

LEARNING THE THINGS OF GOD

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What is real and lasting in our life in this world? (a) God's acceptance of us "in Christ," and (b) what His love accomplishes for us and in us. In this light, all worldliness is vanity, for it passes away with our "perishing" outside of Christ.

We humans have a built-in obsession for idolatry; we *must* worship something or someone. This worship is just as constant as the worship of the ancient Egyptians and Canaanites for their idols. Our idols are our new cars, the limitless contents of our department stores. Our temple is our mall. The *Titanic* was once Europe's idol; look at it now.

Our human idols are our pop stars, our sports heroes, our military and political leaders. They too get old, and die.

Once we have seen and believed the truth of what the Son of God accomplished by His sacrifice on the cross, we cannot worship any other "god" instead of our one true Creator-and-Redeemer—God of the Holy Bible. Since He reversed the "condemnation" that came on the human race through Adam, now He treats us as though we had never sinned. He brought us out of "Egypt," out of the "house of bondage." It's time to tell Him Thank You!

1. Our God and Savior is too great and wonderful for any idol on earth to represent Him in any way. He is the Creator of heaven and earth! The Maker of the Milky Way! The ocean is but a teacup in His hand! And He knows every one of us, all of our secrets, better than a mother can know her children. How could we drag Him

down to the level of any "thing" that humans could devise?

2. He is not only "great" in the sense of vastness, bigness, and power. He is "great" in the sense that His love for each of us is personal and never ending. Not only did He fling into endless space the numberless suns and worlds of the Milky Way, He also designed and made the tiny humming bird with its delicate wings. And Jesus told us that when one of them flies against my window in summertime and breaks its neck and falls, that same infinite Father in heaven looks down and notices what happened and He is sorry.

After telling us about this, Jesus said: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 30, 31). Why, there's not an astronomer on earth who can tell you how many suns and stars are in the Milky Way! Nor can any mother on earth count how many hairs are in her child's head. But although "the Lord your God" knows all your secrets and even shameful thoughts, He still loves you!

3. Since God is Spirit, it's impossible that any idol or statue could represent Him. He wants us to learn to worship Him, not some useless idol. When Mom and Dad kiss Baby goodnight, often he wants a teddy bear in bed with him, a kind of surrogate "Mom or Dad." But our loving heavenly Father is too wise to let us ever have a surrogate of Himself. No Beanie Baby "god" for anyone who has learned Lesson Number One about the love of God!

4. The baby's teddy bear or Beanie Baby is clutched in bed because Mom or Dad can't stay in the bedroom all night.

But "the Lord our God" is always with us, not down the hall somewhere: "He Himself has said, 'I will never leave

you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). One of the names of Jesus is “Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us” (Matthew 1:23). David asks, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ... If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day” (Psalm 139:7, 11, 12).

5. But His nearness is even greater than David saw it to be! The New Testament reveals Jesus as One who came so close to us that He became one of us (that’s what “Immanuel, ... God with us” means). As our Creator and Redeemer, He was utterly without sin, but He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know what it is to be tempted in all points like as we are, yet always without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He experienced all of our temptations and our feelings. He even tasted that bitter cup of feeling forsaken. He cried out on His cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). He felt that way and conquered it, so that we might never have to feel forsaken by God.

Why did Jesus, the Son of God, come down to this earth? Not simply so He might take us to heaven when we die. He has another blessed purpose. The angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary before He was born, “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).