

So Long, Plato

Hello, Spirit!

**Knowing Knowledge
by
Reading Scripture**

**Scott Schafer
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Contents

Page

Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Premises	7
Summary	8
Chapter 1 Plato Was Wrong	9
Chapter 2 The Word Is Right	23
Chapter 3 You <i>Can</i> Know for Sure, and <i>Do</i> , and <i>Must</i>	34
Chapter 4 Knowledge Is Either Objective or Subjective	50
Appendix A Brief Comment on Christian Faith	63
About the Author	64

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Introduction

To the church's experts in philosophy:

May this book edify, accomplish the Lord's task for it, and give no offense.

I am not one of you. I have not taken the time for formal study of Scripture and philosophy. This will be evident to you. You will spot my mistakes, my misunderstandings, my faulty assumptions, my poor reasoning. Good; please correct me. Do what you do best.

Know, though, that I have sought the Spirit's teaching of the Word and tried to follow it. Where He has not illumined the text for me, or where I have not learned well the truth He has exposed, I hope and pray that you will seek His guidance and rectify things.

For whatever is unworthy and false herein, blame me (John 15:5d).

For whatever is true and meaningful, glorify God (Matthew 19:26c).

Premises

Scripture is inspired.

Scripture is inerrant.

Scripture is infallible.

Scripture is true, always.

Truth corresponds to reality.

Reality comprises God Himself, His knowledge, and His creation.

What is true is real, and God is the ultimate Reality.

What is real is true, and God is the ultimate Truth.

What God knows about any object, any physical thing, comprises all truth about that object; all facts about the object compose God's knowledge of it.

What God knows about any idea, any conceptual thing, comprises all truth about that idea; all facts about the idea compose God's knowledge of it.

What God knows about any person, any human being or the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, comprises all truth about that person; all facts about the person compose God's knowledge of that person.

His knowledge exhausts the dimensions of the truth of anything or anyone.

God has revealed in Scripture the truth that He deems necessary and sufficient for the elect to understand—for now.

Summary

Analysis of the Bible indicates that:

- Justified, true belief is a false concept of propositional knowledge.
- Comprehended, proven truth is the true one.
- All knowledge is certain; no one knows anything for unsure.
- Knowledge comes from proof: objective, from objective; subjective, from subjective.

Chapter 1 Plato Was Wrong

Justified, true belief (JTB) does not define or even form the basis of propositional knowledge. Specifically, a man, for instance, does *not* know that a proposition is true if and only if 1) the proposition is true, 2) he believes that it is true, and 3) he can justify his belief in it. JTB, a version of which Plato presented and defended,¹ fails to define this kind of knowledge because each of its three conditions is wrong.

The third condition: The intended knower must justify his belief in the proposition.

Epistemologists know well the problem here. JTB's definition permits justification to range too broadly; the person who intends to know can choose a faulty reason for believing the proposition to be true and thereby attain JTB by accident. Despite profuse debate and abundant prose since Edmund Gettier explained this problem in 1963,² philosophers remain stumped. The solution eludes them because they fail to begin with the Bible. As Scripture indicates, rather than seeking to justify his belief, the intended knower must acquire and understand proof of the truth. Either he becomes certain that the proposition is true, or he fails to know it (as discussed below, especially in Chapter 2).

The first condition: The proposition must be true.

Essentially, JTB is conceptually lopsided because the requirement for meeting the first condition does not match that for meeting the second and third ones. Read a standard presentation of the concept:

According to the traditional definition of knowledge, . . . [f]or claims to count as knowledge, a person must have belief and justification, and, in the end, the claim must be true. . . . Consider once more what is required by JTB. In this account, a person has knowledge if and only if she has belief, justification for that belief, and that belief is in fact true.³

Note the activity that the concept obliges of the woman in this case who seeks to know: she must believe and justify. In contrast, she has no such responsibility for ascertaining the truth. No one does, in fact. The concept allows the intended knower to meet the first condition without doing a thing; the proposition merely must be true. This in part generates the kind of problem that Gettier spotlighted. Think about how this issue plays out in the illustration below.

¹ D.A. Truncellito, Epistemology, section 6, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; accessed on January 2, 2017, at <http://iep.utm.edu/epistemo>. "In his dialogue *Theaetetus*, Plato offered (though he did not completely endorse) . . . JTB," according to J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2003), p. 73.

² Moreland and Craig note that others before Gettier, such as Alexius Meinong and Bertrand Russell, also identified instances that oppose JTB's definition. See p. 74 of their book.

³ James K. Dew and Mark W. Foreman, *How Do We Know?* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2014), pp. 24-25.

Mary owns land in an area filled with wells pumping oil and hires a company to assess the likelihood of the fossil fuel's lying beneath her property. This company has performed hundreds of such studies and has an excellent record of accurately evaluating these situations. According to its appraisal, the chance of discovering oil within two miles below the surface of her land is 99.9 percent.

On this basis, Mary believes that her land has oil, decides to drill, and employs a highly reputable firm to do the job. It goes slowly at first. After five days, the workers reach a depth of a quarter of a mile, with no results. Three days later, they make it to three quarters of a mile, but still no oil. The next day, however, after boring down to 0.9 miles, the effort pays off. Oil gushes forth, and Mary is rich!

So, when does Mary know that her property contains oil? According to the concept of JTB, she does as soon as she believes that proposition, for her belief has excellent justification, and the oil is there. But when do you think that she *believes* she knows it?

Now, reconsider this tale. After receiving and believing the reliable assessment, she hires the company, and the drilling begins. As before, the workers dig down a quarter of a mile after five days and three quarters of a mile after three more, without success. The next day, they bore down to 0.9 miles, and then past a mile, but still nothing. Mary allows the drilling to go on for six more days, down to a depth of 1.8 miles, but several costly problems encountered during the last two days exhaust her budget, and she is forced to halt the operation. Unfortunately for her, a large deposit of oil lies just 200 feet below where the drilling has ceased.

Once again, however, Mary knows that oil lies beneath her property, for her belief in that proposition is justified and true. But does she believe that she knows it? Would you, were you in her shoes?

In both cases, when Mary reads the assessment, she remains unsure of its veracity. Nonetheless, at that moment, she "knows" that her property has oil because JTB's definition allows for passive satisfaction of the first condition and deficient satisfaction of the third condition—justification that fails to yield surety. The problem that Gettier identified results from this combination of flaws. In the end, the drilling in the first case produces the proof that Mary needs and turns her JTB into knowledge.

So, if the concept of JTB obligated Mary to produce one or more reasons that proved the proposition to be true, so that she was certain of it, she herself would meet all three conditions and be sure that she had JTB. Even then, however, the concept would remain invalid because of the second condition.

The second condition: The intended knower must believe that the proposition is true.

Philosophers regularly assert that belief in a proposition is necessary for knowing it. According to Matthias Steup, for example, "A proposition S," the intended knower, "doesn't

even believe can't be a proposition that S knows. Therefore, knowledge requires belief."⁴ James Dew and Mark Foreman put it this way: "At the most basic level, this claim to knowledge must start as a simple belief. . . . We cannot know about things that we do not have a belief about. It makes no sense to say, 'I know the earth is spherical, but I don't believe it.'"⁵ Or, as Peter Klein summarizes, "There is a vast array of views about propositional knowledge, but one virtually universal presupposition is that knowledge is true belief."⁶ In other words, in defining propositional knowledge, philosophers habitually begin with an assumption.

Scripture, however, starts with the truth and implies another definition entirely. Whereas JTB requires someone to believe that a proposition is true in order to know that it is so—to gain propositional knowledge *through* propositional belief—the concept implicit in the Bible entails knowing that truth independent of believing in it. Details on the Biblical idea come in the next three chapters, but for the rest of this one, ponder 17 passages that illustrate it, and not JTB.

Propositional Knowledge *Without* Propositional Belief

Examine first two examples in which the proposition to be known (in boldface) is explicit in the passage. Bear with the detail of the initial one—three nearly identical verses from the synoptic gospels—which will begin to illustrate an important aspect of defining propositional knowledge: the need for proof that produces certainty.

Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10-11; Luke 5:24 (respectively)

- ⁶ But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."
- ¹⁰ But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."
- ²⁴ But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recount Jesus' healing of a paralytic and His explicit proposition. To see how these verses convey knowledge without belief, first understand the meaning of the phrase "that you may know." Does it entail JTB, as in, "so that it will be possible for you to know, if you believe the proposition"? Or does it mean, perhaps, "so that it will be possible for you to know, whether or not you believe the proposition"? Here, it means neither, although the latter is closer. The grammar of the sentence and the overall context of disbelief by the

⁴ Matthias Steup, Epistemology, section 1.1, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Zalta, E.N. (ed.); accessed on January 2, 2017, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/epistemology/>.

⁵ Dew and Foreman, p. 22.

⁶ Peter D. Klein, Epistemology, article summary, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; accessed on January 2, 2017, at <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/overview/epistemology/v-2>.

Jewish authorities indicate that the phrase means, “so that you will know for sure, whether or not you believe the proposition.”

The Greek word underlying the phrase “you may know” is *eidēte*,⁷ a form of *eidó*. This verb has two basic meanings in Greek—to see and to know—which occur respectively in the aorist and perfect tenses.⁸ Not only are all three cases above in the latter tense but also, critically, in the subjunctive mood.⁹ According to a website on New Testament Greek (with emphasis added):

The subjunctive mood indicates probability or objective possibility. The action of the verb will possibly happen, depending on certain objective factors or circumstances. It is oftentimes used in conditional statements (i.e. ‘If . . . then . . .’ clauses) or in purpose clauses. *However if the subjunctive mood is used in a purpose or result clause, then the action should not be thought of as a possible result, but should be viewed as a definite outcome that will happen as a result of another stated action.*¹⁰

In the verses above, the latter is the case: the verb appears in a clause containing both the purpose of what Jesus says He is about to do and one result of His action. Thus, when Jesus proceeds to cure the man’s paralysis (Matthew 9:7, Mark 2:12, and Luke 5:25), the witnesses do indeed know the truth of His proposition by observing “a definite outcome . . . of another stated action”—namely, the man’s rising to walk at Jesus’ command to do so.

Moreover, the implications are clear:

- To know, after Jesus’ display of power, that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins is to know that Jesus is the Son of Man with that authority.
- Since only God can forgive sins, as the scribes and Pharisees thought to themselves (Matthew 9:3, Mark 2:6-7, and Luke 5:21), Jesus must be God.

So, Scripture indicates that the scribes and Pharisees in attendance now know that the proposition is true, but do they believe it? Matthew in 9:3, Mark in 2:6-7, and Luke in 5:21 specifically recount the doubts of the scribes and Pharisees before Jesus’ demonstration and afterward state respectively that “the crowds . . . were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men” (9:8); “were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (2:12); and were amazed and “glorified God and were filled with awe,

⁷ εἰδῆτε (*eidēte*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on June 23, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/eide_te_1492.htm.

⁸ STRONGS NT 1492: εἰδῶ, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on January 25, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/1492.htm>.

