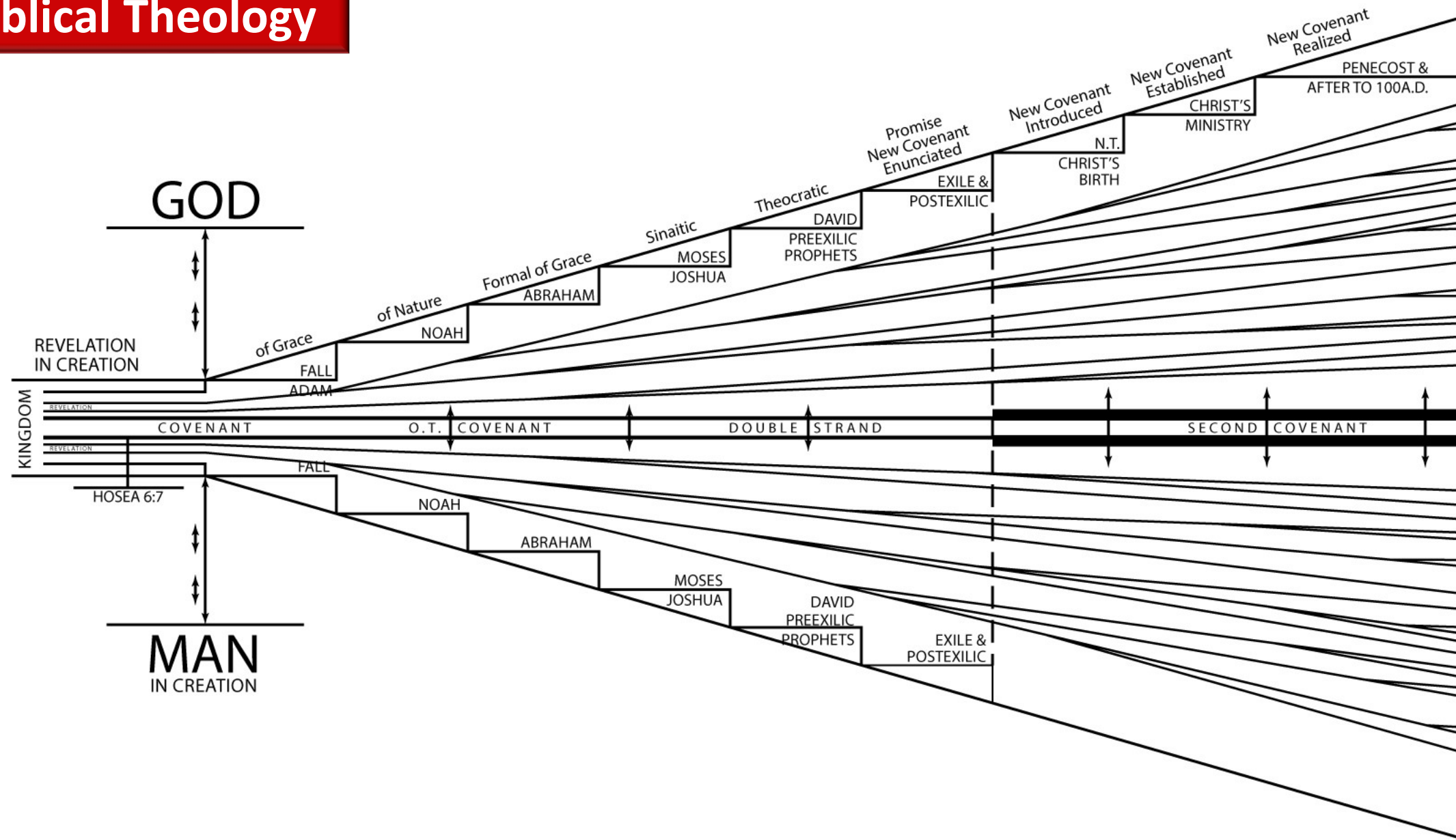




“The organic progress is from seed-form to the attainment of full growth; yet we do not say that in the qualitative sense the seed is less perfect than the tree.”

- Geerhardus Vos

# Biblical Theology





# Understanding Biblical Theology

1. God's revelation was not completed in "one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts."
2. Revelation and redemption are inseparably attached by the activity of God. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption. Revelation comes to a close, but redemption still continues.
3. Act-revelation (e.g., the crucifixion and resurrection) must be placed side-by-side with word-revelation. "Act-revelations are never entirely left to speak for themselves; they are preceded and followed by word-revelation." The usual order: (a) God speaks, then (b) the fact (He acts), then (c) He interprets with words.





# Understanding Biblical Theology

4. The organic progress of God's revelation is from seed-form to the attainment of full growth. However, the seed is never less perfect than the tree.
5. Since redemption is progressive, revelation had to take on the same nature. When redemption takes slow steps, revelation follows at the same pace.
6. The truth is inherently rich and complex, because God is rich and complex. God controls all the organs (Moses, prophets, apostles, etc.) of revelation and shaped each one for the precise purpose He intended.



# Understanding Biblical Theology

7. The body of revelation is not a school, intended only for an intellectual purpose, but a covenant. In other words, the truth of God's revelation is practical and consists in knowing Him. It is His response to the needs of His people in history.
8. "Biblical Theology imparts new life and freshness to the truth by showing it to us in its original historic setting."
9. Biblical Theology shows us what great care God has taken to give His people a new world of ideas.
10. The supreme purpose of Biblical Theology is the glory of God.



D. A. CARSON  
GENERAL EDITOR

FULL COLOR / 65 CONTRIBUTORS / 20,000 STUDY NOTES

NIV  
BIBLICAL  
THEOLOGY  
STUDY  
BIBLE

FOLLOW GOD'S REDEPTIVE PLAN

AS IT UNFOLDS THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

(Previously published as the NIV Zondervan Study Bible)





# Knowledge *About* and *Of* God

“How can we turn our knowledge *about* God into knowledge *of* God? The rule for doing this is demanding, but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God. We have some idea, perhaps, what prayer is, but what is meditation?...Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God, and to let His truth make its full and proper



# Knowledge *About* and *Of* God

impact on one's mind and heart. It is a matter of talking to oneself about God and oneself; it is, indeed, often a matter of arguing with oneself, reasoning oneself out of moods of doubt and unbelief into a clear apprehension of God's power and grace. Its effect is ever to humble us, as we contemplate God's greatness and glory, and our own littleness and sinfulness, and to encourage and reassure us – 'comfort' us, in the old, strong, Bible sense of the word – as we contemplate the unsearchable riches of divine mercy displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ."

- J.I. Packer