

# Knowing God #3

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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Have you ever heard of the Wicked Bible? No! I'm not making a joke. Back in the early days of printing with movable type, someone made a mistake in setting the type of the seventh commandment. It was in the year 1632, and even the proofreader missed it. So out came a Bible that reads, quote, "Thou shalt commit adultery." End quote.

And, as ridiculous as it sounds, I have a legitimate question: Why not? Why should all the commandments be negative, "Thou shall not"? Why not have some positive commandments, "Thou shall steal, Thou shall commit adultery, Thou shall bear false witness against thy neighbor." Now there is a reason why that sounds ridiculous. It is ridiculous!

## **Origins of Divine Law**

There is some confusion around the origins of divine law. There are those who argue for the abolition of divine law, but for that to be possible, the law itself must be arbitrary. In other words, God could just as easily have said, "Thou shall steal" as to say, "Thou shall not steal," but He didn't do it. Now, I will guess that you intuitively know that that's not right. God didn't say "Thou shall not steal" when He could just as easily have said, "Thou shall steal."

God said, and I think all of us understand this, "Thou shall not steal," because it is intrinsically wrong and it's intrinsically wrong because it's harmful. Now what does that tell you about the nature of God? Why do you tell your children to stay out of the street? Because you don't want them to have any fun? Because you want them to lose their ball? No, you tell them to stay out of the street because you care what happens to them. Do you discipline your children for going into the street? If you do, is it because you don't like your children and you want to hurt them? No! You discipline them because you love them and you don't want them to get seriously hurt.

Your command to your children not to play in the street is at peace with God's commandment regarding boundaries. When those commandments are broken, there are several things that can happen. You can chastise your children or they can suffer consequences by being turned into roadkill by a cement truck or nothing may happen and the kid gets the idea that there's really no reason not to play in the street. His life will become increasingly dangerous and he will conclude that other rules can be broken as well because rules are just rules that somebody made up. They don't have any rationale behind them, so it doesn't matter whether he keeps the rules and the risks to his life increase incrementally and sooner or later, better or worse, it will rise up and bite him.

Now I'm not talking about child rearing here. What I'm talking about are the laws of God, all of which are given to us for the same reason you give rules to your children, they are for our good. God's laws are a revelation of the difference between right and wrong, the difference between what makes life work and what makes it fall apart. This is an important part of knowing God.

### **Three Things to Know About God**

If you go through life thinking that God is unfair, that God is arbitrary, that He just decides things on a whim, then you obviously don't know God, and that brings me back to the words that God, Himself, gave to Jeremiah. It's in Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 24, "Let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." So, God can be known and God can be understood. There are three primary things that God wants us to know and to understand about Him, that He exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

### **Judgment and Righteousness**

I've already talked a lot about loving-kindness. Now it's time to talk about judgment and righteousness.

Consider one of the greatest crimes of man, genocide. Not long ago I heard an eyewitness tell the story of a Jewish woman pleading for the life of her child to an officer of the German SS. She was crying, tears running down her face. She offered her own life. She begged him to spare her child. She was holding and kissing the hand of this SS officer begging for the life of her child. He just laughed, took her baby by the feet, and dashed its skull against the pavement. What shall we say about this man? Is it fair to say that he was evil? Was his behavior wrong?

Now how can you allow such a crime to go unpunished? The Nazis committed great crimes against humanity. They were evil to the core and they led Germany to complete destruction. Well, what you do with this?

In Romans 12 verse 19, Paul wrote to the Romans and said, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." We are not to avenge ourselves, personally. But God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." That little short passage should make your blood run cold.

God believes in justice! And vengeance is the central value of justice.

### **A Biblical Example of Justice**

Once upon a time, a long time ago, the sons of a man named Jacob migrated from Palestine down to Egypt in a time of great famine. They were treated well at first, and the reason was,

one of them, named Joseph, had been there ahead of time and led Egypt through a period of terrible famine and as a consequence, he had a great reputation and was very much admired by the leadership of Egypt and for generations, they were treated extremely well. They were a prolific people, they had babies on top of babies and before long they outnumbered the Egyptians. In the course of time that became a problem.

