

The Elusiveness of Knowledge—Part Two

Does it make any sense that knowledge is so easily gained and lost and that not everyone comes to have the same knowledge at any given time—especially about the Bible. Why should it be this way? Why wouldn't God make all knowledge, including what we find in the Bible, available at the same time to everyone in the world?

Jerusalem, under the reigns of King David and King Solomon, had become a center for commerce and learning as the capital of a regional empire in the Middle East.

Consequently, in Solomon's day there were people who could navigate the seas, build marvelous buildings, paint, sculpt, go to war, explain the path of the stars, mine the earth and fetch exotic creatures from far away lands, and do many, many other things. These people were responsible for teaching King Solomon about how to do things, and the things that they did and the knowledge that they had existed before Solomon.

Yet, it was from this body of knowledge that Solomon began to acquire his own knowledge and formulate the wisdom that he attained, which also included the then known Scripture, including the writings of his father David.

The book of Ecclesiastes—attributed to Solomon—is an example of experiential learning and the knowledge gained from that experience and experimentation, and how that

acquired knowledge was valued against the Scripture. By his learning Solomon became an instructor of the people in acquirable wisdom and knowledge as it is written in Ecclesiastes that he “taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs” (Pro. 12:9).

Showing us that Solomon had “sought” to acquire knowledge and wisdom, which lead him to sum the matter of his quest by stating that we should, “fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Something that Solomon had surmised by juxtaposing his experimentation against the information of what was to be found in Scripture.

Thus, we may reasonably conclude then that when the Queen of Sheba came to test Solomon with hard questions, she was perhaps challenging Solomon's gift of discernment regarding the acquirable knowledge and wisdom that he gathered from all those who preceded him, including his father David. If we have surmised correctly, this tells us that there is a difference between the acquirable knowledge and wisdom that Solomon came to possess, and the revealed knowledge that comes from God.

We have to remember that Solomon was certainly aware of the writings of Moses, and the wisdom and knowledge that it contained, which included what God had revealed to Moses. We also need to recall that it was Solomon who had asked God for the ability to “discern between good and bad” for the purpose of judging the people

correctly, and so he sought that knowledge and wisdom and taught it in the form of proverbs to the people of Israel (I Kg. 3:9).

It was this gift of discernment that gave Solomon his reputation for wisdom.

The record of which is in the Bible.

We have it in possession today.

Yet, still, even though we have such knowledge and wisdom from Solomon we see that few can use the Scripture to explain God's way of life, and the purpose for our existence, and what it is that God has planned for all humankind.

Notably, then, we should also keep in mind that Solomon did not ask God how to explain the genetic framework of life, or how light waves work, or how he might travel into outer space, and so on. Even wise King Solomon would marvel at today's advancements in technology, and in the enormous amount of existing information waiting to be turned into knowledge.

So, then, what does all this mean for a book such as the Bible?

Well, we might think that here is a book that if more people had knowledge of, and an understanding of its meaning and purpose, there would be fewer troubles in the world—before Solomon's time and after.

In actuality, however, it has been, and continues to be, just the opposite even to this day.

Having the Bible is one thing and understanding its place in the world of knowledge is another, for we see that the Bible has been the basis for many a superstitious belief, and it has even been used to condone war, incite racial tension, and exploit the poor. It has also been used—at times—to interfere with a growing body of

knowledge about this world.

This, of course, is not the purpose of the Bible, but throughout its development and canonization it has been a book frequently misused for the benefit of the user. Even in our modern day, we find conflict between people's interpretation of Scripture and what some people have discovered in the world of science. For example, through various interpretations of Scripture, some believe Jerusalem is the center of the earth, and some have concluded that the earth is only 6,000 years old.

Interestingly, in some cases the Bible would have helped people in their understanding of the earth and its wonders.

Now, people might think that such issues would not be addressed in the Bible, and that would be an incorrect view of Scripture. In centuries past, as people began to explore the earth, we find that early on many believed the earth to be flat and some thought the earth was even rectangular in shape, or that the stars were fixed in the sky.

However, it is interesting to see that Isaiah wrote something that would incline us to believe the earth was understood to be round in the days of the kings of Israel.

Notice what Isaiah wrote in his prophecy: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Isa. 40:22-23).

Was Isaiah referring to the earth as having a circumference? Was he explaining that the universe was expanding by the nature of its creation?

It could be.

The question we will pose is this.

Was this knowledge from God, or did this knowledge come to him from those who had been venturing throughout the earth?

In other words, Isaiah may have been using the wealth of knowledge created by other people to help him write what we find in Holy Scripture. (There are places in the Bible that refer to known constellations as well.)