⁹ εἰδῆτε (*eidēte*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on June 23, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/eide_te_1492.htm.

¹⁰ Verbal Moods, Greek Verbs (Shorter Definitions), Resources for Learning NT Greek; accessed on June 23, 2019, at http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm.

saying, ‘We have seen extraordinary things today’” (5:26). However, the writers never indicate, in the immediate contexts or in the rest of their gospels, that anyone present that day glorifies *Jesus* as God because of this miracle. As John MacArthur summarizes:

[Jesus’] ability to heal anyone and everyone at will—totally and immediately (v. 25)—was incontrovertible proof of his deity. As God, he had all authority to forgive sins. This was a decisive moment and should have ended once and for all the Pharisees’ opposition. Instead, they began to try to discredit him by charging him with violating their Sabbath rules¹¹

Thus, if Jesus means for all who see this miracle to have JTB about His original proposition—as well as the other two implied by it—then, by definition, all of the witnesses believe in His divinity. Since, however, the Bible reports no such faith resulting from Jesus’ feat, JTB is not the concept of knowledge that He has in mind here.

Scripture, moreover, nowhere indicates that any miracle of His yields less surety of the truth than does any other, as if some are “weaker” or less convincing. Thus—within the bounds of propositional knowledge as defined below in Chapter 2—anyone who witnesses such a miracle knows that He is divine.

Exodus 7:1-5

And the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. ²You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. ³But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵The Egyptians shall know that **I am the LORD**, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.”

After God frees the Israelites from slavery, the Egyptians know the truth of the proposition, but they believe it neither before, while, nor after observing the miracles that God performs in their midst.¹² Thus, their knowledge is not JTB.

Scripture also contains implicit propositions of knowledge. The first example below follows the pattern shown above of miracles that prove the proposition’s truth.

¹¹ John MacArthur, commentary on Luke 5:24, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, English Standard Version (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2010), p. 1485.

¹² Knowing and believing the proposition *I am the LORD* results from knowing God personally, in the way that saves. Knowing the proposition without believing it results from knowing Him impersonally, in the way that renders the knower responsible to seek the personal knowledge. See discussion of Romans 1:18-20 in Chapter 4.

Daniel 5:22-23

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew **all this**, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

Belshazzar knows all of this: that “the Most High God” has raised up and brought low his father, King Nebuchadnezzar, “until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will,” as Daniel explains in verses 18-21. Yet, nothing in chapter five of Daniel indicates that Belshazzar also believes the truth of this proposition. Moreover, Daniel’s pointed rebuke of him in verses 22-23 implies that Belshazzar should humble his heart and honor God, instead of exalting himself—actions that would evince belief in the proposition that Belshazzar knows to be true. While, arguably, he may have believed the proposition and foolishly ignored it, also, arguably, God could have breathed out that fact for Daniel to include and thus could have compounded the severity of His indictment of Belshazzar. All things considered, then, the text indicates no belief by Belshazzar in the proposition and, therefore, no JTB for what he knows to be true.

John 10:24-27

²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If **you are the Christ**, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Here, the Jews already know that Jesus is the Christ because He has testified to this truth and proven it with miracles, as He affirms in 10:25. They simply disbelieve the proposition because, as He explains, they belong not to His flock, who hear His voice, believe, and follow. Thus, the Jews’ knowledge is not JTB.

Romans 1:18-20

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

This passage implies the proposition that **God exists** and indicates that everyone¹³ knows it. However, since everyone includes atheists, JTB cannot define propositional knowledge here, for that would produce a contradiction in at least two ways.

First expression:

- The passage implies that an atheist knows that God exists, although, by definition, an atheist disbelieves that He does.
- JTB implies that an atheist does not know that God exists because, by definition, an atheist disbelieves that He does.
- Together, these statements violate the law of non-contradiction: In the same way at the same time, an atheist cannot know and be ignorant of God's existence.

Second expression:

- The passage implies that an atheist knows that God exists, although, by definition, an atheist disbelieves that He does.
- JTB implies that anyone who knows that God exists, by definition, believes that He does.
- These statements likewise produce a contradiction: In the same way at the same time, someone who knows that God exists cannot disbelieve and believe that He does.

To resolve this contradiction, someone might contend that no true atheist exists—that anyone who avows disbelief in God speaks falsely. Thus, everyone could know that God exists, as the passage indicates, and everyone could believe that God exists in order to know so, as JTB requires.

Scripture, however, affirms the reality of atheism. According to Psalm 10:4, "In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'" Similarly, Psalm 14:1a states, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Romans 1:18, however, puts it more obliquely. To "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (NASB) means "to restrain, hinder (the course or progress of)"¹⁴ the truth "without judicial approval, . . . a violation of *God's justice*, i.e. contrary to His *righteous judgments* (what He approves)"¹⁵ (no emphasis added). The Amplified Bible translates the phrase as "suppress *and* stifle the truth," while the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, expands it further, to "repress *and* hinder the truth *and* make it inoperative." And that is exactly what the atheist does to the truth. He represses and hinders its rightful function, against God's will, by disbelieving what he knows to be true about God. Thus, atheism consists not in secretly believing in God while publicly professing otherwise, but

¹³ Presumably, this means everyone who is morally accountable, to exclude those who are mentally unable to grasp this truth, whether because of youth or infirmity.

¹⁴ STRONGS NT 2722: κατέχω, Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on September 26, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2722.htm>.

¹⁵ Gary Hill, 93 *adikia*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

in overtly and genuinely disbelieving in God while inwardly knowing the truth of His existence—being sure of it, even if that truth is buried deeply in the mind’s recesses.

So, since Scripture is always true, everyone knows that God exists, atheists know the truth of this proposition without believing in it, and JTB cannot be the concept of propositional knowledge implicit in this passage.

Psalm 77:14

You are the God who works wonders; **you have made known your might among the peoples.**

In other words, the passage implies that the peoples know that **God is mighty**. But at least the atheists among them do not believe it because they do not believe that He exists. Thus, they have not JTB but knowledge without belief.

John 6:35-36

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

When Jesus tells the Jews that they have seen Him, He implies that they know that **He is God**. The verb translated above as “you have seen,” *heōrakate*,¹⁶ is a form of *horaó*, which means (with no emphasis added):

properly, *to see*, often in the *metaphorical* sense: “to see with the mind” (“spiritually see”), i.e. perceive (with inward spiritual perception) as in “I see what you mean.” . . . [It] typically refers to grasping the meaning of something through God’s *revelation*, i.e. perceiving on the *invisible (supernatural)* plane. . . . [It] implies *comprehension* . . . [and] focuses on the mental and spiritual enlightenment that brings understanding, i.e. inner illumination that also implies “take *heed*” (give regard to).¹⁷

In this particular instance, *horaó* means “**to see with the eyes . . . Christ**, i. e. to have seen him exhibiting proofs of his divinity and Messiahship” (no emphasis added).¹⁸ Such proof they have already grasped, after witnessing His miracles, so they know Who He is. Nonetheless, they fail to believe what they know, and their knowledge is not JTB.

¹⁶ ἑώρακατε (*heōrakate*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 25, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/heo_rakate_3708.htm.

¹⁷ Hill, 3708 *horáō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹⁸ STRONGS NT 3708: ὅπτω, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on January 25, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3708.htm>.

John 12:37

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,
....

Similar logic demonstrates that JTB cannot be the concept of propositional knowledge in use here. The Jews see the miracles, grasp them as proof of Jesus' divinity, thus know that **Jesus is God**, and yet fail to believe what they know.

Propositional Knowledge *Before* Propositional Belief

Other passages in the Bible demonstrate a related way in which JTB is not in use: believing in a proposition after knowing it. Seven examples follow.

John 4:39-42

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that **this is indeed the Savior of the world.**"

In essence, "many more" Samaritans believe that this explicit proposition is true because of what they hear from Jesus and know about Him. They do not know the proposition because, in part, of what they believe about Him and it. Think through the details.

Initially, according to John, many Samaritans believe in Jesus "because of the woman's testimony," while later many more believe "because of his word." In both cases, the Greek verb for this belief is *episteusan*,¹⁹ a form of *pisteuó*, which "is used of: persuading oneself (self-based believing); and *faith*-believing, i.e. believing in conjunction with faith (4102/*pístis*, *God's inbirthed persuasion*, what pleases Him). Usually the context alone indicates which sense is meant" (no emphasis added).²⁰ Here, the contrast that John creates in this passage indicates the former meaning in the first instance and the latter in the second one (even though these two groups of Samaritans overlap, as "no longer" in verse 42 denotes):

- In verse 39, many Samaritans believe in Jesus because of what the woman says about His words, but what they know of Him John does not state.
- In verses 41-42, however, many more believe in Jesus because of what *He* says *and* because of what they know of Him as a result.

Put another way, they hear Jesus' words and know Him to be the Christ, and because of *this*, they believe—an example of Romans 10:17 in action. Surely, God could have saved the

¹⁹ ἐπίστευσαν (*episteusan*), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on January 26, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/episteusan_4100.htm.

²⁰ Hill, 4100 *pisteúō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

Samaritans through her words about Him, but the testimony in verse 42 shows that He did not. And since they acquire their faith as a result of knowing Him as “the Savior of the world,” their knowledge of this proposition comes before their belief in it²¹ and thus is not JTB.

John 16:29-30

²⁹ His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰ Now we know that **you know all things and do not need anyone to question you**; this is why we believe **you came from God**.”

The two propositions here go together logically. To know one is to know the other, either by deducing the second after knowing the first, since only One coming from God can have omniscience and absolute authority; or by presupposing the second as the logical basis for knowing the first, since omniscience and absolute authority can only come from God. And since the disciples say that their knowledge of the first proposition precedes their belief in the second one, their knowledge of the second one must also precede that belief. Thus, their knowledge of neither proposition is JTB.

Daniel 2:45b-48

⁴⁵ . . . A great God has made known to the king **what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.**”

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.”

⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

The proposition here is implicit: King Nebuchadnezzar now knows that **his dream**, as explained by Daniel in verses 37-45, **will come true**. Verses 46-47 show that the king believes in the proposition after Daniel delivers the interpretation. Thus, the king’s knowledge is not JTB.

Acts 2:22-23

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: **Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst**, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

²¹ This implies that personal knowledge of God, and in particular of Jesus as Lord and Savior, precedes faith in Him in the order of salvation, but logically so, not chronologically. Perhaps the effectual call generates the fear of the LORD that initiates this personal knowledge, as in Proverbs 1:7.

The phrase highlighted above implies that **Jesus of Nazareth is such a man**, which Peter says that the Jews in the audience know to be true. Yet, at this point in the apostle's sermon, many, if not all, of them do not believe God's testimony about Jesus through miracles He performed before their eyes. Thus, this is knowledge of the proposition before belief in it, not JTB.