You will find the story in the first chapter of the book of Exodus, and in verse 7, it says, "The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and they became exceedingly numerous, and the land was filled with them. {8} There arose up a new King over Egypt, that never knew Joseph and had no awareness of him. {9} He said to his people, "Look, the children of Israel are more and stronger than we are." They were stronger because they were doing a lot of labor that the Egyptians didn't want to do. {10} "So let's get smart, lest they multiply and it come to pass, that if we ever get into a war, they are liable to join with our enemies and fight against us. We have no way of knowing where that will go, {11} So they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom, and Rameses."

### **Israelites Made Slaves**

What this means, essentially is, the Egyptians made the Israelites slaves. They went from workmen and agricultural people into absolute bond servants of Pharaoh, but a funny thing happened, Exodus 1 verse 12, "The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew and they were grieved because of the children of Israel." You know, I suppose there is something natural involved in this, because the more they afflicted them in the daytime when they went home they sought comfort. They grew closer to their wives and closer to their families and the result was, more kids, and consequently they became an even greater problem to the Egyptians.

Verse 13, "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. {14} They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in every kind of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve was with rigor." It was 24 seven. It was up in the morning when they could first see, they worked until it was night and they did it seven days a week.

### **The Midwives Lied**

Meanwhile, verse 15 of Exodus 1, "The King of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives and he told them, {16} When you do to the office of the midwife to the Hebrew women and you see them on their birthing stool, if the child being born is a boy, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, save her alive." Now what a thing to tell a midwife. They didn't do it. They absolutely would not do it because they were afraid of God more than Pharaoh so they saved the boy children alive.

"The King of Egypt," verse 18, "called the midwives, and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" {19} The midwives, well, they lied, they said, "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, they are lively and they deliver before we ever get to them and we can not kill all of those boy children." {20} And God dealt well with the midwives." Isn't that interesting. They made a decision to defy Pharaoh, in which they took their lives in their hands. You have to understand that they saved these children alive, and when challenged on it, they lied and God still dealt well with them, and the people multiplied and grew even more numerous."

### **Pharaoh Charged ALL His People**

Finally, Exodus 1 verse 22, "Pharaoh charged ALL his people." If you mark in your Bible, you may want to underline that expression "ALL his people." Pharaoh said, "Every son that is born to the Israelites you shall cast into the river and every daughter you shall save alive." Now in our modern world we call that genocide. The foul murder of every male child born to the Israelites in this troublesome time, it's important for you to know this, ALL of the Egyptian people were involved in this crime. There's no way to know how many thousands of little babies were taken by the heels and thrown to the crocodiles in the Nile River and it was done, not just by Egyptian soldiers, not just by Pharaoh's officers, Pharaoh told ALL his people to commit this crime, and so ALL the Egyptians were guilty of genocide.

Now here's an important question. How could God allow such a heinous crime, one of the worst crimes ever committed, not just by Pharaoh, but by ALL his people, how could God allow such a crime to stand? How could He allow the Egyptian people to get off by saying, "Well, we were just following Pharaoh's orders!"

### **The Blood to Drink was Justice**

By now everyone knows the story of the Exodus. I can in my mind's eye, see Charlton Heston as Moses standing on the bank of the Nile in front of Pharaoh and telling him that the whole river was going to turn into blood. Moses sticks the tip of his rod in the river and the river begins to turn red and goes right on over to the other bank turning the water into blood. And as they are pouring water from a vessel into something to drink, the water turns to blood as they pour it. Everyone has seen that. Chances are you've seen that movie or maybe the new animated version of it is well.

I wonder how many people tumble to the fact, that the Nile River is where all those little babies were thrown, drowned, eaten by crocks. God gave these bloody people blood to drink, because it was justice!

In the end, God took the life of the firstborn in every family in Egypt, not every male baby, like Egyptians had taken, only the firstborn.

Now you see what I mean, when I say, that knowing God involves knowing that He not only is a God of loving-kindness, He is also a God of justice!

