



Gaining
Christ

READING THE MANUAL

11

THOSE HOUSE PAINTERS WERE WOEFULLY IGNORANT OF THE THINGS OF CHRIST. They didn't have the truth about Him because they didn't *know* Him. The same also works in the reverse: They didn't know Jesus Christ because they didn't have the truth about Him.

Way back in 1986—in binary terms, the ice ages—we purchased our first computer: monochrome, 640 kb RAM, two 5.25 inch floppy drives, no hard drive. The operating system for this technological wonder was MS-DOS version 2.11. As this was my very first computer of any kind (Linda had been using them at the office), I was utterly ignorant of what made them tick.

So, following the advice of the salesman, I took the MS-DOS manual to bed with me—not the general manual for the mechanical operation of the computer, or the manuals for the rudimentary WordStar and Lotus 1-2-3 applications, but the hardcore manual for the foundational operating system. Night after night I ingested the otherworldly concepts and cipher-like nomenclature for communicating with MS-DOS from a command prompt, until I understood what was going on beneath the surface of that glowing green monitor and paste colored metal box.

And over the years that investment in time and head-scratching has paid off. No matter how fancy and colorful operating systems have become—no matter how much RAM we have, or how immense our hard drive and powerful our CPU—the fundamentals about how computers do their thing inside the box really do not change. And when, over the last twenty-four years, problems have arisen, I have been grateful for the time I spent learning the truth about the fundamentals.

THE UNFILTERED TRUTH

After we come to know Christ Jesus *positionally*, by conversion, how do we begin the process of knowing Him *experientially*? How do we begin to know the person and personality of the One who has redeemed us from a life of sin?

We take the manual to bed with us.

God's word—not from Matthew 1, but from *Genesis* 1—is packed to the gills with the fundamentals about the Son of God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

The word "God" in the first verse of the Bible is plural, which succinctly expresses the "plurality of persons" of the Godhead—that is, the tri-unity of God. The plurality of verse one is hidden inside a word that in English sounds singular, but verse twenty-six brings it out into the open.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:26 (emphasis added)

The apostle John in his gospel removes all doubt that the Son of God was not just present, but active in the Creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was

God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:1-3

The truth about Jesus Christ, the second member of the triune Godhead, will not be found in television programs on PBS entitled *From Jesus to Christ* (announcer: "How Jesus became Christ"). Nor will it be found in brain-dead films such as *The Da Vinci Code*. Snippets of truth may be scattered about in popular culture, and certainly large helpings of truth are regularly dispensed from pulpits. But sermons and self-help books and Christian music—even, shockingly, this journal—are all filtered through the mind of man, which is a dependably imperfect organ.

We *are* to attentively listen to our pastor expound on God's word, but we are also to read it for ourselves. We *can* enrich our walk of faith by listening to gospel music, but we must always hold the lyrics up to the light of the *real* gospel. Do our Sunday hymns square with Scripture? How are we to know if we never read it? Do we catch the cynicism in a title such as *From Jesus to Christ*, and are we then angered that they would broadcast such a program on Christendom's most holy day? We may not, if we are unfamiliar with the

divine eternity of the Son of God as explained unequivocally throughout God's word.

If one wants to truly know Christ, one must begin by reading the manual that has been written about Him. It is all there. The truth.

God's word, from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21, gives us all the fundamentals about Christ: who He is, what He did, what He said, what He is still doing.

It is all there.

Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with Him. No, I must know Him myself; I must know Him on my own account. It will be an intelligent knowledge—I must know Him, not as the visionary dreams of Him, but as the Word reveals Him. I must know His natures, divine and human. I must know His offices—His attributes—His works—His shame—His glory. I must meditate upon Him until I “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

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