

**I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IN THE EARLY CHURCH (ACTS 1-2)**

***Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, (David) being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on His throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God had raised up of which we are all witnesses. -Acts 2:29-32***

- A. The early Church in the book of Acts may be what we would consider a missional movement, however, through the work of the Spirit, their driving conviction wasn't the vision of *solely* being a missions movement.
- B. To the disciples in that day, a life in the Spirit and the mandate from Jesus was avidly real and personal. The words and remembrance of a Man stirred these weak individuals to *stay* in the place of friendship (ministry to the Lord), *before* and *after* the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 1; 2; 4; 13).
- C. The vision that laid hold of them was that of a real Man, Jesus. The early Church was a Christocentric movement, hungering for the revealing and knowing of Christ and Christ crucified. Friendship with Jesus defined their lives. It radically disrupted their personal agendas. It sustained them through the coming widespread persecution of the church.

***7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him... -Philippians 3:7-9***

- D. The Father divinely endorsed the overflow of this lifestyle with power, signs and wonders (Acts 4:31-33). Through the Person of Jesus, God released a divine wounding in their hearts that provoked a lifestyle response. They were compelled by friendship with Jesus. They hastened the Day of His return. They longed for His presence. (see Lk 12:36; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13; Jude 1:21)

***13 ....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession... -Titus 2:13-14***

- E. Friendship with Jesus (ministry to the Lord) was the lifeblood of their ministry. As Andrew Murray says:

*"We have the key that can unlock the dungeon of atheism and of heathendom. But, oh! we are more occupied with our work than we are with prayer. We believe more in speaking to men than we believe in speaking to God."*<sup>1</sup>

- F. Oh! that we would believe more in speaking to God than to men! How often we have plowed forward in our own ingenuity, strength, and timing, when there is sweet fellowship that is available to us -- the Holy Spirit doing part of the work and men doing the other part.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, Andrew. "Absolute Surrender". p. 43

## **II. DEFINING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS**

- A. Christianity at its foundation is not simply a lifestyle, set of beliefs, moral code, or gathering around a certain cause. Christianity is an active relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ, a Person to be known, not an object to acquire information about.
- B. Currently, in the West, we have trivialized what it means to have friendship with Jesus. The central plumb-line has moved away from friendship with Jesus, instead replaced by a vague and ambiguous concept of what it means to be a Christian.  
*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My father I have made known to you. -John 15:15*
- C. We cannot lay hold of the depth of friendship with Christ that we desire unless we actually know what it is that we are in search of.
- D. Jesus as Creator and Judge has the right to define what a great person looks like.
- E. What does it actually mean to grow in friendship with Jesus? How is it accomplished?

## **III. THREE FACETS TO THE REALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST**

- A. We cannot lay hold of the depth of friendship with Christ that we desire unless we actually know what it is that we are in search of.
  - 1. The invitation to friendship: the revelation of His desire for us (how he feels for us).
  - 2. The substance of friendship: relational knowledge.
  - 3. The overflow of friendship: “Your heart is moved by this, therefore my heart is moved by this...” (joy, emotional transformation, obedience, devotion, etc.)

## **IV. RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE (JOHN 14-17)**

- A. Intimacy in friendship is primarily established through relational knowledge. Our love and passion for Jesus must be rooted in the revelation of Jesus in scripture.  
*30 When he (Jesus) was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” -Luke 24:30-32*
- B. Any passion not completely anchored in His identity will be fleeting zeal and hollow sentiment. Zeal is cheap, but passion is costly. If our passion is for a Person, our natural response would be to devour everything centered around that Person. Passion for Jesus must be based around the knowledge of His life revealed in the Word. Knowledge is the fuel for love and relationship. We are most intimate with those whom we know the deepest (i.e., husband, wife, best friend).

- C. There is often a season of obedience and cultivation before you experience deep encounter with God. But Jesus promises to show himself to you.

***He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. - John 14:21***

D. **The crisis of ignorance:**

1. It's becoming common to know very little about Jesus as Christianity is increasingly being defined by a belief in basic formulas, good moral ideas, participation in activities, allegiance to issues, etc. Christianity has been defined by so many things.
2. We must soberly ask questions about what a relationship with Christ is actually based off of.

E. **The crisis of relevance:**

1. The most important issue the apostles faced was concerning the reality of the truth of Jesus. In the End-Times, the Holy Spirit will emphasize the same issue to the End-Time prophets and apostles. The question in that hour: "Who do they say Jesus is?" (Matt. 16:13-19)
2. Because Jesus is God His life is entirely relevant to us.

- F. Jesus understood this reality. In John 14-17, He reveals the Father's heart to prepare the disciples for the greatest trials they would face in their lives and identities. Jesus willingly chose to open up His heart and reveal the Father's love knowing that the disciples would all deny Him. He knew what He was getting into when He called you, yet He called you still!

***As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. -John 15:9***

***I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. -John 15:5***

***No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My father I have made known to you. -John 15:15***

***I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly (or to the full; NIV) - John 10:10***

V. **FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM: THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY**

- A. John the Baptist defined his entire lifestyle and ministry around this reality of friendship with Jesus, the Bridegroom God. He was a friend of the bridegroom who stood and heard him. (John 3:29) When the priests and levites asked John who he was, he declared to them Isaiah 40:3:

***I am the voice one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD (YAHWEH)."***

- B. John declared: “I am preparing the way of YAHWEH!” Every Gospel begins with this revelation. It was purposeful. The Holy Spirit meant to reveal everything through this lens: Jesus *IS* God in flesh.

***3 He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint (representation) of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. -Heb. 1:3 (ESV)***

This revelation and identity of Jesus was the piercing power in the early Church:

***Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and ... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” -Acts 2:36-38***

- C. The result of the unique identity of Jesus is that He is the fullness of the Divine nature of God. In Christ alone we find the revelation of who God is and what He is like.
- D. The implications of this is that we must wholly redefine our lives around this central reality. While Jesus is often viewed as the stepping stone to enter into something higher, the Father is intent on glorifying His Son that He would have preeminence in all things (Col. 1:17-18; Is. 2:10-11; Heb. 1).
- E. By joining Himself with the human story, God invited us to join in with His story. This is everything.

## **I. “HEAR HIM!”**

- A. Scripture records three times in the New Testament when the Father speaks audibly to Jesus: at His baptism (Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22), when some said it thundered (John 12:28), and at His Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5). Yet there is only one time when the Father speaks audibly to others, at His Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Lk. 9:35):

***And a voice came out of the cloud saying, “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!” -Luke 9:35***

***“...one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” -Luke 10:42***

- B. We must have discernment on what is primary (the First Commandment) and what is secondary (the Second Commandment). The two cannot be divorced from one another. Friendship with Jesus is dynamically connected to hearing His voice (abiding in the Vine) and doing His will (following His commands). When the First Commandment is put in first place, the Second Commandment becomes anointed and a baptism of power is released.
- C. That which Jesus established at His first coming, the Holy Spirit will restore prior to his Second Coming.

***17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” -Rev. 22:17***