## **Justice in World War II**

You know, my mind has to come back to the German SS officer, who took the baby by the heels and slammed its little head against the pavement and compare it to what happened in Egypt with the death of the firstborn children of Israel, God only knows how complicit the German people were in the crimes of the Nazis. Some of them knew, some of them didn't, all of them probably knew more than they wanted to know.

God gave the German people over to utter destruction in return. God only knows how many people died in the firebombing of Dresden. God only knows how many people died in the whole terrible war. Estimates range from 35 to 60 million people died in World War II and we weep bitter tears over 57,000 or so who died in Vietnam. Can I remind you, in World War II, at least 35 million people died on all sides, maybe as many as 60 million. At Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States was not merely avenging the blood of Pearl Harbor, they were avenging that, and the rape of Nanking and Japanese atrocities all over China and all the rest of the Far East.

## **God of Justice**

God cannot, as a God of justice, allow these kinds of atrocities to go unpunished. Remember what He says, "Let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness," but also, "judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight."

If no justice is ever taken then one act of man is as good as any other, if there is no justice, if no one is ever called to account, and the books are never balanced, then how can we say that it is wrong to murder? How can we say it's wrong to steal? To enslave other people? If one act of man is as good as any other.

## **Vengeance Belongs to God**

The writer of Hebrews put it this way, Hebrews 10 verse 30, "We know him that has said, "Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Well, we started out with the assumption that we wanted to know God, didn't we? We talked a lot about God's loving-kindness. We know God will let man off the hook if there's any way to do it. We know that God was headed down to Sodom and Gomorrah and He was willing for Abraham to talk him down from the destruction of the city to where He would have saved it, if He could only have found 10 righteous people in the city.

We know that when Jonah came marching into Nineveh, and when he preached "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown", we know that the repentance of the Ninevites actually saved their city and that God really didn't want to do it, even though Jonah apparently did.

We know these things, God is willing to let you off the hook if He can find a way to let you off, but unless there is a hook, there is no justice.

### **Ahab and the Vineyard**

Once upon a time, there was a King named Ahab (1 Kings 21), and adjacent to his palace, there was a truly fine vineyard on a really good piece of property. It was fertile and produced beautiful grapes with nice vines and every morning King Ahab would look out his window at the vineyard and wish that he had it. The vineyard was owned by a man named Naboth, so Ahab made him an offer. He offered to buy it, or give him another vineyard, or give him a field, or whatever he wanted. Naboth turned it down, because it was a family inheritance. It had been in his family for generations. It had a value to him far above monies, it was priceless. He didn't need the money. He said, "No thanks, King. I don't want to sell it." Well, Ahab was, to say the least, spoiled. He went back to his palace, went to bed, wouldn't eat, turned his face to the wall. He wouldn't have anything to do with anybody. He was pouting over the loss of this vineyard and that he couldn't buy this property that he wanted.

Well, to make a long story short, his wife Jezebel, arranged the judicial murder of this man so they could steal his vineyard. She bought it and gave it to Ahab. The rich and the powerful must have their way, no matter who suffers in the process.

This crime stunk to high heaven and everybody had seen it. Everybody knew what went on. Everybody knew why it went on.

So God sent a prophet down to Ahab with a message. You will find this story in first Kings chapter 21 verse 16, "When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up to go down to the vineyard to take possession of it. {17} The word of the Lord came to Elijah the prophet and said, {18} "You get down there and you meet Ahab."

Now Elijah is a singular man. He's a man who is described in the Bible as wearing leather and having a big beard. He apparently is a kind of guy, that if he was around today, would probably ride into town on a Harley-Davidson. He was a rough man, a man of very few words.

God said, "You go down there and meet Ahab. He is in Samaria. He is in the vineyard of Naboth. He has gone down there to possess the vineyard, {19} And this is what I want you to tell him, "Thus saith the LORD, "Have you killed and taken possession?" Thus saith the Lord, "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick your blood, even yours." So Elijah went down to Ahab, {20} And Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And Elijah answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself

to work evil in the sight of the Lord, {21} Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and I will take away your posterity, and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisses against the wall, and him that he shut up and left in Israel."

Now I really believe that God chose Elijah to go talk to Ahab, when He could've chosen some other prophet, because He wanted the roughest, toughest, meanest, and worst looking prophet He could send down to meet Ahab. The prophet had to be apt to fit the man.