John 14:7-11

⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Here, Philip knows the truth of the proposition but does not yet believe it. In the passage, Jesus employs the following logic to explain what the disciples²² know of Him and His Father:

1. Premise: Had you known Me, you also would have known My Father (verse 7).
2. Premise: From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him (verses 7 and 9).
3. Implication: You know and have seen Him because you know and have seen Me; you know Us both.
4. Implication: You know Him by knowing Me because I am in the Father and the Father is in me; We are One.
5. Conclusion: Therefore, you know that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**.

Thus, although Philip knows the proposition is true, he fails to believe it here, as his request of Jesus in verse 8 to "show us the Father" and Jesus' command in verse 11 to believe Him confirm. Thus, Philip's propositional knowledge is not JTB. Yet, Christians may presume, he (and all the disciples, save Judas Iscariot) eventually believed the proposition, since he saw the risen Christ and received the Spirit and His teaching.

John 4:49-53

⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

²² Not only Philip because "you" in the Greek in verse 7 is plural each time, according to John 14:7, Text Analysis; accessed on January 26, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/text/john/14-7.htm>.

⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” And he himself believed, and all his household.

The proposition here is implicit. When the official realizes that his son recovered at the very hour at which Jesus told the official his son would live, the official knows that *Jesus* healed the son. This miracle proves to him that **Jesus is God**, the proposition he thus knows to be true. As a result, the official believes this proposition, demonstrating that the official’s knowledge of Jesus’ deity precedes his belief in Him and thus is not JTB.

Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that **all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that **our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.** ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that **Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.** ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The logic of the progression that Paul describes in this passage rules out JTB as the definition of propositional knowledge that he employs. As John MacArthur explains, Paul here presents a sequence of knowing, assessing that knowledge, and *then* believing it.²³ Specifically, the apostle tells believers in Rome (and now beyond, of course) to know three propositions, along with the elaborations that he provides:

- God has spiritually immersed believers into Christ, uniting and identifying them with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, so that they are new creations, regenerated and given a new nature, to live righteously.²⁴
- The believer’s old, unregenerate self was killed in Christ so as to render powerless the flesh’s penchant to sin that remains and to free the believer from slavery to sin.²⁵

²³ John MacArthur, “Dying to Live, Part 3,” January 9, 1983, Code: 45-47, PDF, pp. 2-8; accessed on April 6, 2019, at <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-47/dying-to-live-part-3>.

²⁴ See MacArthur, commentary on Romans 6:3-4, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, p. 1658.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, commentary on Romans 6:6-7.

- The resurrected Christ will live forevermore because death no longer controls Him, for He died “1) in regard to sin’s penalty—he met its legal demands upon the sinner; and 2) in regard to sin’s power—forever breaking its power over those who belong to him. And his death will never need repeating”²⁶

Paul uses the verb *ginóskō*, to know by personal experience,²⁷ in verses 6 and 9, and its negation, *agnoeó*,²⁸ in verse 3—rhetorically implying in the last case that a Christian reader *should* know the verse’s truth. In verse 11, he employs the verb *logizomai*, translated “must consider” above, to exhort the believer, who knows the truth of the three propositions, “to reckon or account [for], and treat accordingly,”²⁹ that knowledge by believing it. Comments MacArthur:

This word was often used metaphorically to refer to having an absolute, unreserved confidence in what one’s mind knows to be true—the kind of heartfelt confidence that affects his actions and decisions. Paul is not referring to mind games in which we trick ourselves into thinking a certain way. Rather he is urging us to embrace by faith what God has revealed to be true.³⁰

Or, as he has preached (with no emphasis added):

Now, the second term is reckon and here, beloved, doctrine gives way to faith. The word “know” dealt with the mind. The word “reckon” deals with the heart. You know it to be so intellectually, and now you believe it to be so, you reckon. Now, what does it mean to reckon, *logizomai*? The word has many translation possibilities. . . . But it also can be used in a figurative sense to refer to calculating in the mind, or reasoning in the mind, or affirming in the mind that something is so. And that’s the way it’s used here.

We could translate it simply “affirm.” You know and now affirm that it is true, or conclude that it is true. Or if you want to put it in the category of the genuine Christian term that is all encompassing, “believe that it’s true.” You know it is because the data says it is, now believe it with a heart belief. Come to that settled confidence.³¹

Thus, in this passage, Paul urges belief that ensues from knowledge—a logical redundancy, if not an absurdity, if he thinks JTB equals propositional knowledge:

²⁶ Ibid., commentary on Romans 6:9-10, pp. 1658-1659.

²⁷ Hill, 1097 *ginōskō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

²⁸ Hill, 50 ἀγνοέω *agnoeō*, NASEC dictionary, *The Discovery Bible*.

²⁹ STRONGS NT 3049: λογίζομαι, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on May 11, 2018, at <http://biblehub.com/greek/3049.htm>.

³⁰ MacArthur, commentary on Romans 6:11, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, p. 1659.

³¹ MacArthur, “Dying to Live, Part 3,” p. 4.

- Because a follower of Christ knows the three propositions to be true, in part by believing that they are so, he should reckon that knowledge and believe it.

* * *

Now, stand back and evaluate: What do you think of JTB—or some form of it, as debated post-Gettier?

- If, before reading this chapter, you were convinced of its truth and now, having come this far, your conviction remains, please go ahead and close this book. Thank you for giving these thoughts a hearing.
- If, however, you agree with the analysis above, or at least want to consider it further, please read on.

* * *

Does the Bible contain multiple concepts of propositional knowledge?

At this point, analysis shows that the Spirit of God did not have JTB in mind when He supernaturally moved Moses, Asaph, Daniel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul to discuss propositional knowledge in the examples above. But what about the rest of the Bible? If, in fact, He has guided the prophets and apostles to employ both JTB and no less than one other such concept, we should expect Him, at the very least, to describe them plainly and perhaps to shine light on His reasons for the variety. “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace,” as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:33a about the need for orderly worship in church, and the need for lucid, harmonious Scripture is at least as great. His nature and character demand nothing less.

So, is such discussion anywhere to be found in the Bible? Does it manifest more than one such concept? The answer is no on both counts, according to the research and analysis that follow.

Chapter 2 The Word Is Right

The Holy Bible contains no explicit definition of propositional knowledge, but it indicates in context that someone knows a proposition is true upon grasping the meaning of what proves that truth. In other words, propositional knowledge is comprehended, proven truth (CPT): the mental state of certainty about a statement's truth gained by acquiring and understanding proof of that truth. Failure to know a proposition's truth means not to gain the proof or not to comprehend it once gained.

Propositional belief, by contrast, is the mental state of acceptance of or admission to a statement, with or without being sure of its truth. This belief can range in strength from unexamined presupposition to conscious, full trust. Moreover, believing in a proposition is totally separate from knowing it. Neither one entails the other. As seen in the examples in Chapter 1, a person can know the truth of a proposition before or without ever believing it. Likewise, a person can believe a proposition to be true before or without ever knowing it to be so. Failure to believe a proposition means not to accept or admit that a statement may be true—or, more forcefully, to reject the possibility.³²

Before delving deeper into the above concept of propositional knowledge, consider first some examples of it. Each one that follows presents a proposition of knowledge in boldface, accompanied by its proof. Note that proof, when provided in Scripture, often falls within a few verses of the proposition at hand. Notice also the lack of JTB involved.

From the Old Testament

Proposition: Exodus 11:7

⁴ So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that **the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.**' ⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

Proof: Exodus 12:29-32

²⁹ At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive

³² This definition of propositional belief is an overall impression that flows in part from this study of propositional knowledge and in part from the author's experience. To him, it seems consistent with Scripture, but it is not the product of the same degree of analysis found in the rest of this book.

who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ³⁰ And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹ Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³² Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!”³³

Proposition: Exodus 6:7

⁶ Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that **I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.**

Proof: Exodus 13:17-14:31

... ³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Proposition: Exodus 16:12

¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that **I am the LORD your God.**”

Proof: Exodus 16:13-14

¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.

Propositions: Numbers 16:28, 30

²⁸ And Moses said, “Hereby you shall know that **the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord.** ²⁹ If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. ³⁰ But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that **these men have despised the LORD.**”

³³ For other such examples in the account of the 10 plagues, see Exodus 7:17-18, 20-21; 8:9-11, 13; 8:22-24; and 9:13-15, 18, 23-26.

Proof: Numbers 16:31-33

³¹ And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. ³² And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. ³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

Propositions: Deuteronomy 4:35 and 4:39

³² “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. ³³ Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? ³⁴ Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵ To you it was shown, that you might know that **the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.** ³⁶ Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. ³⁷ And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, ³⁸ driving out before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day, ³⁹ know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that **the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.**

Proof: Deuteronomy 4:33-34, 36-38

Propositions: Joshua 3:7 and 3:10

⁷ The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, **as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.** ⁸ And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’” ⁹ And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.” ¹⁰ And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that **the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.** ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. ¹² Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. ¹³ And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the

earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

Proof: Joshua 3:14-17

¹⁴ So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, ¹⁵ and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), ¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

From the New Testament

Proposition: John 3:2a

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that **you are a teacher come from God,**

Proof: John 3:2b

for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Proposition: John 6:69b

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that **you are the Holy One of God.**”

Proof: John 6:68b (in addition the many miracles, the Father’s testimony, and so on)

You have the words of eternal life,

Propositions: John 8:28b

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I am he,** and that **I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.**

Proof: Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)

Proposition: John 13:35a

³⁵ By this all people will know that **you are my disciples,**

Proof: John 13:35b

you have love for one another.”

Proposition: John 14:20b

²⁰ In that day you will know that **I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.**

Proof: John 14:19b

¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.
Because I live, you also will live.

Proposition: 1 John 2:3a

³ And by this we know that **we have come to know him,**

Proof: 1 John 2:3b

if we keep his commandments.

Proposition: 1 John 2:5b

⁵ . . . By this we may know that **we are in him:**

Proof: 1 John 2:6b

⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Proposition: 1 John 2:18d

¹⁸ . . . Therefore we know that **it is the last hour.**

Proof: 1 John 2:18c

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.

Proposition: 1 John 2:29b

²⁹ . . . you may be sure [*ginóskó*] that **everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.**

Proof: 1 John 2:29a

²⁹ If you know [*eidó*] that he is righteous,

Proposition: 1 John 3:14a

¹⁴ We know that **we have passed out of death into life,**

Proof: 1 John 3:14b

because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

Proposition: 1 John 3:19

¹⁹ By this we shall know that **we are of the truth** and reassure our heart before him;

Proof: 1 John 3:18b

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Proposition: 1 John 3:24c

²⁴ . . . And by this we know that **he abides in us,**

Proof: 1 John 3:24d

by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Proposition: 1 John 4:13a

¹³ By this we know that **we abide in him and he in us,**

Proof: 1 John 4:13b

because he has given us of his Spirit.

Proposition: 1 John 5:2a

² By this we know that **we love the children of God,**

Proof: 1 John 5:2b

when we love God and obey his commandments.

