

Who is God?

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Hebrews 1:12

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Now the message that I am going to bring this evening was a message...is a message that I feel like that God gave me over the past several days.

Now, the people in Mexico whom we visited last week and the week before are religious people. The name God is very familiar to them. The name Jesus is a very familiar name. The cross is a very familiar figure. In fact, in all of the cities and pueblos of the Yucatan you see crosses everywhere. Almost every woman in the Yucatan wears a cross around her neck. They have big temples and to cathedrals, some of them still standing after 240 and 250 years. And all of these little pueblos. Most of them have no services now, but they are there with their wooden crosses, some of them fallen in. But they are still there. It is a religious nation. They are religious people.

And as I walk through these pueblos and I...as I would stand in these broken down cathedrals and temples as I watched these poor, blinded, superstitious people in the same town where they go through all these parades worshipping the virgin Mary and they have a witch doctor. They throw fire crackers at demon spirits. They burn candles to drive away demon spirits. They will just do anything, anything at all that someone religious tells them to do because they know about heaven and they know a little bit about hell. It is a word they use frequently in their language. And I thought while I was walking among these ruins and these...some of them very thriving active groups and churches, this question kept coming to my mind. Who is God? Who is God?

David said in Psalm 51 verse 21...Psalm 50 it is verse 21. David said as he wrote Psalm 50 verse 21, "These things hast thou done and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

God is not who we think he is. God is who he is. God is not who you think he is. He is not who I think he is. He is not who I think he is. He is not who that poor native thinks he is. He is not who the high ecclesiastical power thinks he is. God is not who we think he is. He is who he is.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 55, "Your thoughts," God said, "are not my thoughts."

If you come to know the living God, you have got to forsake your thoughts. You have got to turn from your thoughts. God is not who you think he is.

“Well, I’ll tell you what I think.”

God is not who you think he is. God is who he is. We have got to find out who God is, not who we think he is or who somebody else thinks he is. Everybody has got an idea about God. But he is not who you think he is. He is who he is. God is God. He is who he is, not who we think he is.

And then God is not who we say he is. God is who he says he is. God is not who I say he is. I have got a religion. I have got a doctrine. I’ve got a creed. I’ve got a theology. God is not necessarily who I say he is. God is not who that priest says he is. God is not who the evangelist says he is. I don’t care where he got his doctrine. God is who he says he is. And I have got to find out who he says he is, not who somebody else says he is. I have got to find out who God says he is. That is who he is.

The heathen down there bow before their idols of stone and idols of marble and wood and all over this world. They bow to the sun. They bow to Mecca. They bow to something else. And they say, “Here is God,” but that is not God. God is now who they say he is. God is who he says he is. The Romanist brings forth his statues of saints and prays to them. They bring forth the sacrament and they say, “Here is God. God is in the wafer. God is in the wine.”

No, he is not.

They bring forth their pictures of Mary and open the school day with Hail Mary mother of God full of grace and truth pray for us poor sinners. But God is not Mary and Mary is not God. God is not who they say he is. God is who he says he is.

And the ritualist. He goes through all of his holy days and his ceremonies and his processions. And he says, “Here is God. Here is God in the well ordered, organized religious procession with all of our uniforms and our special banners, the banners of the church and the banners of the father and the banners of the denomination. Here is God.”

And then the legalist. He brings forth his laws, his rules of religion, his do’s and don’t’s. And he says, “Here is God. God is in the law.”

But the law is not God. And the procession is not God and the ritual is not God and the holy day is not God and the ceremony is not God.

And the theologian digs in all of his books and his old rusty volumes and he comes up with all the old creeds, the Heidelberg and the New London and the Westminster and the Philadelphia and this creed and that creed and this synod and that synod. And he comes up with all of his doctrines and creeds and charts and he says, “Here is God. Here is God.”

And then the experientialist. He talks about being...having a super piety. I heard a dear lady trying to preach on the radio this afternoon and she says, "They tell me you can't live above sin, you can't live from sin." She says, "I do. I live a clean holy life and if you want to get to heaven you have got to live a clean holy life." And these people profess a super piety which they don't have. They talk in a gibberish tongue which nobody can understand. They dream dreams and see visions that no one can interpret and they say, "Here is God."

It is not God either. God is not who you say he is. He is who he says he is.

