

# The Knowlege of the First Century Christian

By Doug Hamilton

The Bible can seem to be an intimidating book when you look at the cultures it emerged from and the mere size as a whole. There are 66 books making up two Testaments (old and new), 1189 chapters and 23,145 verses. It would be absolutely ridiculous to assume that everyone in the religious world of Christianity would agree on their thoughts concerning such. We in the church family could spend the rest of our lives discussing all the possible viewpoints of each other's concerning the words of the Bible and never draw closer in unity on those things which we need to.

The aim of this lesson is to deal with the absolute points of knowledge of the first-century church that emerged from the shadow of the apostles. We live in a world that prides itself on divisive relativism. We in the church need to take the time to dwell in the minds of the first-century Christian and attempt to KNOW what they KNEW for sure. The New Testament is very clear about what the first-century Christians knew. Using verses from the NT that include "know", "knowing" and "do you not know", we will try and reconstruct some of the absolute so as to leave this study "absolutely united" in our mission of Christ.

## What do we KNOW the First-Century Church KNEW about the Plan of Salvation?

- They knew that the whole world is in the grip of the devil.
  - 1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*.
- They knew that there was nothing good about man.
  - Romans 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.
- They knew that nobody could be saved by their own works.
  - Galatians 2:15-16 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,<sup>16</sup> knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.
- They knew that God sent His Son to rescue us from those sins.
  - 1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.
- They knew that God's Grace was the foundation of their faith.
  - Colossians 1:6 "...which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard of *it* and knew the grace of God in truth;
- They knew the grace of God was demonstrated on the cross of Christ as a path.
  - 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

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## They KNEW what it meant to enter a relationship with Christ.

### • Confession:

They knew they had to confess Christ.

- 1 John 4:2–3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;<sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Note: This was not an alien concept to the first-century church.

- There were two terms used for Christians whom were persecuted during the time of the New Testament.
  - 1) There were the confessors. They were the individuals that were willing to testify before men to the fact that Jesus is Lord. They might be beaten, lose their jobs, their property and respect among the community. This is what Jesus was referring to in *Matthew 10:32–33* “*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*<sup>33</sup> *But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*”
  - 2) There were the martyrs. They were persecuted in the same ways as the confessors, only it actually led to death. *Revelation 2:13* “...and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you...”
- What good is a faith in Jesus Christ if you are ashamed of even admitting that fact before men? It is the first step in the believing process and they definitely believed in it. *Acts 8:37* And Philip said, “*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*” And he answered and said, “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*”

### • Repentance:

They knew they had to be repentant.

- Romans 2:2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
- Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

### • Baptism:

They knew that Baptism was the point of dying to themselves and beginning the walk with Jesus.

- Romans 6:3–7 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?<sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.<sup>5</sup> For if

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we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,<sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;<sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin.

- Living for God
  - a) Not Living in Sin
  - They knew that choosing to not walk for God would incur the wrath of God.
    - 1 Thessalonians 4:1–6 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.<sup>2</sup> For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority* of the Lord Jesus.<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;<sup>4</sup> that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,<sup>5</sup> not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;<sup>6</sup> *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.
  - They knew their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit.
    - 1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?
    - 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?<sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
- b) Godly Relationships

What do we KNOW that the first-century church KNEW about personal relationships?

All their relationships would be sanctified.

## Church Family Relationships:

- 1 John 2:11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

## Family Relationships

- They knew the husband was to be a godly leader of a submissive godly wife.
  - 1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.
- They knew that the path of faith was to be passed down to the next generation.
  - 2 Timothy 3:14–15 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,<sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
  - 2 Timothy 1:5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well.

## Employment Relationships

- They knew that Christian employees had to reverence their employers.

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- Ephesians 6:7–8 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,<sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Special Note: They definitely knew to not only work hard, but also to avoid to be a strain on others

- 2 Thessalonians 3:7–10 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,<sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;<sup>9</sup> not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.
- They knew that Christian employers had to reverence their employees.
  - Ephesians 6:9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.
  - Colossians 4:1 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

Closing Thoughts: There are many different opinions that we can hold to in the bible, but there are many things we KNOW that the first-century Christians KNEW. Perhaps we should become experts in knowing those things before spending countless hours on KNOWING things that might not make a difference.