Proposition: 1 John 5:13b

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that **you have eternal life.**

Proof: The whole of 1 John³⁴

Proposition: Acts 15:7b

⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that **in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.**

Proof: Acts 10:19-45

¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." . . . ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation

³⁴ See MacArthur, commentary on 1 John 5:13, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, p. 1923.

anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. . . .⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

* * *

Now, examine the components of CPT. First, all of the propositions above are **true**. They are God's message, which He breathed out (2 Timothy 3:16a) and which His human "co-authors," under the Spirit's superintendence, breathed in and wrote down or had written down for them (2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Peter 1:11). Of course, being the Truth (Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3, 14:6; 1 John 5:6, 20), God speaks only the truth (2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 119:160; John 1:14, 17:17) and cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).³⁵

Second, in each case above, God provides **proof** of the proposition's truth. Such proof is information that leaves the people involved with no good reason to doubt the truth that this information conveys; it produces a mental state of certainty, as discussed in the next chapter. They obtain the proof either through the senses, by seeing or hearing it, for example, or through the mind, by thinking of it or by receiving it from the Spirit living in them—i.e., by observation or experience.

Third, these people **comprehend** the proof obtained. When the proof is natural, all people can grasp it, if their minds are competent and mature enough. When it is spiritual, however, unbelievers fail to understand it, and the propositional truth of the Scripture involved eludes them (1 Corinthians 2:14). True Christians, by contrast, because of their new nature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the teaching of the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 1 John 2:20, 27) Who is in them (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 1 John 3:24; 4:13) and is the Truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6), can seize the proof's meaning (1 Corinthians 2:12, 15-16). As new converts especially, this may involve, by the Spirit through use of Scripture, a simple and direct teaching of basic propositions, such as that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is the Lord, that He is the Savior. More difficult propositions often require preparation through study of the grammar and history within and surrounding a Biblical passage, done either by the Christians themselves or by a pastor or other seasoned teacher, which the Spirit uses at the appropriate time, when the students are yielded and ready.

Moreover, having comprehended the proof, the people in question know the truth of the proposition and continue to know it for as long as they retain the proof, even if they choose afterward to disbelieve what they know. Thus, propositional knowledge entails understanding the truth of the proposition conveyed by the proof; or, in other words, gaining and grasping the proof results in knowing and comprehending the truth. Someone cannot know the truth

³⁵ This reasoning appears to be circular at first glance: The propositions are true because they come from God, and He always speaks the truth, according to Himself. A Christian's personal knowledge of God, however, enables him to discern the truth of God's Word. See Chapter 4.

without understanding it, or understand it without knowing it. Obviously, however, deeper propositional truths require deeper comprehension in order to know them thoroughly, and someone may attain only a basic knowledge of them at first.

Next, look at a couple of the examples above to see CPT at work. In Exodus 11:7, Moses, quoting God, states to Pharaoh the proposition to be known: “the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” Moses also states the proof in verse 5: “every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.” Then, in Exodus 12:29, God carries out His vow and delivers the proof: “At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” Finally, in verse 30, Pharaoh comprehends the proof: “And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.” At this moment, he knows the truth of the proposition, as do all Egyptians who are aware of the proposition. Whether they believe it or not is irrelevant to knowing it.

John 3:2, by contrast, displays CPT in a single verse. Nicodemus presents Jesus with the proposition, “you are a teacher come from God,” and the proof of it, “these signs that you do.” At this point, the text indicates, Nicodemus already has understood the proof and now knows the proposition to be true. He also appears to believe it. As the ensuing conversation with Christ indicates, however, Nicodemus fails to believe what the signs also prove, that Jesus *is* God, even though he knows this more profound proposition to be true (in the way discussed in Chapter 1 regarding Jesus’ healing of the paralytic man).

Impediments to Gaining CPT

John provides a couple examples of obstructions to knowing a proposition’s truth. In 20:8-9, he depicts the problem of acquiring proof without comprehending it. After describing how he and Peter had raced to Jesus’ tomb to verify Mary Magdalene’s report of His body’s disappearance, and how Peter had entered the tomb first, John says that he “also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” As John MacArthur comments:

Neither Peter nor John understood that Scripture said Jesus would rise (Ps. 16:10). This is evident by the reports of Luke (Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-47). Jesus had foretold his resurrection (John 2:19; Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:22), but they would not accept it (Matt. 16:22; Luke 9:44-45).³⁶

Mark, in 8:31-32, recounts one such occasion:

³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” ³²But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

³⁶ MacArthur, commentary on John 20:9, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, pp. 1583-1584.

Luke's description of apparently the same event, in 9:43b-45, tells more:

⁴³ . . . But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵ But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

Luke suggests that, if indeed God Himself did not do the concealing, He at least allowed the disciples not to comprehend His words until the time was right, precluding them from knowing of Jesus' resurrection until after the fact.³⁷

John, in 10:30-38, suggests another obstacle to attaining CPT: acquiring and comprehending the proof without also believing it. He writes:

³⁰ **I and the Father are one."**

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" ³³ The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that **the Father is in me and I am in the Father.**"

The issue here is the meaning of the phrase *believe the works*, which presents an issue of interpretation that could affect the definition of CPT. In order to know and understand the proposition in question, Jesus in verse 38 tells the Jews at least to "believe the works" that prove the truth. If the matter is that simple, then the Biblical concept of propositional knowledge entails acquiring, comprehending, and believing the proof involved. The interpretation of a similar passage, however, may overrule this simpler explanation. Consider each possibility.

First, Jesus here may merely be imploring the Jews to believe the proof that they see. If so, they have experienced the works that His Father has given Him to do and have understood what they experienced but have not believed that the feats were real. They are experiencing the disbelief many have when watching a magician perform—at least doubting the reality of the actions, if not rejecting them altogether.

³⁷ This indicates one reason for the variety of interpretations that Christians devise for many sections of Scripture: God teaches Biblical truth to them when and as He chooses—often bit by bit and obviously not all at once.

Suppose, for example, none of the Jews who saw the man of Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5 get up and walk had previous knowledge of him. Some of them most likely would have questioned whether he really was paralyzed in the first place. Despite what they witnessed and understood to have happened, they would have doubted the work's validity and so would not have known the truth of Jesus' proposition. (In reality, Scripture indicates no such doubt among the Jews that saw this miracle. They gained CPT about Jesus' proposition but refused to believe what they knew.)

Second, however, Jesus may be entreating them to believe the proposition that the works they see prove as true. A later passage, John 14:4-11, that deals with the same proposition suggests this interpretation:

⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Here, Jesus specifically contrasts believing the proposition on the basis of His words with believing it on the basis of His works. His meaning regarding the latter He makes clear with a preposition, *dia* in Greek,³⁸ rendered above as “on account of” and as “because of” in the NASB. He is saying, in effect, “If you do not believe the proposition because of the words that I speak on My Father's authority, then believe it because of the works that My Father is doing through Me.”³⁹ So, in this case, Jesus focuses on belief in the proposition on the basis of the proof, whereas, according to the simpler explanation of this issue in John 10, He is focusing on belief in the proof of the proposition.

This information indicates two possible resolutions for the matter in John 10. First, John 10 and John 14 require separate interpretations because, in the former, Jesus is dealing with unbelievers who see His works as the fakery of a magician, whereas, in the latter, He is teaching faithful disciples who see His works as the miracles of the Son of God. Thus, in John 10, Jesus

³⁸ *διὰ (dia)*, Englishman's Concordance; accessed on March 18, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/dia_1223.htm.

³⁹ Jesus has already told the Jews and the disciples that the Father has given the works to Jesus (John 5:36; 10:25, 32, 37).

implies that someone must gain, understand, and believe in the proof in order to know that the proposition it conveys is true—which adds an element to the concept of propositional knowledge so far discussed in this analysis. This element of belief makes perfect sense and does no damage to CPT. One could take it as something implicit in the Bible’s presentation of knowledge. The problem with this explanation is the dearth of evidence in the text that the Jews actually view Jesus’ works as magic tricks. Apparently, only Jesus’ appeal in verse 38 to “believe the works” suggests it.

Alternatively, the interpretation in John 14 governs that in John 10. In this view, the former is a clearer text about the issue at hand, and so, by the analogy of faith, its meaning prevails. In both passages, Jesus is telling His interlocutors to believe the proposition on the basis of the proof, the works He is doing. The context supports this view—specifically in John 10:25:

²² At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,
²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

In his defense, Jesus again appeals to both His words and His works, but adding that the latter “bear witness about” Him. The point of the works is to demonstrate the truth. Putting all of this together, Jesus pleads with the Jews in John 10:38 to believe that He and the Father are in each other at least because of the works that prove that fact.

On balance, the second explanation, because it accounts better for all of the evidence, is more likely to be correct. Nonetheless, the need to believe the reality of a proposition’s proof is also valid, and perhaps God intended the inspired text in John 10:38 to remind readers of that principle. Because Scripture treats that factor implicitly, however, it will not be added formally to the concept of CPT.

* * *

According to the analysis so far, JTB was not the concept of knowledge used in the cases presented in Chapter 1, and CPT was the concept of knowledge used in the cases presented in Chapter 2. Two questions remain in this regard:

- Is JTB used anywhere else in Scripture?
- Is any other concept of knowledge used anywhere else in Scripture?

The analysis in Chapter 3 concludes that the answer to both questions is no.

Chapter 3 You *Can* Know for Sure, and *Do*, and *Must*

Analysis of Scripture indicates that knowledge is always certain, that the knower is always sure of what he knows. As presented below, this analysis first examines whether God never, sometimes, or always knows for sure, and then whether human beings do the same. In particular, it evaluates two hypotheses which, if either is true, mean that humans know with doubt at least some of the time. It concludes, after careful study, that both divine and human knowledge are always positive, never unsure. If Scripture indicates that propositional knowledge is always certain, then it cannot be JTB because JTB entails doubt.

Discussions of knowledge as being JTB normally lead to the question of certainty. Writes Garrett DeWeese, for example, “The right kinds of reasons [for believing in a proposition] are those making it *probable* that the proposition you believe is true” (emphasis added).⁴⁰ Or, as J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig argue (with no emphasis added):

If someone knows something, it does not necessarily mean that the person has complete certainty about that thing. “Being completely certain” in this context means “is logically impossible to be mistaken about.” This is a pretty high standard for knowledge. It requires it to be logically impossible for someone to be mistaken about a claim before one can know the claim in question. . . .

Such a requirement for knowledge—complete certainty—is too stringent and eliminates as knowledge many things that we do, in fact, know. For example, Allison can know that her light is on even though this knowledge is not completely certain: The proposition *Allison takes herself to know that the light is on, but in fact it is not* is not self-contradictory. However, Allison’s knowledge that the light is on does not require that this proposition be self-contradictory. Thus one can have knowledge even though it is logically possible that one is mistaken. In fact, we sometimes contrast knowing something with knowing it *with certainty*, implying that there is a contrast between knowing with certainty and simply knowing. Thus simple knowing is still knowing even if it is not for certain.⁴¹

Contextual analysis presented below, however, concludes that the Bible demonstrates the surety of knowledge. This analysis entailed an assessment of Hebraic, Aramaic, and Greek words from Scripture, as translated into English and in context, to determine whether probability or certainty characterizes the concept of knowledge, especially of propositions, that God breathed out and men wrote down by the Spirit’s superintendence.