God said, {22} "I'm going to make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. I will make your house like the house of Baasha the son of a Ahijah." What He means by this is that He would wipe these people out and He will wipe Ahab out "for the provocation which you have provoked me to anger and made Israel to sin. {23} And of Jezebel also the LORD said, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. {24} Him that dies of Ahab," He is talking about Ahab's son, "He that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs will eat, and him that dies in the field the fowls of the air shall eat."

Now this is really a tough prophecy. God means none of your family, not your wife, not your sons, not your daughters, nobody in your family is going to have an honorable burial. You will be left to the birds and the dogs, and then there is this footnote to it. {25} "But there was none like Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

### **No Good Kings in Israel**

You need to understand this. There were no good Kings in Israel. Throughout their 200 to 220 year history, there was not one King that the Bible registers as being a good man. Ahab was the worst of a bad lot. He deserved every word that Elijah spoke against him.

### **Ahab Turned To God**

But a funny thing happened, first Kings 21, verse 27, "When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, he put on sackcloth and he fasted. He laid in sackcloth and went about softly." You know this was a man who previously, when he walked around the palace, there was clattering, swords clashing, there were doors opening and slamming. Everywhere he went, people were proclaiming the way ahead of them. None of that anymore. Now you could see this man creeping around the palace barefoot and nobody knew when he was coming and when he was going.

Verse 28, "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah and said, {29} "Well look at that, do you see how Ahab humbles himself before me? Because he humbles himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days. I will do it in the days of his son."

Now you really need to think about that, because I don't know what kind of evil there has been in your life. I don't know what kind of things you may think you have done that are bad that maybe God can't forgive.

But here is a man, and we have God's testimony that Ahab was the worst. But when he humbled himself and prayed and fasted and turned to God, God says, "Look at that, I will not bring the evil in his days." What if, Ahab's sons had repented and fasted and humbled themselves also, God would not have brought the evil in their days either. And maybe after a few generations of children that followed God the curse could have passed from Ahab's house completely. But it didn't!

### **Justice is Done**

In the process of time Ahab was finally killed in battle. The story of this is told in first Kings 22 beginning verse 34, "And a certain man drew his bow at random and smote Ahab between the joints of his harness." He actually had some kind of an armor, but there was a crease in it and the arrow went straight through the crease and wounded him and he said to his driver of his chariot, "Turn away, get me out of here. I'm wounded." {35} The battle increased that day and the King was held up in his chariot against the Syrians, but he was bleeding all the time and he died at evening and the blood ran out of his wound into the midst of the chariot as he bled to death. {37} So he died and was brought to Samaria and they buried the King in Samaria. {38} And one washed his chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood and they washed his armor so the dogs could lick the blood, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke." It all came true.

### **What about Jezebel?**

What about Jezebel? Well, in the process of time, God appointed a man named Jehu to be king over Israel. He was given a commission in the process, to deal with Jezebel. God told them him to go to Jezreel, find this woman and deal with her. You'll find the story in second Kings 9 verse 30, "When Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. She painted her face, arranged her hair and looked out a window. {31} As Jehu entered the gate, she leaned out the window and said, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?" She was talking about the fact that just like Zimri had slain his previous King so Jehu had done the same. {32} "He lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three of the palace eunuchs looked out at him. {33} And Jehu said, "Throw her down," So they threw her down from upper story window, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses and Jehu rode right over her, treading her under the feet of his horse. {34} When he came in, he ate and drank and had a meal, and said, "Go out and find this cursed women and bury her, after all, she's a King's daughter." {35} And when they went out to bury her, they couldn't find any more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. {36} They came back and told him and he said, "Well, that's what Elijah said, "In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel, {37} And the carcass of Jezebel should be is dung on the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so they

will never be able to say, to walk up to a grave and say, "This is Jezebel." They can't say that, because she was not buried in any place.

It is chilling, but justice tends to be chilling to evil men and evil women.

And that brings us once again back to God's words to Jeremiah, "But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth."

Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart and you were Born to Win!

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