And I am not going to listen to your descriptions of God. I want to hear what he says about himself. And the worldly religionist, he goes through the motions of his denominational program. We have got those all around us. They went to church this morning and now they are through until next Sunday morning. They might make it out next Sunday morning if they have nothing else of greater value or more importance to do. They play church on Sunday and they sit in their churches and they say, "God is with us. Here is God. Come to us, world, and we will show you God."

And the fundamentalists, the high pressure evangelists, the Hollywood promoter. He talks about the terrors of hell and the joys of heaven and he calls everybody to make a decision for Jesus. Come to the front. Here is God.

No he is not here. God is not here. This isn't God.

Where is God?

Turn to Psalm 42. I am dead serious about this. You get out and walk among all that ritualism and ceremonialism and legalism and all other kind of -isms and you think, "Where did it all come from and where is it all going?"

And everybody has got a different description of God, a different version of God. And I keep asking myself: Who is God? Where is God? There is not but one God. The Scripture says there is one God, the true and living God.

And before I die I want to know him, don't you? Before this life is spent I want to know him.

And so did David. And he says in Psalms 42:1, "As the hart, the deer, panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee, oh God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, the living God." Not the Catholic God or the Baptist God or the Presbyterian God or the Holy Roller God or the Pentecostal God. My soul thirsteth for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God? In other occasion on another occasion he said, "I pant and search for God in a dry and thirsty land." And nobody has ever lived in a drier nor a more thirsty land than the one we are living in.

And then if you will turn to Philippians three you will hear in the New Testament the apostle Paul using similar language in Philippians chapter three and verse eight through 10. He says, "Doubtless..." You talk about a ritualist. You talk about a legalist. You talk about a doctrinalist. You talk about a theologian. You talk about an orthodox fundamentalist. Paul was one. He was playing church and wrapped up in religion all his life. And he said, "Doubtless," Philippians 3:8, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and I do count them but..." A little stronger now. "Dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death if by any means I might obtain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Christ said, "You don't know me and you don't know my father."

Christ said, "This is eternal life that they might know thee, the living God, the true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Where is God? I seriously for the past few days...and Charlie and I and Walter and David have been talking on this subject. Who is God? I want to know the living God. I want to preach the living God. I am not interested in names and buildings and programs and success and numbers or anything else. I want for myself and for all who hear me to know the living God; know him not just by name, but know him by heart. Know him not just as an historical figure, but a living person; know him in such a way that he walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. And the joys we share as we tarry there none other has ever known.

I want to be able to say we know him whom to know is life eternal. And I want to hear him say at the judgment, "I know you."

A true knowledge of God...now listen to me. Turn to Hebrews chapter 21 again. A true knowledge of God, he is not who we think he is. He is who he is. Don't be satisfied with thinking anything about God because he says your thoughts are not my thoughts and the way...there is a way that seemeth right unto man. This seems logical. But logic and spirit are two different things.

Just because it is logical doesn't mean it is true. Your wisdom, God said, is foolishness. And you think his wisdom is foolishness. The preaching of the cross is foolishness, sheer nonsense to them who are perishing. But it is the wisdom of God.

"You thought I was altogether such a one as yourself."

Have you built God according to your own dimensions and specifications and plans and blue print? Or have you tried to find out who he is and who he says he is?

It says here in Hebrews chapter one a true knowledge of God must come by divine revelation. God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets... That's the first way that God reveals himself, through his Word. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. That's the second way God reveals himself, through his Son who is called the living Word, the living Word. You don't know God if you don't know his Word. And you don't know God if you don't know his Son. He has never spoken to anybody.

Oh, I know the heavens declare the glory of God, but what can you learn from the stars about the redemptive purposes of God? You tell me. What can you learn from the trees and the rivers and the mountains and the valleys and the sun and the moon and the stars about the purpose of God in redeeming sinners, about the love of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God, the death of God, huh? Nothing. That has got to come from the Word. That has got to come by divine revelation.

Turn to Job 11. Listen to this. In Job chapter 11... It has got to come by divine revelation. In Job chapter 11 Job says this, verse seven. "Can you by searching find out God?"

Somebody may leave here tonight when I finish preaching and say, "I am going out and I am not going to stop until I find out God."

But I will tell you this. You had better start right here in this book. Don't go anywhere else. Just go to the book because that is where God is revealed.

Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the almighty unto perfection? Why it is as high as the heavens. What can you do? It is deeper than hell. What can you know? Can your finite mind contain an infinite God? Can your limited thoughts contain an unlimited God? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.

Then in 1 Corinthians chapter two, 1 Corinthians the second chapter Paul writing says this. 1 Corinthians two verse nine. As it is written, but as it is written in Isaiah, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Now what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is him?"

You don't know what I am thinking. The spirit of man which is in him. You don't know what I am thinking. You don't know what kind of person I am.

If you met someone new today, someone introduced you, somebody said, "Mr. Brown, this is Lonnie Lewis." Now Mr. Brown has never seen Ronnie Lewis ever in his life. He just heard his name. Mr. Brown doesn't know one thing about Ronnie Lewis, not one single thing until Ronnie opens his mouth. And the more Ronnie talks and the more Ronnie identifies himself, the more Ronnie tells about himself, his family, his background, where he works, what he does, what his hobbies are, what his interests are,

the more he talks the more the man is going to know him. If he keeps silence the man will know nothing about him.

That is the reason this generation doesn't know God. They deserted this book. They turned their backs away from him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the image of his person. And they turned to stone and to idols and ceremonies and processions and rituals and playing church. They don't know God.

Read on. He said, "No man...What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him. Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but he Spirit of God."

Verse 14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, neither can he know him because they are spiritually discerned."

Has God taught you about himself? God must speak to us if we are to know God. And there are only two ways that you can know the living God and both are vital. You can't have one without the other. God speaks through his Word. God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets...what did he say by the prophets? Well, let's look at some of them. Let me just quote some of these Scriptures.

In Genesis 1:1 God said through Moses that he is God the Creator. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The only way you can know the one who created the heavens and the earth is because he said he created the heavens and the earth.

And he took Job. Turn to Job 38. And he took Job across his vast creation. He took Job across his vast universe and he declared in Job chapter 38 verse two, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now your loins like a man and I will demand of you and you answer me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

I run into people standing on their little soap boxes saying, "I don't believe there is a God."

I run into other people who say they are agnostics. That is a word that came from the word ignorant. If you want to claim to be an agnostic, do you know what you are saying? You are ignorant.

God says, "Job, who is this popping off down here without any knowledge? You gird up your loins. I've got something to ask you."

Verse four. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of this earth? Declare if you have any understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof if you know? Who stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened and who laid the cornerstone thereof? When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God

shouted for joy, who shut up the sea with doors when it break forth as if it had issued out of a womb? Where were you, Job, when I made these things?”

When God spake to our fathers by the prophets he said, “I am God the creator. I hung the moon and the stars and the sun. I created the world and I created man in my own image.”

And then God tells us that he is holy. He took Israel to Sinai in Exodus chapter 20 verse one and he says, “I, Israel, I am the Lord your God.” Exodus 20. “I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”

Who is God? God is holy. He is the God of creation. He is the God of holiness. He revealed his holiness to Isaiah. Isaiah said, “When King Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up and that his train filled the temple and even the cherubims and seraphims hid their faces and cried, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God almighty.’”

He said to Moses his servant, “Take off your shoes. You are in God’s presence. You are on holy ground.”

I know just as soon as some person tells me they are living free from sin, they are also living free from God because the minute you come into the presence of a holy God you recognize his holiness and your unholiness. You recognize his perfection and your imperfection. You recognize his strength and your weakness, his glory and your shame.

God is holy. He is to be feared and had in reverence by them that are before him.

And God is sovereign. What did he say to us through David? Turn to Psalms 135 and listen to what David wrote. God spake by David to the fathers and this is what he said in Psalms 135 beginning with verse four. “The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself and Israel for his peculiar treasure. I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord—capital L-O-R-D—is above all gods—little G-O-D-S. And whatever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, in earth, in the seas and all deep places. God is sovereign.

That is what he said to the fathers through the prophets. He says, “I am the Lord. I create darkness. I create light. I create good. I create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things.”

He took old Jeremiah down to the potter’s house and he said, “Watch that potter.” And that potter. That potter was forming the vessel from clay on the wheel. And as he formed it, it broke in the potter’s hand. He cast it aside and he got the lump and he started a new vessel. And God says, “Can I not do with my own what I will? Hath not the potter power over the clay to make of one lump...of the same lump a vessel unto honor and a vessel unto dishonor?”