⁴⁰ Garrett J. DeWeese, “How Can We Know Anything at All?” *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Holman Bible Publishers: Nashville, TN, 2007), p. 1766.

⁴¹ Moreland and Craig, pp. 84-85.

The Lord Our God Knows Fully and Certainly

In several places in Scripture, the Holy Spirit inspired testimony to God's omniscience.⁴² For example, after Jesus asks a third time whether Peter loves Him, Peter exclaims, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (John 21:17). John is likewise succinct: ". . . God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:20b).⁴³ Nothing bounds His knowledge; it is complete, yet, paradoxically,⁴⁴ without end, perfect in quantity and quality, and—most importantly here—beyond probability, certain every time. He is sure of all things, as Scripture shows.

First of all, God speaks in terms of knowing for sure. For instance:

- In Genesis 15:13, God tells Abram to know "for certain"⁴⁵ that his descendants will live for 400 years as slaves in a foreign land.
- In Jeremiah 42:22, the prophet, summarizing God's judgment, tells the Judeans who survived the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem to "know for a certainty"⁴⁶ that by the sword, famine, and plague [they] will die," if they flee to Egypt.

⁴² In Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, Jesus admits that He does not know the day and hour of His Second Coming. John MacArthur attributes this limitation to Jesus' will. In *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, p. 1455, he points out that Christ "demonstrated his omniscience on several occasions (cf. John 2:25; 13:3), but he voluntarily restricted that omniscience to only those things that God wanted him to know during the days of his humanity (John 15:15). Such was the case regarding the knowledge of the date and time of his return. After he was resurrected, Jesus resumed his full divine knowledge (cf. Matt. 18:18, Acts 1:7)." Thus, Jesus' knowledge exemplifies paradox, knowing infinitely in His divinity but finitely in His humanity.

⁴³ See also 1 Kings 8:39; 2 Chronicles 6:30; Job 26:6, 34:21; Psalm 44:21, 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Luke 9:47, 12:30; John 2:24-25, 16:30; Acts 1:24, 15:8; Romans 11:33-34; Colossians 2:3; and Hebrews 4:13.

⁴⁴ According to R.C. Sproul's definition of the term in *Everyone's a Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Reformation Trust Publishing: Sanford, FL, 2014), p. 58: Because the Greek prefix of *paradox* means "alongside of" and the root of it "comes from the Greek word *dokeō*, which means 'to seem,' 'to think,' or 'to appear[.],' . . . the word *paradox* refers to something that, when placed alongside of something else, appears to be contradictory until closer examination reveals it is not so." At a minimum, this definition makes sense of seeming contradictions in Scripture, such as the concept of the Trinity, the formula for which Sproul says, on p. 57, "is paradoxical, but . . . by no means contradictory." Contemporary dictionaries, by contrast, usually define the word as an apparent contradiction that, at best, *may* be true. See, for example, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradox> (here as accessed on June 8, 2019): "2a: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true."

⁴⁵ Rendered the same way in the NASB, HCSB, NRSV, and NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+15%3A13&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>. These five translations represent a sample from the formal half of the spectrum, with the NIV generally recognized as being in the middle of the full spectrum.

⁴⁶ Rendered as "clearly understand" in the NASB, "know for certain" in the HCSB, "[b]e well aware" in the NRSV, and "be sure" in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+42%3A22&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

- In Genesis 20:7, God tells Abimelech in a dream to know that, if he fails to return Sarah to Abraham, Abimelech and his family will “surely die.”⁴⁷
- In Jeremiah 44:29, the prophet conveys God’s declared intent to punish the Judeans living in Egypt so that they may know that His judgment against them “will surely⁴⁸ stand against [them] for harm.”
- In John 17:8, Jesus says that the 11 remaining disciples have received the words that the Father gave the Son and “have come to know in truth”⁴⁹ that Jesus came from the Father.

The first two examples above are special and relatively infrequent cases in which the Hebraic verb *yada* is repeated. In this verse and others like it, *yada yada*⁵⁰ means to know for sure, which Young’s Literal Translation renders as “knowing – know,” and a footnote in the Lexham English Bible expands to “knowing you must know.”⁵¹ The next two examples also convey certainty by repeating the verb—*muth* (generally, to die; in this case, to die as a penalty inflicted by God)⁵² and *qum* (to arise, stand up, stand)⁵³ respectively—which equates to certain knowledge simply because to know something surely will happen is to know for sure that it will. Moreover, in the first four cases, God is telling people to know something for certain and, in the last one, that people do know something for certain—all in explicit terms. Since God is the Truth, speaks only the truth, and cannot lie, He can tell people to know for certain that something is true only if He also knows it for certain. Thus, the Bible at times implies without question that God knows some things for sure, that He is certain about the truth at least some of the time.

Usually, however, when God tells people to know something, He merely implies that He is assuring them of the truth. That is, He allows the verb *to know*, without qualification, to carry

⁴⁷ Rendered as “surely die” in the NASB and NRSV, “certainly die” in the HCSB, and “may be sure that you . . . will die” in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%20%3A7&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁴⁸ Rendered as “surely” in the NASB, NIV, and NRSV and “certainly” in the HCSB; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+44%3A29&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁴⁹ Rendered as “truly understood” in the NASB, “known for certain” in the HCSB, “know in truth” in the NRSV, and “knew with certainty” in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A8&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁵⁰ Specifically, *tê·da’ yā·dō·a’*, according to Genesis 15:13, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 26, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/15-13.htm>.

⁵¹ Genesis 15:13; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2015%3A13&version=LEB;YLT>.

⁵² For repetition, Interlinear Bible; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/20-7.htm>. מוֹת (*muth*), Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/4191.htm>.

⁵³ For repetition, Interlinear Bible; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/jeremiah/44-29.htm>. קָמָה (*qum*), Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/6965.htm>.

the meaning of surety. For example, through the prophet Ezekiel, God pledges to carry out a series of actions that will enlighten particular groups of people by revealing something of His identity and character when He proceeds. In Ezekiel 6:13-14, for example, He vows to punish Israel for idolatry (with emphasis added):

¹³ And *you shall know that I am the LORD*, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols. ¹⁴ And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then *they will know that I am the LORD.*”

God obviously must and does know everything that He proclaims the people of Israel will come to know, and each of His pledges, moreover, must convey certainty, for He can neither lie nor dishonor His own name. His character ensures that He will stand by His word and carry out each promise.

Yet, judging by the information in an interlinear Bible, the Hebrew for the repeated phrase “know that I am the LORD” includes nothing but the verb itself—no adverb, no adverbial phrase, no noun—to indicate surety on the part of the stated knower, the phrase’s subject.⁵⁴ Out of 72 instances in 28 chapters of Ezekiel, summarized in Table 1, 69 are in the *Qal* conjunctive perfect. According to *The Discovery Bible*, “The OT (Hebrew) conjunctive perfect . . . underlines information with *certain-and-solemn* significance in the storyline—data set off as *integral* (*central*) to the message of the passage” (no emphasis added).⁵⁵ Thus, this form of the verb imparts surety. Two more instances, in 20:12 and 20:20, are in the *Qal* infinitive construct, and each expresses the purpose for the Sabbaths’ being a sign between God and Israel. Logically, fulfillment of such a significant purpose should convey certainty, not probability, about the identity and character of God. The final instance, in 20:26, is in the *Qal* imperfect, which “expresses *continuing (unfinished)* activity” (no emphasis added).⁵⁶ Neither God’s devastation of Israel for her grievous sin and rebellion nor her consequent knowledge of Him has He brought to completion. Yet, this knowledge will be sure when He does so. Thus, in all cases, the phrase drives home this point: *to know* by itself conveys the definition of knowledge for these oaths. In context and effect, God is saying that He is true to His word and that people will know it and thereby know something of Him when He acts as promised.

Similar examples exist in the New Testament. John 13:3 contains three propositions that Jesus knows: “that the Father had given all things into his hands,” “that he had come from God,” and that He “was going back to God.” Jesus knows these things for sure, and only the

⁵⁴ Interlinear Bible; accessed on June 14, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com>.

⁵⁵ Hill, [Hebraic] Conjunctive Perfect, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁵⁶ Hill, [Hebraic] Imperfect, *The Discovery Bible*.

Table 1: Instances in Ezekiel of “know that I am the LORD” or “know that I am the Lord God”

Hebraic Phrase	ESV’s Translation	Frequency	Comment on <i>yada</i>
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·nî kî- plus wə·yā·ḡa·’û, wî·ḡa·’tem, wî·ḡa·’ten, wə·yā·ḡa·’at, or wə·yā·ḡa·’tā, sometimes adding ’ē·lō·hê·hem.</i>	The subject “shall” or “will know that I am the LORD,” sometimes adding “their God.”	63 times	The verb is in the Qal conjunctive perfect, varying in person, gender, and number.
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·nî kî- wə·yā·ḡa·’û</i>	The subject “may know that I am the LORD.”	1 time	The verb is in the Qal conjunctive perfect, third person common plural. ⁵⁷
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·ḡō·nāy ’ă·nî kî- wî·ḡa·’tem</i>	The subject “shall” or “will know that I am the Lord God.”	3 times	The verb is in the Qal conjunctive perfect, second person masculine plural. ⁵⁸
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·ḡō·nāy ’ă·nî kî- wə·yā·ḡa·’û</i>	The subject “shall” or “will know that I am the Lord God.”	2 times	The verb is in the Qal conjunctive perfect, third person common plural. ⁵⁹
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·nî kî- lā·ḡa·’at</i>	The subject “may” or “might know that I am the LORD.”	2 times	The verb is in the Qal infinitive construct. ⁶⁰
<i>Yah·weh ’ă·nî ’ă·šer yê·ḡa·’û</i>	The subject “might know that I am the LORD.”	1 time	The verb is in the Qal imperfect, third person masculine plural. ⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ezekiel 12:16, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/12-16.htm>.

⁵⁸ Ezekiel 13:9, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/13-9.htm>. Ezekiel 23:49, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/23-49.htm>. Ezekiel 24:24, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/24-24.htm>.

⁵⁹ Ezekiel 28:24, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/28-24.htm>. Ezekiel 29:16, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/29-16.htm>.

⁶⁰ Ezekiel 20:12, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/20-12.htm>. Ezekiel 20:20, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/20-20.htm>.

⁶¹ Ezekiel 20:26, Interlinear Bible; accessed on March 27, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ezekiel/20-26.htm>.

verb *eidó* conveys it. Likewise, Matthew 12:14 contains a proposition—“the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him”—that in the next verse the apostle states that Jesus knows. Again, the verb alone, here *ginóskó*, carries the surety.