We must realize that the Bible developed through time just as knowledge of the world developed through time. The information that it contains may be found in some places and not in others. Likewise, it has traveled along the roads of commerce over the centuries to centers of learning in this world.

One only has to observe the journeys of the Apostle Paul to realize that the message he took with him became a part of the flow of knowledge from seaport to seaport, and from city to city.

This gives us something to reflect on about the gospel message we find in Scripture. Because it also did not go, and has not gone, everywhere in the world.

Does this mean that Christianity, or more specifically the church of God, has failed in its efforts to spread the gospel, or does it mean that the gospel was never intended to be everywhere at one time for everyone?

We are forced to conclude that Holy Scripture fixes for us a small part of the enormous amount of knowledge that exists in the world. The Bible also contains the same kind of knowledge that we find in the world. It contains histories, genealogies, king lists, stories of battles, songs, etc. It is recognized

as an important body of literature, and it is regarded as such by many who have read it.

Nonetheless, we should pose the question and ask if indeed the Bible is really different from other literature of the world.

Is there knowledge to be had from the Bible that is not acquired by human effort, observation and experimentation?

If we were to remove from Scripture everything that is comparatively the same as what we would find in the world of knowledge, what would we discover?

We would find that there are two ways of obtaining knowledge.

The first is through observation and experimentation, and that which comes in through the five senses.

We can call it “created knowledge, or acquired knowledge,” and maybe we have never thought about it before, but it appears that humankind has been destined to be creators of knowledge through observation and experimentation.

Knowledge is nothing more than the imparting of information into the human mind, and humankind does this through the quest to explain the world. This would, perhaps, explain why all peoples do not have all knowledge at all times. It is continually growing, evolving and progressing, and it has done so only through human effort and experimentation.

The second kind of knowledge can be called “revealed knowledge,” for lack of a better term.

How do we know that there is such a difference in knowledge?

Humankind’s appetite for more knowledge is insatiable. People have traversed the globe for knowledge until they

came full circle. They began to dig down to rediscover their past, and to leave the planet to discover their future. In the process of creating knowledge about many things, people have not been able to find the answers to all their questions.

For centuries, people wondered what marvelous places existed beyond their known seas and continents. It took them a long time to find out. First, because technology was originally slow in developing, and second, created knowledge has natural human limitations that never allows it to be everywhere at all times. These limitations would include language, location and people's desire to keep some knowledge to themselves.

Revealed knowledge, however, is something that God gives to us in the Bible, and it walks hand-in-hand with created knowledge. And, because it has nearly always done so, it, too, has been subject to the same human limitations as acquirable knowledge (Gen. 3:22-24).

However, revealed knowledge, which is beyond people's ability to acquire through effort and experimentation, must be given to us as a gift. Such knowledge has not yet been found to come from the created knowledge of this world. It has never been discovered in the same way as acquirable knowledge.

Yet, because we have the word of God written for us in Scripture, which is to say that the Bible actually contains the revealed word of God, and because we have the word of God in print, such revealed knowledge is acquirable by humankind (II Tim. 3:16).

An example is the Ten Commandments.

Which most people in the world have

not heard about or if they have heard about them they have rejected them as divine guidance in how to live.

This brings us back around to the Bible. Here we have a book that claims to contain revealed knowledge that is apart from created knowledge. It claims to have knowledge that transcends what can be found in the material world.

Notice how Jesus stated this issue to Peter when he was asked to explain who Jesus is. "He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 16:15-17).

People marveled at the knowledge Jesus had, but it was not because he was giving them what they were able to learn for themselves about the earth and the world in which they lived. Jesus' knowledge pertained to Godly wisdom, and the knowledge and the purpose that God has for humankind. Allowing Jesus then to say that "the queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Mt. 12:42).

Because created knowledge is naturally limited by human ability, it is never able to be everywhere, for everyone, all the time. Knowledge about many things constantly eludes us, sometimes with little or no consequences, and sometimes with severe consequences. And, because humankind had already rejected God's guidance at the

beginning of this world's civilization, revealed knowledge has been subject to the same limitations and consequences as created knowledge.

It, too, seems to have eluded the majority of humankind.

The world has largely rejected what God says about our own existence and what he expects from us as his creation. As creators of acquirable knowledge, people need God's guidance to use created knowledge correctly. Or the knowledge that people create has the potential to destroy us all.

However, Scripture tells us that this will not be the end result of this world's way of using knowledge. There is coming a time when the "earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab. 2:14).

Such a phenomenon will require a teaching ability that would exceed and replace today's human limitations of location, language and the supposed need for secrecy. It will also require teachers skilled in the understanding and application of revealed knowledge. It will also require and acceptance of God as the one who reveals the reason for our existence and the purpose for our life. 