God declareth the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done saying, “My counsel shall stand.” And Paul said, “He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Who is God? He is the Creator. That is what he said. He is holy. That is what he said. He is sovereign. That is what he said. And he is our Savior.

Do you know what Mary said when the angel came and announced to her the birth of Jesus Christ? She said, "My soul rejoices in God my Savior, God my Savior." His name Jehovah is Savior.

Turn to Psalm 68. Let me show you this little verse here in the book of Psalms 60 verse 20. Psalms 68 verse 20. It says here, David writing, "He that is our God is the God of salvation and unto God the Lord belong the issues of death."

He is a sovereign Savior. He said, "Moses..."

Moses said, "Lord, show me your glory. Who me your glory."

Brethren, I want to see God's glory, don't you? I want to see God glorified in himself and in his work. I want to see his glory.

Moses had seen the Red Sea divide. Moses had seen the pillar of fire and the cloud by day. Moses had seen the death of the first born. Moses had seen the river turned to blood. Moses had seen these things that folks say, "This is God. Look at the miracle. A man was healed. Here is God."

Moses had seen all that, but he wanted to see God's glory. And God said, "I'll let you see my glory. I will make all my goodness pass before you and, Moses, I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."

And if God leaves you alone you will go to hell. But if God almighty is pleased to reach down in that cesspool of sin in which you was born and in which you by nature have laid and in which you by choice have continued and in which you by affection love. And he reaches down and begets in you a new nature that hates sin and loves holiness and hates yourself and loves God and reveals himself to you. Then you'll be saved. But he is going to have to do it.

God is sovereign. He is sovereign in all things. Not only in creation, not only in providence, but in salvation. God is sovereign and God is a Savior. He showed that to Israel when he showed them the blood on the door. And he said, "When I see that blood I will pass over you." There is the Savior.

He took Abraham up on Mount Moriah and he said, "Abraham, don't touch your boy. Look behind you." And there was a ram. He said, "Put that ram on the altar and take Isaac off." There is substitution.

He said, "Moses, make a serpent of brass in the same form as the serpent that had bitten the people and lift it up and whosoever shall look at it shall live." There is substitution.

That high priest crawls under the veil and puts that blood on the mercy seat covering the law. And God forgives. That's substitution.

Can't know God unless you listen to his Word. And his Word says he will punish sin. He showed Adam that in the garden, Pharaoh that at the Red Sea, Sodom and Gomorrah that, the cities of the plain. God will punish sin. He said, "I will in no wise clear the guilty."

Turn to Psalm 50. Listen to this verse. God owns all things. Who is God? Oh, I want to know him. I just enjoyed looking up these verses.

I said, "Lord, speak through your Word. As you spoke to the fathers by the prophets, speak to this child. And reveal yourself."

And he says, "I own all things." Psalm 50. Look at verse seven. "Hear, oh my people, I will speak. Oh Israel, I will testify against you. I am God. That's who I am. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of your house nor he goat out of your fold for every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle on a thousand hills are mine. I know all the fowls of the mountain and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I wouldn't tell you. The world is mine and the fulness thereof."

Don't feel too sorry for God. How about that?

God owns all things. Who is he? He is eternal.

Thy throne, oh God, is forever having no beginning or ending. God is omnipresent. Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in hell thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea God is there.

Don't run down to some building and try to meet God. He is everywhere. God gives life.

He said, "Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee. Who formed thee? I did."

God takes life. Job 14 says man's days are determined. The number of his months are with the Lord. He cannot pass. God takes life.

And thank God he will forgive sin. He said, "Their sins will I remember no more. I will blot out their transgressions. I will separate their sins from them as far as the east is from the west."

How many times did our Lord Jesus Christ reach out and say, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee"?

Do you know God? God is not in worshipping on Saturday or Sunday either one. God is heaven a broken heart of worship 24 hours a day.

There is a way to be baptized, but that is not God. There is away to observe the Lord's table, but you can observe right and go to hell. There are doctrines that are true. There is truth that is true. But a man can follow what we call truth and not know God. God is a person. He is a living God. He is a spirit. They that worship him worship him in spirit and in truth.

This mechanical religion of the 20th century is nauseating to all who even think about it, especially those who understand it.

Oh, my heart, my soul, panteth for thee, the living God.

