

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"THE SERMON'S CONCLUSION—THE LORD IS GOD; THERE IS NO OTHER"

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: September 4, 2022

SPEAKER: Aaron/Wil

SERIES: Deuteronomy

PASSAGE: Deuteronomy 4:32-40

Family Dinner Table

Covenant Epistemology

The concept of "covenant epistemology" has been posited by Geneva College professor and American philosopher Esther Lightcap Meek. An epistemological question asks, "How do I know?" And the question, "Can I know God?" is of vital importance to every human being. If we say we know God, it begs the question, "Then what do we know about him?" Unpacking the relational aspect of "covenant" will help shed light upon and bring us to a fuller understanding of the answers to our epistemological questions about God. Meek asserts that true knowledge about God is not an accumulation of facts. (A Presbyterian might say, "Not just the ability to recite the Westminster Shorter Catechism"). Rather, true knowledge stems from the interaction that happens through relationship. In order to demonstrate this, she argues that the best paradigm for all of our knowing comes from a transformative, interpersonal, communion with our covenantal God: "When it comes to my relationship with God, my respect for who he is actually serves to enhance my knowing him. In fact, I simply cannot know him if I refuse to submit in reverence to him. The Bible makes it plain that obedience leads a person further into truth...One of the many astounding things that Jesus says is, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). If truth is ultimately a person to be known, then it is reasonable to think that knowing truth should work like knowing a person. In fact, the way Scripture presents God and our knowing him is as a lover, a husband to his people, whom to know involves an interpersonal, unfolding, covenantal relationship."³

- Reflect on knowing God. How does the reality of God initiating and entering into a relationship with you, bring further insight?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

RUF at UTK, denominational partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Oleg, supported missionary partner who teaches in a Middle Eastern Bible college.

Some of you may be old enough to remember the opening scene of a 1970s commercial that takes place in a buzzy New York restaurant. Two diners are discussing investment strategies while being served coffee. After chatting with his dinner companion about advice from his broker, the diner pauses to ask his friend, "What does your broker say?" To which the friend replies, "Well, my broker is E.F. Hutton, and Hutton says..." Immediately, the entire restaurant freezes in silence as they lean in to eavesdrop on the conversation. The advertisement ends with the following slogan, "When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen." In today's lesson, the children of Israel lean in and listen intently to Moses as he concludes his first of three sermons with a powerful proclamation. In Deuteronomy 4:32-40 we encounter Moses' extraordinary enunciation to the children of Israel. In the final scene of *Chapter 4*, Moses recounts the exclusivity of Yahweh's relationship with Israel as he urges the nation to pay attention to what he is about to say. The declaration in the sermon's conclusion is remarkable, given the polytheistic predispositions of the neighboring peoples: *The LORD is God; there is no other* (v. 39).

A unique experience of God's revealing and redeeming power (vv. 32-34)

As we examine verses 32-34, we hear echoes from the *Book of Job* in Moses' line of questioning (See Job 38, 40:6-9). Moses sets the stage with the children of Israel as he declares that their future hope is based on the power of God's "mighty hand and an outstretched arm," reminding them of the many signs and wonders Yahweh performed before their fathers (v. 34). They alone had the unique experience of God's revealing and redeeming power.

- According to the passage, in what ways were the Israelites unique from other nations?
- During his sermon, Moses calls the children of Israel to remember in order to encourage them. Read Exodus 34:5-7. Describe the character of God as revealed to Moses at Horeb. How does this encourage you?

A unique relationship with the one true God (vv. 35-39)

Epistemology is the philosophical study of how we know things. And in verses 35-39, Moses provides the children of Israel with an epistemological foundation for knowing God. Moses tells the children of Israel that they should know that Yahweh is the one, true God, because he has made himself known to them through his word and mighty deeds. It is this unique relationship with the one true God that enables them to *know* him.

- Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. In what should Christians boast?
- In her book, *A Little Manual for Knowing*, philosopher Esther Lightcap Meek explains how *knowing* God is an embodied, holistic understanding that is shaped by an interpersonal, covenantal relationship: "The goal of knowing is communion. This is an ongoing, dynamic, joyous, fruitful friendship—not a one-sided power domination...Communion contrasts to power in affording a lively, joyous, fruitful peace."¹ Based on last week's lesson, what did Moses warn Israel about that would disrupt our communion with God (vv. 23-24)?

A unique response to God's law (v. 40)

Because of their unique relationship with Yahweh, God requires a unique response to his law. Moses charges Israel to keep God's commandments "that it may go well with you and your children after you" (v. 40). An ongoing theme in Deuteronomy is that covenantal obedience brings covenantal blessings.

- Pastor and theologian J.I. Packer wrote, "There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life, through death and on forever."² According to verse 40, explain how "peace" would come to Israel as a result of knowing and obeying God.

¹Meek, Esther Lightcap. *A Little Manual for Knowing*. 2014. Eugene, OR. Cascade Books. 93

²Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*. 1973. Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press. 26

³Meek, Esther Lightcap. *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People*. 2003. Grand Rapids, MI. Brazos Press. 179