So, the Bible implies, God knows for sure even when He simply states that He knows. He need not emphasize His certainty with an adverb, adverbial phrase, or repetition of *yada* because, in fact, the idea of His “knowing for sure” is redundant. For Him at least, to know is to be certain of what is true or what is false about everything and everyone. Thus, the omniscient One has no doubt: His thoughts are always sure; He has only knowledge, never an assumption.

This conclusion points out why God’s knowledge of propositions is not JTB. The concept of belief entails the possibility of doubt. A human can choose to believe or disbelieve the truth because he is able to doubt it. He is fallen and liable to sin, and thus by his unrighteousness can suppress the truth (Romans 1:18). God, however, is impeccable, can never doubt the truth, and therefore can never, in the sense just described, disbelieve or believe it. He simply knows for sure. Thus, He neither can nor needs to fulfill the second condition of JTB’s definition—belief in the proposition at hand—which means, of course, that the concept does not apply to His propositional knowledge.

Human Beings Know Partly but Surely

Analysis of Scripture shows that surety of knowledge also applies to people.⁶² Although they obviously lack the Lord’s omniscience, when they do know, they know for certain. This analysis involved studying, in as much context as necessary, every verse in the Bible containing the Hebraic, Aramaic, or Greek words listed in Tables 2 and 3, all of which refer to knowing. The study discovered not a single instance of a human being “knowing for uncertain,” only evidence that God and humans both know for sure.

First, Scripture confirms that people sometimes know for sure, in cases such as these:

- In Exodus 2:14, Moses concludes that his killing of an Egyptian “[s]urely . . . is known”⁶³ (*nō·w·ḏa’ ’ā·kên*)⁶⁴ among the Hebrews.
- In 1 Samuel 24:20a, Saul says of David, “And now, behold, I know that you shall surely [*mā·lōk kî- yā·ḏa’·tî*]⁶⁵ be king.”⁶⁶

⁶² *People* refers to human beings herein, to exclude the three Persons of God.

⁶³ Rendered as “surely” in the NASB and NRSV, “certainly” in the HCSB, and “must have become” in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+2%3A14&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁶⁴ Interlinear Bible, Exodus 2:14; accessed on March 22, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/exodus/2-14.htm>.

⁶⁵ Interlinear Bible, 1 Samuel 24:20; accessed on March 22, 2020, https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_samuel/24-20.htm.

⁶⁶ Rendered as “surely” in the NASB, NRSV, and NIV, and “for certain” in the HCSB; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+24%3A20&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

- In Acts 2:36, Peter exhorts all Jews to “know for certain”⁶⁷ (*asphalōs . . . ginōsketō*)⁶⁸ that God has made Jesus Lord and Messiah.
- In Acts 12:11a, Peter says to himself, “Now I am sure”⁶⁹ [*oida alēthōs*]⁷⁰ that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod”

When Scripture clearly states that people know something for sure, the context often contains information to prove the point. This occurs in each of the cases above: in Exodus 2:14, when the Hebrew asks Moses if Moses plans to kill him too; in 1 Samuel 24:1-19, when David spares Saul; in Acts 2:14-35, when Peter explains how people spoke in various tongues at Pentecost by recounting what God has done through Jesus; and in Acts 12:7-10, when the angel leads Peter to safety.

Humans also know for sure when God tells them to do so, which implies that they can, for He would not direct them to do the impossible. Such cases occur rarely in Scripture, and God’s command can be explicit, as in Genesis 15:13, or implicit, as in Genesis 2:17.

The Bible, however, does not attest *explicitly* to a mental state of certainty in every case in which it declares that people know something or someone. This fact raises three possibilities: Scripture implies that humans always know for sure, sometimes know without surety, or neither, leaving the definition inconclusive. A search for evidence to confirm the second possibility—by examining passages containing the two sets of words below—turned up not a single verse indicating that humans *probably* know anything. In any situation, they either know for sure or do not know.

First Hypothesis: Probable Knowledge Implied in Cases Unique to Humans

A survey of the Bible indicates that the 15 Hebraic, Aramaic, and Greek words in Table 2, appearing in 93 verses, refer only to human knowledge. Most of these words appear infrequently, with only four occurring at least 10 times. Because God inspired the application of these terms only to people, hypothetically, some or all of the words could compose an implicit lexicon for human knowledge on the basis of uncertainty.

Close scrutiny of the 93 verses in English, however, demonstrates that none conveys doubt about what people know. Every verse, in context, indicates that they know for certain. Thus, the first hypothesis is false. A few examples follow.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Rendered as “know for certain” in the NASB, “know with certainty” in the HCSB and NRSV, and “be assured” in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A36&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁶⁸ Interlinear Bible, Acts 2:36; accessed on March 22, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/acts/2-36.htm>.

⁶⁹ Rendered as “know for sure” in the NASB, “know for certain” in the HCSB, “am sure” in the NRSV, and “know without a doubt” in the NIV; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+12%3A11&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>.

⁷⁰ Interlinear Bible, Acts 12:11; accessed on March 22, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/acts/12-11.htm>.

⁷¹ For simplicity, the terms in brackets within quoted verses are in their general forms, as found in Bible Hub.

Table 2: Biblical Terms Used for Human Knowledge Only

Word	Language	Definition from Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon or Thayer's Greek Lexicon ⁷²	Occurrences of Knowing ⁷³
<i>madda</i>	Hebrew	Knowledge; place of knowledge, mind, thought.	6 in 6 verses
<i>manda</i>	Aramaic	Knowledge, power of knowing.	4 in 4 verses
<i>yetsab</i>	Aramaic	To make certain, gain certainty.	1 in 1 verse
<i>anagnósis</i>	Greek	A knowing again, owning; reading (from Plato on).	3 in 3 verses
<i>epignósis</i>	Greek	Precise and correct knowledge. ⁷⁴	20 in 20 verses
<i>gnóstés</i>	Greek	A knower, an expert; a connoisseur.	1 in 1 verse
<i>anagnórizó</i>	Greek	To recognize. Also, to be made known, make oneself known. ⁷⁵	1 in 1 verse
<i>epistamai</i>	Greek	To be acquainted with, to understand; to know.	14 in 14 verses
<i>diaginóskó</i>	Greek	To distinguish, know accurately, ascertain exactly. ⁷⁶	1 in 1 verse
<i>kataginóskó</i>	Greek	To find fault with, blame; to accuse, condemn. Also, “properly, to find as <i>decisively guilty</i> and on the basis of direct, <i>personal acquaintance</i> ; <i>specifically</i> [to] condemn by having a first-hand awareness of the facts; to charge as guilty with specific (pointed) facts” (no emphasis added). ⁷⁷ [I.e., to find in this manner is to come to know.]	3 in 3 verses
<i>suneidón</i>	Greek	To see (have seen) together with others; to see (have seen) in one's mind or with oneself, to understand, perceive, comprehend. To know with another, be privy to; to know in one's mind or with oneself; to be conscious of. [Acts 12:12: coming to know or comprehending what is known; Acts 14:6: becoming aware mentally, i.e., coming to know.]	4 in 4 verses
<i>historeó</i>	Greek	To inquire into, examine, investigate; to find out, learn, by inquiry; to gain knowledge of by visiting, to become personally acquainted with, know face to face.	1 in 1 verse
<i>epistémón</i>	Greek	Intelligent, experienced, especially one having an expert's knowledge.	1 in 1 verse
<i>gnóstos</i>	Greek	Known, be it known to you; notable; an acquaintance, intimate.	15 in 15 verses
<i>phaneros</i>	Greek	Apparent, manifest, evident, known; to make one known; to come to light or to open view.	18 in 18 verses
Total			93 in 93 verses

Of the terms in Table 2, *epignósis* occurs most often in Scripture, usually in one of Paul's letters. In Romans 3:20, for example, he writes, “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge [*epignósis*] of sin.” In other words, no one can obey the law perfectly, and failure to do so, time and time again, certifies

⁷² Entries for each word; accessed June 15, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com>.

⁷³ Entries for each word; accessed June 15, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com>. Translations vary, to include *recognize*, *realize*, *show*, *teach*, *inform*, *perceive*—synonyms in English that can mean not only “to know” but “to come to know,” “to make known,” “to see” mentally in the sense of knowing and understanding, and so on.

⁷⁴ “Correct knowledge” is redundant (and “incorrect knowledge” is oxymoronic).

⁷⁵ 319. *anagnórizó*, Strong's Concordance; accessed on June 15, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/319.htm>.

⁷⁶ Also, to examine, determine, decide in a legal sense. Not counted here.

⁷⁷ 2607. *kataginóskó*, HELPS Word-studies; accessed on June 15, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/str/greek/2607.htm>.

one's sinful condition. Thus, experience with the law leaves no doubt; humans know their status for sure; probability is out of the question.

In Ephesians 1:17, Paul prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge [*epignósis*] of Him.” The Holy Spirit will not produce in believers a “probable knowledge” of God. If, however, the correct translation is “a spirit,” as found in the NASB, HCSB, and NRSV,⁷⁸ then a “probable knowledge” of God will not produce in believers the kind of spirit of which the apostle speaks. Only knowing Him for sure, albeit incompletely, will result in “having the eyes of [their] hearts enlightened, that [they] may know what is the hope to which he has called [them], what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward [those] who believe, according to the working of his great might,” as Paul continues in verses 18-19.

Later, in Ephesians 4:11, Paul lists the kinds of people that God provides—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—to train and build up the body of Christ, and then adds in verse 13, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge [*epignósis*] of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Members of the church, however, will neither share the same trust in and understanding of Jesus nor reach the level of maturity Paul describes if they “know” Him unsurely, so that they doubt to some extent the nature and depth of their relationship with Him. Only certainty of the truth in these matters will produce in them the likeness of Christ that He intends.

Jude uses *epistamai* once, and Luke uses it nine times in Acts, always conveying certitude, not probability (although see figure 1). For example, in Acts 22:19, after God tells Paul to leave Jerusalem quickly, Paul replies, “Lord, they themselves know [*epistamai*] that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you.” In Acts 26:26, Paul insists that his account of his conversion, commission, and obedience is not insane and that King Agrippa will see its truth, “For the king knows [*epistamai*] about these things, . . . for this has not been done in a corner.”

The Hebrew word *madda* and its Aramaic cognate *manda* express sure

Figure 1: Not Knowing Prevents Diagnosis

The verb *to know* often occurs in a negative construction, such as in James 4:14a: “yet you do not know [*epistamai*] what tomorrow will bring.” When this happens, one usually cannot assess whether the knowledge at hand is certain or probable because not knowing results in doubt either way. (However, see discussion of *anaginóskó* below.)

⁷⁸ BibleGateway; accessed on June 12, 2019, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1%3A17-19&version=ESV;NASB;HCSB;NRSV;NIV>

knowledge seven times, with three other occurrences not meaning knowledge. In 2 Chronicles 1:10-12, for example, God grants Solomon's request for "wisdom and knowledge [*madda*]" to rule Israel. Superior execution of this serious responsibility, which presumably God desires and intends, requires having surety of the truth, not merely the likelihood of it. This logic also applies in Daniel 5:12. The queen of Babylon speaks superlatively of Daniel in her attempt to calm the fears of King Belshazzar and his nobles after they witness the mysterious hand write on the wall. She points to Daniel's "excellent spirit, knowledge [*manda*], and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems." She in no way implies that his knowledge yields only the probability of truth.

