

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Known & Unknown

"[T]here are known knowns; there are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we don't know."

The above statement was made by United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on February 12, 2002 at a press briefing where he addressed the absence of evidence linking the government of Iraq with the supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups.

While some have criticized Rumsfeld's statement as gobbledygook, others defend his words as a concise summary of an otherwise complex concept. Reflecting the iconic status of his quotation, Donald Rumsfeld's recently published autobiography, focusing on his many years of public service, is entitled "Known and Unknown: A Memoir."

The distinction between "knowns" and "unknowns" is important

in the area of national security. The United States of America has been subjected to several surprise attacks in the modern era: the first occurring on December 7, 1941 (when the Japanese launched a military strike against Pearl Harbor) and the second on September 11, 2001 (when Islamic terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center & the Pentagon). We did not know these attacks were coming, and our collective ignorance had devastating consequences. On the other hand, certain things we think we know sometimes turn out to be false. Intelligence agencies in both the United States and Europe believed that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, no substantial WMD stockpiles were ever discovered in Iraq.

Such differences are also important in the spiritual realm. We must distinguish between "knowns" and "unknowns."

Things that are Known

We Can Know Revealed Truth

Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of the Lord to the inspired apostles and prophets so that we may know the things freely given to us by God (1 Cor. 2:12-16). John also affirms that believers can know the truth, and specifics revealed therein, such as the characteristics of the age, the identity of the Christ, the nature of the opposition, etc. (1 John 2:18-24).

We Can Know Present Salvation

Consider the confession of the apostle Paul, who said, "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." Note also the contextual conditionality of such a statement (2 Tim. 1:12-14). Similarly, John said, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." And again, "By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6). Obedience is the true test of spiritual fellowship (1 John 3:24; 5:2-3).

We Can Know Future Glory

Based upon the promises of God, believers know that a glorious future awaits the faithful (2 Cor. 4:17-5:4). Although Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he was not permitted to relate the sights and sounds of Paradise (2 Cor. 12:1-6). In contrast, John communicates the glories of

heaven, comparing physical knowns to spiritual unknowns (Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-5). We may not understand all the specifics, or fully comprehend the description of heaven, but we can be certain of one thing: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:1-3).

Things that are Unknown

We Cannot Know Unrevealed Truth

Distinguishing between the known and the unknown, Moses said, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). Apart from divine revelation, we cannot know the mind of the Lord (Isa. 40:12-17; Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 2:16). Therefore, laying aside human speculation (Col. 2:6-8; 1 Tim. 1:3-7), let us speak as the oracles of God, not adding to, subtracting from, or otherwise altering the inspired message (1 Thess. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 4:11).

We Cannot Know the Unrevealed Future

Solomon said, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). Recognition of this reality offers no excuse for apathy but is rather a call to action (Eccl. 11:1-6). Not knowing the time of Christ's Second Coming, we should be vigilant and watchful (Matt. 24:36-39, 42-44). Not knowing the length of our days, we should humbly trust in the Lord's plan and purpose (James 4:13-17).

We Cannot Know Unrevealed Morality

Jeremiah said, "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Apart from divine revelation, even disciples of the Lord do not know what is best, especially when blinded by ambition (Mark 10:35-40), or consumed by anger (Luke 9:51-56). Therefore, let us trust in the Lord with all our heart and do not lean on our own understanding. In all our ways acknowledge Him, and He will make our paths straight (Prov. 3:5-8).

Let us carefully distinguish between things that we know and things that we do not know. We can know revealed truth. We can know present salvation. We can know future glory. We cannot know unrevealed truth. We cannot know the unrevealed future. Apart from divine guidance, we do not know what is best.

Accordingly, let us worship what we know, trusting in the inspired message of revelation, serving God with the right attitude and according to the revealed pattern (John 4:20-24). Do you know the truth? Obey it today, and be saved!

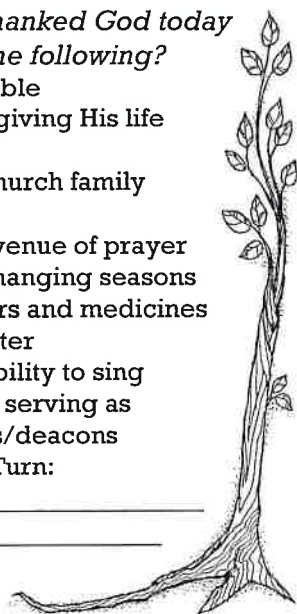
However, as surely as we can know God, let us recognize that we are also known of Him. Speaking to the church at Laodicea, Jesus distinguished between self-deception and spiritual reality, purity of purpose and pretense of heart (Rev. 3:14-19). Are you an erring Christian? Repent and be restored!

Mark Mayberry

God gave you a gift of
86,400
seconds today. Have
you used one to say
THANK YOU?

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Jobs
- The avenue of prayer
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- Laughter
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Second Journey

A	T	Q	N	J	R	E	I	Z	P	F	A	P	V	N	N	O	V	S	Q
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D	D	E	M	N	R	N	G	F	E	D	X	D	J	E	E	Z	O	Q	T
P	A	D	X	F	I	W	R	B	A	K	T	N	J	R	A	R	T	D	X
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Q	P	V	V	U	N	S	I	L	A	S	Q	M	C	J	W	M	F	M	M

DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

Acts 15:40, but Paul chose _____ and departed, having been commended
 Acts 16:1, Paul also came to _____...
 Acts 16:1, ...and to _____. A disciple was there,
 Acts 16:1, named _____, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer
 Acts 16:12, and from there to _____, which is a leading city
 Acts 16:14, One who heard us was a woman named _____
 Acts 16:29, and the _____ called for lights and rushed in
 Acts 17:1, they came to _____, where there was a synagogue
 Acts 17:10, immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to _____
 Acts 17:22, "Men of _____, I perceive that in every way you are very religious
 Acts 18:1, Paul left... and went to _____. And he found a Jew named...
 Acts 18:2, ...a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife