

Two Words for "Knowledge"

by
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Before we proceed further to consider some other of the practical effects of this knowledge, let us notice the fact that there are two words in the original for this knowledge of God, two verbs which mean to know. As these are used some times in the very same verse, it is very important that we should carefully distinguish that which the Holy Spirit has so especially emphasised. There are, indeed, six Greek words which are translated to know, but these two are the most common.

1. The one, oida, means to know without learning or effort; and refers to what we know intuitively, or as a matter of fact or history.
2. The other, ginosko, means to get to know; by effort, or experience, or learning.

This difference will be clearly seen, if we examine one or two passages:

John 13:7. "What I do thou knowest not now." This is the former of these two words, and tells us that Peter had no intuitive knowledge of what the Lord was doing; and had no means of knowing. It was impossible. The Lord, however, goes on to say, "but thou shalt know (i.e., get to know) hereafter." Peter would learn, and find out, by experience and revelation, what the Lord was then doing.

John 8:55. "Ye have not known him (i.e., gotten to know him. No. 2 of these two words); but I know him (No. 1); and if I should say know (No. 1) him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know him (No. 1)." Here the Lord declares His immanent knowledge of the Father; and declares that those whom He was addressing, not only had no such innate knowledge of God, but had not even attained to that knowledge

I John 5:20. "We know (No. 1, i.e., we know as a historical fact, without learning it) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know (i.e., get to know, No. 2) him that is true."

Here the truth is taught that, before any one can get to know God, he must have a spiritual understanding imparted to him. With this agrees 1 Corinthians 2:14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he get to know them." Why not? Because "they are spiritually discerned." The natural man has no means of getting to know spiritual things. A spiritual understanding must first be "given" to him. Then he is able not only to discern, but to love and delight in the revelation of spiritual things, and to get to know Him, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "This is life eternal" (John 17:3).