Two of the words in Table 2, as used in Scripture, mean *to ascertain*, and thus both rule out the idea of knowing in an unsure way. One occurs only in Daniel 7:19, where the prophet says that he "desired to know the truth [*yetsab*] about the fourth beast" in his terrifying vision. Luke employs the other in Acts 23:15 to mean "to know accurately, ascertain exactly."⁷⁹ According to his account, the Jews who were plotting Paul's death say:

Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him [Paul] down to you, as though you were going to determine [*diaginóskó*] his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

To pull off this assassination, the conspirators need the chief priests and elders to feign a convincing inquiry—i.e., to appear to seek "to know accurately."

Second Hypothesis: Probable Human Knowledge Sometimes Implied in Context

A survey of the Bible also indicates that the 11 Hebraic, Aramaic, and Greek words in Table 3, appearing in 1,639 verses, refer to divine or human knowledge, depending on the case. In Scripture, most of these terms occur frequently, or relatively so. Again, hypothetically, some of them at times may evince "uncertain but likely knowledge" for humans.

As happened with the first hypothesis, however, a careful assessment of all 1,766 instances of these words, in English and in context, shows no sign that people "probably know" anything or anyone. On the contrary, all indicate that they know for certain. Some verses directly demonstrate surety of human knowledge, while others reveal it indirectly, by forming clear statements only if both human and divine knowledge are indeed certain. Thus, the second hypothesis also is false.

⁷⁹ STRONGS NT 1231: διαγινώσκω, Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 14, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com/greek/1231.htm>.

Table 3: Biblical Terms Used for Both Divine and Human Knowledge

Word	Language	Definition from Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon or Thayer's Greek Lexicon ⁸⁰	Occurrences of Knowing ⁸¹
<i>daath</i>	Hebrew	Knowledge, perception, skill; discernment, understanding, wisdom.	95 in 93 verses
<i>deah</i>	Hebrew	Knowledge.	6 in 6 verses
<i>yada</i>	Hebrew	To know; to learn to know, perceive, discriminate, distinguish, know by experience, recognize, admit, acknowledge, confess, consider; to know or be acquainted with a person; to know carnally; to know how or be able to do (a thing), be skillful in; to have knowledge, be wise; to be made known, be or become known (of a thing or person); to make oneself known (of a person); to be perceived; to be instructed.	942 in 873 verses
<i>yeda</i>	Aramaic	To certify, know, make known, teach. ⁸²	47 in 42 verses
<i>gnósis</i>	Greek	Knowledge; intelligence, understanding.	29 in 28 verses
<i>eidó</i>	Greek	To know; to get knowledge of, understand, perceive. ⁸³	319 in 294 verses
<i>ginóskó</i>	Greek	To learn to know, come to know; to become known; to know, understand, perceive; to become acquainted with; to know carnally.	222 ⁸⁴ in 205 verses
<i>anaginóskó</i>	Greek	To distinguish between, to recognize, to know accurately, to acknowledge; hence, to read, to read to others.	32 in 29 verses
<i>epiginóskó</i>	Greek	To become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly; to know accurately, know well; to know, recognize, perceive, find out, ascertain, understand.	44 in 40 verses
<i>proginóskó</i>	Greek	To know beforehand, to foreknow; to predestinate.	5 in 5 verses
<i>gnórizó</i>	Greek	To make known, to become known, be recognized; to know.	25 in 24 verses
Total			1,766 in 1,639 verses

Consider three examples of the direct cases, three dozen of which are cited in Table 4. In them, according to the text, both God and humans know something or someone within precisely the same context, with a verb applied explicitly to both parties to convey certainty.

First, in Genesis 3:5, Moses relates the serpent's statement to Eve: "For God knows [*yada*] that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing [*yada*] good and evil." As the law of non-contradiction implies, a word used twice in the same way within the same context must mean the same thing both times, or the statement (or statements) will make no sense. Thus, a reader can deduce the surety of Eve's knowledge (and Adam's) directly from the context:

1. God's knowledge is always certain.

⁸⁰ Entries for each word; accessed June 15, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com>.

⁸¹ Entries for each word; accessed June 15, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com>.

⁸² 3046. *yeda*, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance; accessed June 15, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/str/hebrew/3046.htm>. Biblehub.com has no entry from Brown-Driver-Briggs for this word.

⁸³ *Eidó* used in the perfect tense means *to know* and used in the aorist tense means *to see*, according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon at <https://biblehub.com/str/greek/1492.htm>. Only the former instances are counted here.

⁸⁴ Or 221, depending on the Greek text used in translating John 14:7. John 14:7, Greek Texts; accessed on June 15, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com/text/john/14-7.htm>.

2. *Yada* means to know.
3. Therefore, the first instance of *yada* in this verse means to know for certain.
4. The second instance of *yada* in this verse also means to know.
5. A word used twice in the same way within the same context must either convey the same meaning or produce gibberish.
6. Verse 5 is lucid if the second instance of *yada* means to know for certain, but not if it means “to know for uncertain.”
7. Therefore, Eve’s knowledge here also is certain.

Table 4: Passages Directly Demonstrating Consistency Between Divine and Human Knowledge

Verb	Passages
<i>yada</i>	Genesis 3:5, 7; 3:22; 15:8, 13; 20:6-7; Exodus 2:14, 25; 33:12-13, 16-17; Joshua 22:22; 2 Samuel 7:20-21; 1 Kings 8:38-39; 2 Kings 19:19, 27; 2 Chronicles 6:29-30, 33; Psalm 139:1-2, 4, 14, 23; Isaiah 37:20, 28; 48:4, 7-8; Ezekiel 11:5, 10, 12; Hosea 13:4-5
<i>yeda</i>	Daniel 2:8-9, 15, 17, 21-23, 25-26, 28-30, 45
<i>eidó</i>	Matthew 9:4, 6; Mark 12:14-15; John 4:10, 22, 25, 42; 6:42, 61, 64; 7:27-29; 13:11, 17-18; 16:30; 18:2, 4; 21:12, 15-17; Romans 8:27-28; 1 Corinthians 2:11-12; 2 Corinthians 12:2-3
<i>ginóskó</i>	Matthew 12:33; John 10:14-15; 17:25; 1 Corinthians 8:2-3; Galatians 4:9; 1 John 3:19-20
<i>epiginóskó</i>	1 Corinthians 13:12

Second, in John 10:14, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. I know [*ginóskó*] my own and my own know [*ginóskó*] me.” By employing the logic above, a reader can deduce that, in this context, *ginóskó* means to know for sure and that Christians know Jesus in this way. Jesus emphasizes this point by adding in verse 15, “just as the Father knows [*ginóskó*] me and I know [*ginóskó*] the Father.” The Father and the Son know each other for sure, and, in kind, Christians know Jesus just as surely as the Father and Son know each other (although in degree, of course, the Father, Son, and Spirit know each other infinitely well).

Third, in 2 Corinthians 12:2-3, Paul writes of himself, “I know [*eidó*] a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven And I know [*eidó*] that this man was caught up into paradise,” adding twice that “God knows [*eidó*]” whether this man was in the body or out of it. Again, a reader can deduce directly that Paul and God share the same concept of knowledge in this context and, therefore, that both know for sure.

More frequently than the use of direct implication, however, God inspired the use of verbs to imply circuitously that He and humans share an identical concept of knowledge. Table 5 contains about 10 dozen examples of this type. In each case, the statements involved make sense only if humans know for sure every time they know something. Some examples follow.

Table 5: Passages Indirectly Demonstrating Consistency Between Divine and Human Knowledge

Verb	Passages
<i>yada</i>	Genesis 20:6; 22:12; Exodus 3:7; 3:19; 4:14; 6:7; 7:5; 7:17; 8:22; 9:14; 10:2; 14:4; 14:18; 16:12; 29:46; 31:13; Numbers 12:6; 14:34; 16:5; Deuteronomy 8:3; 29:6; Joshua 3:7; 1 Samuel 16:3; 1 Kings 20:13; 20:28; 1 Chronicles 17:19; Nehemiah 9:14; Psalm 9:16; 16:11; 25:4; 25:14; 39:4; 46:10; 48:3; 51:6; 67:2; 77:14; 79:10; 83:17-18; 98:2; 103:7; 106:8; 109:27; 143:8; Isaiah 5:5; 19:21; 37:20; 48:4; 66:14; Jeremiah 11:18; 16:21; Ezekiel 20:5; 20:9; 36:32; 39:7; Daniel 9:25; Hosea 5:9; Habakkuk 3:2
<i>yeda</i>	Daniel 2:23; 2:28; 2:29; 2:30; 2:45
<i>eidó</i>	Matthew 9:6; 20:25; 26:2; Mark 2:10; 10:42; Luke 5:24
<i>ginóskó</i>	Matthew 13:11; 16:3; 24:32; 24:33; 24:43; Mark 13:28; 13:29; Luke 6:44; 8:10; 12:39; 21:30; 21:31; John 13:7; 14:7; 14:17; 14:20; 15:18; 17:3; 17:8
<i>anaginóskó</i>	Matthew 12:3; 12:5; 19:4; 21:16; 21:42; 22:31; 24:15; Mark 2:25; 12:10; 12:26; 13:14; Luke 4:16; 6:3; 10:26
<i>gnórizó</i>	Luke 2:15; 2:17; John 15:15; 17:26; Acts 2:28; Romans 9:22; 9:23; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 15:1; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:11; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3; 3:10; 6:19; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:27

The Spirit inspired a variety of uses of *yada* to imply the existence in Scripture of a single concept of knowledge. In 13 cases cited in Table 5, God uses a phrase identical or similar to those found in Ezekiel as discussed above to say to humans that they will know Him when He acts. In Exodus 7:5, for example, God says, “The Egyptians shall know [*yada*] that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” He applies the verb to humans without further definition or qualification, here or elsewhere, neither explaining nor implying that it has one meaning for them and another for Him. And since He knows the truth of His statement and His knowledge is certain, He thus implies that their knowledge is too. If theirs could be or were uncertain here, God’s declaration would lose strength and imply that the power of His action was not compelling: The Egyptians will know, *but not surely (or perhaps not surely)*, that I am Yahweh when I free my people, Israel.

The usage of *gnórizó* in the verses cited in Table 5 implies in a compact way that God and humans both know for certain. In 10 of these cases, God makes known to humans something that He already knows for sure. In Luke 2:15, for example, after myriads of angels appear to shepherds in the field and one proclaims the coming of Messiah, the shepherds are certain of what they just learned when they say, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known [*gnórizó*] to us.” The shepherds testify that God has let them know of Jesus’ birth—meaning that they know, to the extent revealed, what He knows. Nowhere here do they or does God indicate that their knowledge is less sure than His is. Thus, implicitly and at least qualitatively, they know this fact as surely as God does. Were this not so, they would be going to Bethlehem to see what God *probably* had revealed to them,

implying that the display of angels failed to convince them of the truth, its Sender's identity, or both.

