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When God Complained

by Don Kistler

For us to understand God, He must speak to us in anthropomorphic terms. When He speaks to us of anguish, He must explain it in a way that we can understand. In Jeremiah 4:19-22, we have God crying out as if He were a human being: “O my soul. I am pained in my very heart.” God is complaining here. “My people have not known Me.” He says that His people are foolish, and the essence of their foolishness is that they do not know Him! It is also strongly stated in this passage that the source of all their problems was their ignorance of their God. Much is made of what happens in Acts, when Paul says that he saw the shrine to “the unknown God,” but it is to be feared that this passage describes many so-called Christian churches in our day, not just the heathen temple in Paul’s day!

In a recent World magazine article on the top 100 selling “Christian” books, only 4 of them were remotely about God, Christ, or salvation—and that is being extremely charitable! You can hear God evaluating the state of affairs today: “My people know financial concepts; they know love languages; they know pop-psychology; they know how to express their ‘needs’ to each other; they know how to give hugs to women; they know how to deliver themselves from demons, how to loose themselves from oppression, how to take weight off, how to make decisions, how to bind Satan, how to claim this and that,

how to cast out demons. They know a thousand peripheral things, but they do not know Me!”

We seem interested in the gifts, just not the Giver. We are more interested in what God can do for us than



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in Who He is in Himself. Jonathan Edwards once said quite accurately, “If we only love God for what He can do for us, we really only love ourselves.” The amazing thing is that God has revealed so much of Himself to us,

not only in His Word, but in His very creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” said the psalmist. But we study astronomy without seeing the wonder of the God who makes it all so amazing!

God has revealed Himself in His Word over and over again. But we see it as a self-help manual rather than as God’s revelation of Himself. There is much in the Scripture that can help us, but the focus of Scripture is not us and our problems, but God and His glory!

God reveals Himself and His character in His names. Each of His names reveals something of His character. His activity reveals something of His character. We are told: “He made known his ways to Moses, and his acts to the sons of Israel” (Psalm 103:7).

The narratives of Scripture tell us how God does things, and from that we can deduce much of His character. But we do not seem to be very interested in the character of God, just the “goodies” of God. Yet we are commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are commanded to love God with all of our mind. The knowledge of God is so much an issue that God summarizes all of eternal life with these words: “For this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Eternal life is knowing God and Christ. It is knowing about them as much as it is knowing them. You wouldn’t give two cents for anyone who said they wanted a relationship with you, but weren’t interested in who you were! And neither does God. Compare the attitude of most professing believers today with that of Paul, who declared, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” What a contrast! Hosea says this on God’s behalf, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the

LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (Hosea 4:1).

There is no truth, and there is no mercy in the land. Why not? Because there is no knowledge of God in the land. These are inseparable items. Only to the degree that there is knowledge of God in the land will there be truth

or mercy. Second Peter 1:2 says that grace and peace would be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God. In fact, “everything that pertains to life and godliness comes through the true knowledge of him who has called us” (2 Peter 1:3).

Through the true knowledge of God, which presupposes that there is a false knowledge, comes “everything” that has anything to do with life or godliness. Physical life and spiritual life all have the true knowledge of God as their source, and everything that has anything to do with either of those two things! Is it any wonder then that God says His people are foolish for not knowing Him?

The Hebrew there carries with it the idea that the people are not just silly, but they are morally deficient; and then He adds that they have no understanding. They are totally ignorant of doing that which is pleasing to God. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they do not know. The idea of foolish or stupid here also carries with it an obvious arrogance; they are not only foolish, they are not only ignorant, they are

not only stupid, but they are arrogant in their ignorance, which calls to mind the words of Paul: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!” Look at all that God has done to reveal Himself, and how aggressively man has rejected that knowledge. Paul tells us that God has put the knowledge of Himself within



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every man, so that all men are without excuse. Paul says that God's invisible attributes are clearly seen. He then explains that ignorance of God is a conscious choice that men have made. He says, "Though they knew God, they would not have God in their thoughts." Now, before you can not have God in your thoughts, you must have God in your thoughts.

So atheism is a conscious choice on the part of wicked men to eliminate the knowledge of God from their consciousness. Atheism is not an intellectual thing; it's a moral thing! Repeatedly God says, "They have rejected knowledge." We don't know God because it's not important to us to do so. It is far more important to us to know ourselves than to know God. But it is a conscious choice, and every last one of us is without excuse.

Our problem is self-induced and our wounds are self-inflicted. What are we to do? We are to "press on to know the Lord." We must confess the sin of self-imposed ignorance and turn from it. And then we must give ourselves to know not just facts about God, but the God of the facts. How does He think? How does He act? Why does He act that way? What does that tell me about His nature and character? Let us be determined to know God, for this is eternal life. ◻