God is not just a name. He is a person. Not just a historical character, a living indwelling spirit who makes my heart throb and my mind rejoice and my lips praise him. He is not a fire escape to heaven out of hell. He is not a doormat called Jesus. He is not a poor, defeated, frustrated little Lord that can't do what he wants to do. He will tell you who he is. If you want to know, he will tell you.

He said he spoke to our fathers by the prophets and they knew him. They listened to the prophets. They listened to the Word. I sat in the car coming up here. Charles was driving. I was reading the book of Psalms and I thought, "You know, I think some Wednesday night I'll just start with Psalms one and just read the psalms." Oh, how it gives God the glory, how it reveals the person and character of the living God. David knew God.

Then he hath spoken to us by his son. Turn to 1 John five. Let me read you a verse here. 1 John five verse 20. Listen to this. And we know, we know that the Son of God is come and he hath given us an understanding." That is what I want. Not just a doctrine. I want to understand it, not just a denomination. I want an understanding, not just a profession, not just some mechanical orthodoxy. I want an understanding.

The Son of God hath come and given us an understanding that we may know him that is true and that we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God. This is eternal life.

And I know some of you are charitable. You are more charitable than the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul says if anybody comes preaching any other gospel, even if it is an angel from heaven, let him be accursed. And I know some of you think you are being goody goody and you are being nicey nicey when you say, "Well, everybody is striving for the same place."

That is what I'm afraid. You are all going to the same place. It is called H-E-L-L hell. We are not supposed to call the names of religion. We are not supposed to find fault with other people's religion. Let every man settle it in his own heart. That is not what

Scripture says. It says, "To the law and to the prophets if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." Isn't that what it says?

God is not who you think he is. He is who he is. You had better find out who he is, not who you think you is. God is not who I say he is or anybody else. He is who he says he is and that's what I am interested in. I am interested in these poor people in the Yucatan coming to know, find out who God is.

And he said the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know the true God. This is eternal life.

If you don't know the true God, you don't have eternal life. No man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Isn't that what he said?

And in closing in Bethlehem's manger we see God incarnate, the Word made flesh. In the home of sinners we see God's love for the guilty, the friend of sinners. We see him reaching down and lifting a fallen woman. We see him lying there while a harlot bathes his feet in tears. We see him coming under a tree and calling down a tax collector, a publican. We see him hanging on a cross in death forgiving a thief. He loves sinners. That's God. God is not in your temples of gold and silver. God is down there in the house of that sinner. God delights to show mercy. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Watch Jesus Christ as he rebukes the Pharisee and he rebukes hypocrisy and he rebukes false religion. He is God. God hates hypocrisy. God hates your lies. God hates your false religious show. God hates your super piety. God hates your false profession.

See the woman at the well, God's mercy to the undeserving. See him on the cross, God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Do you want to know God? Come to Calvary.

Turn to John 5:22 and I close by reading this Scripture. John 5:22. Do you want to know God? You make up your mind you don't by nature know him. The natural man doesn't know God. The religious man doesn't know God. He said, "You call me Lord with your lips, but your heart is a long ways away from me." You want to know the living God? You will find him right here in this book, right here in this book. And you will find him in the person of the Son. If you want to know God listen to John 5:22. "For the Father judgeth no man. He has committed all judgment to the Son that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. And he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him."

Philip said, "Lord, show me the Father."

And Christ said, "Philip, have I been with you so long and yet you don't know me. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I and my Father are one."

To know Christ is to know God. To love Christ, not to claim you love him, but love him is to love God. To honor Christ is to honor God. To ignore this book is to ignore the only source, the information you have in order to know the living God.

Do you want to know why you don't know him? It is because you don't know his Word. That's why people don't know the Lord. They have got all these strange ideas that have been handed down to them by every Tom, Dick and Harry. They don't know God.

Oh, like old brother Barnard used to say, "Sinner, before you go to hell buy you a Bible and find out who God is."

Our Father in heaven, let us not call upon an idol of our imagination and think we are calling on thee. Let us not call upon some idol handed down to us through religious custom and tradition and think we are calling on thee. Let us in awe and reverence and fear stand in the presence of him who is revealed in his Word, who revealed in his Son, who hath come to give us an understanding that we might know thee, the true and living God.

Open our eyes that we might see and our ears that we might hear and our hearts that we might understand who thou art. Oh, where is God? My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. There is nothing here to satisfy our soul but the knowledge of the Lord. But wilt thou in Christ reveal thyself to us for his glory, for his praise in his name. Amen.