In every verse containing *eidó* cited in Table 5, Jesus uses this verb to express that one or more humans know the truth of a proposition that, implicitly, He also knows. Each time, He implies congruity in quality between His knowledge and theirs. In Matthew 26:2, for example, He says to His disciples, "You know [*eidó*] that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." They know what will happen because He has already told them about His impending death—something He also knows full well. Since He uses the verb, with no proviso or distinction, to express explicitly something they know and implicitly something He knows, and since He knows for sure what He knows, He implies that they do likewise. Alternatively, the disciples would know, *but not for sure*, that Jesus' crucifixion would follow the Passover, implying that they could not trust His word because they were uncertain of His identity.⁸⁵

The same reasoning applies to most of the verses containing *ginóskó* in Table 5, as they involve knowing propositional truth, but a few of them concern knowing a person.⁸⁶ In John 14:7, for example, Jesus tells His disciples, "If you had known [*ginóskó*] me, you would have known [*eidó or ginóskó*]⁸⁷ my Father also. From now on you do know [*ginóskó*] him and have seen him." He says, in other words, that they now know the Father because they know the Son, Who, implicitly, knows the Father too and knows Him for sure. Since Jesus uses *ginóskó* to say that they know His Father and applies its meaning to them without qualification or further definition, He implies that they, like Him, know the Father for sure personally, in like quality (although not to the same degree, of course).

Finally, the usage of *anaginóskó* implies that God and humans both know for sure, but in a more complicated way. Matthew, Mark, and Luke employ this verb to record Jesus' repeated question to the Jews—essentially, "Have you not read Scripture?" In addition to the definition cited in Table 3, *anaginóskó* means (with no emphasis added):

⁸⁵ According to this analysis, the disbelief in this proposition that they did express, such as by Peter in Matthew 16:22, resulted from their moral capacity to doubt what they knew for sure. See pp. 48-49.

⁸⁶ Note that describing personal knowledge normally entails the use of propositions. For example, to express their knowledge of Christ, followers of Him say that they know *that* Jesus is the Son of God and *that* He is the Messiah.

⁸⁷ Greek texts differ over this verb, according to John 14:7, Greek Texts; accessed on March 20, 2020, at <http://biblehub.com/texts/john/14-7.htm>. At first glance, *ginóskó* seems to be the better choice to maintain coherence, since its meaning (knowing subjectively, by personal experience) differs from that of *eidó* (knowing objectively and impersonally), according to HELPS Lexicon's entries for 1492 *eidó* (*oida*) and 1097 *ginóskó* in *The Discovery Bible*. However, consider the alternative: If the disciples had known Jesus personally, they would have known the Father impersonally by observing Jesus. From now on, however, they know the Father personally and have seen Him because He is in Jesus and Jesus is in Him, which is the proposition of which Jesus seeks to convince to them in the verses that follow.

. . . properly, “to know again” through *reading*. Readers re-live (re-appreciate) what was conveyed (experienced) by the original *author*. . . . [The word] refers to re-grasping what was originally revealed to the Scripture authors.⁸⁸

Thus, for those taught by the Spirit, to read the Bible is to know again the truth that He has let His human co-authors know and moved them to write down.

As noted above, a negative expression of a verb for knowing, as occurs in Christ’s question, normally prevents assessment of whether or not humans know for certain in a particular case. Clearly, each time He asks it, Jesus implies that the chief priests, scribes, and elders, whether Pharisees or Sadducees, have not known the truths He is discussing—presumably not for lack of reading but for lack of connection to the Spirit when reading, which has prevented them from comprehending. However, Jesus’ tone implies that they *should* have known what Scripture was telling them. Thus, more fundamentally, He implies that a human under the Spirit’s tutelage who reads a portion of God’s written Word “knows it again,” in the same way that He does, such as when He “stood up to read [*anaginóskó*]” in the synagogue, according to Luke 4:16. And since Jesus, the Son of God, knows again for sure the truth of Scripture when He reads it, this human likewise must do so when he reads it, or the rebuke implied in Jesus question loses its strength: By reading Scripture, have you not known its truth again, *at least probably*?

The key in all of these examples is God’s provision of no sign in Scripture that, conceptually, humans know less than certainly. Indeed, these passages make sense only under a single concept of knowledge. God inspired the recording of only one.

Which fits. The concept of knowledge is fundamental to understanding His message, and a muddle of meaning would neither serve the purpose of truth nor reflect the *Logos*. He is Truth and knows all. He defines everything that anyone can know. A single, clear, reasonable definition, consistent in all contexts, accords with His character. Had He chosen to define human knowledge as certainty of the truth in some contexts but mere probability in others, then—presumably—He would have done so explicitly, to acknowledge the duality and provide a way to distinguish between its parts, such as plain description of the difference and use of separate verbs and nouns.

Surety: Divine Versus Human

Logically, certainty has no degrees; it is absolute. And, as discussed above, God knows utterly for sure. His rational and moral perfection prevent Him from doubting the truth that He knows. Peccability, however, enables people to doubt the truth that they know for certain. This is not a contradiction. Although their knowledge is indeed sure, as Scripture indicates, and their resulting mental state of certainty is rational, their sinfulness permits doubt. The unredeemed body and soul of unbelievers, and the likewise corrupt body (to include the mind) of believers, allow them to distrust the proof. This misgiving is unwarranted, however, because

⁸⁸ Hill, 314 *anaginóskó*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

they lack any good reason to doubt the proof that they have gained and understood. So, while they remain certain of the truth, they nonetheless can mistrust it, from moral shortfall, not from sensory malfunction or logical error. Thus, it seems sensible to describe human certainty as *rational*, in contrast to God's rational *and* moral surety.

* * *

The research for this analysis turned up evidence for only one concept of propositional knowledge in Scripture, CPT; it found none for JTB. Indeed, the certainty entailed in both divine and human knowledge rules out JTB as even a possibility that God would consider, let alone use or endorse.

Chapter 4 Knowledge Is Either Objective or Subjective

According to HELPS Lexicon, two Greek verbs used in the New Testament, *eidó* and *ginóskó*, involve respectively objective and subjective knowledge. *Oida*, the perfect tense of *eidon*, which is rooted in *eidó*,⁸⁹ means to “know by *direct observation*” and “implies observing *objective* facts—i.e., things observable in their own right, without any necessary ‘personal’ relation to them” (no emphasis added).⁹⁰ By contrast, *ginóskó* means, “properly, *to know*, especially through *personal experience* (*first-hand* acquaintance)”⁹¹ and “implies relational, *subjective* knowing”⁹² (no emphasis added). For example, the knowledge gained by seeing lightning strike something differs from that gained by being struck by it. The Hebraic verb *yada* has similar connotations, according to the same lexicon (with no emphasis added):

. . . to know, typically “*subjectively* know” (like NT 1097 *ginōskō*) – but to also *objectively* know by observation (like NT 3609a/*oida*). . . In sum, 3045 (*yāda*) generally expresses *relational* (*subjective*) *knowing*. It can also express “knowing *about*” (objective, observational knowledge) and the context often indicates both senses working simultaneously.⁹³

In the terms of this analysis, these verbs entail two ways of gathering proof that produces two kinds of knowledge. Upon reflection, however, another distinction comes to mind that is closely related to the one above and also evident in Scripture: that between objective and subjective proof. Each generates surety differently.

Objective Proof Yields Objective Knowledge

Objective proof is evidence that demonstrates truth in a way that a person can sense. It is concrete, material, observable; and it is potentially available to more than one person at a time. For example, authentic video of lightening striking a pond of water is objective proof that the event occurred and thus yields objective knowledge. If the video is the only such proof, however, destruction of it would eliminate that knowledge. Objective knowledge, then, is the mental state of certainty about truth that someone can prove in an objective way, under the right conditions (discussed below), to anyone who is reasonable and whose mind can comprehend the issue.

The Bible in many passages demonstrates the existence of objective proof and the resulting knowledge. Take Christ’s wondrous healings, for instance. Each time He cures the blind, the crippled, the leprous, the deaf, or the mute—or raises the dead—He proves in concrete terms, to those who knew the afflicted person beforehand, that miracles can and do happen.

⁸⁹ Hill, 1492 *eidō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁹⁰ Hill, 4920 *syniēmi*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁹¹ Hill, 1097 *ginōskō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁹² Hill, 1492 *eidō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁹³ Hill, 69d (SN 3045) *yāda*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

In Exodus, Moses presents vivid examples of objective proof for certain people, such as:

- The 10 plagues that God inflicts on Egypt, which show the Egyptians that He is Yahweh (7:5), is unique (8:10; 9:14) and immensely powerful (9:16), owns the Earth (9:29), and distinguishes between Egypt and Israel (11:7).
- God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to possess the Promised Land, which proves to them that He is Yahweh, their God (6:6-8).
- God's provision of manna and quail in the wilderness, which proves to the Israelites that He is Yahweh, their God (16:12), Who has brought them out of Egypt (16:6).

Prophecy also confirms the existence of objective proof and knowledge. As examined in Chapter 3 above, in Ezekiel, God names future acts of judgment that He will carry out to verify to His chosen people that He is Yahweh. He also cites similar objective proof of His identity and character that He promises for Israel's neighbors—Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt—when He punishes them for wishing or committing evil against Israel. For example, He spells out actions He will take to prove to the Egyptians that He is Yahweh:

- “⁸ . . . I will bring a sword upon you [Egypt], and will cut off from you man and beast, ⁹ and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. . . . ¹¹ . . . [I]t shall be uninhabited forty years. ¹² And . . . her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries” (Ezekiel 29:8-9a, 11b, 12b).
- “¹³ . . . At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered . . . ¹⁵ It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations” (Ezekiel 29:13, 15).

Objective Knowledge Is Contextual and Temporary

Objective proof depends on context for meaning. Recall Jesus' miraculous healings. A man whose hearing Jesus has restored could prove the fact of this healing to anyone who knew him when he was deaf by talking with that person in a normal way. Such simple conversation, however, would not objectively prove the cure to someone who had never met him before.

Or consider the olive leaf that the dove brought to Noah on the ark. From the moment he saw it, it proved to him that the Flood was abating (Genesis 8:11), and it would have done so for anyone in his family at the time. Once they disembarked, however, and God revived the greenery of the land, the leaf would have been as any other of that variety, except withered and brown. Had Noah kept the desiccated leaf and eventually shown it to a granddaughter, it would have meant nothing to her, save what he claimed about it. Out of context, it could no longer have objectively proven the Flood's decline.

Thus, context restricts objective knowledge within time and space but can extend it to all time and space, as Romans 1:19-20 (discussed below) exemplifies. Moreover, of course,

nothing in the physical realm, in its fallen state, lasts forever (Psalm 102:25-26), and God plans to destroy the heavens and Earth in their present form (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1). Thus, all objective proof from the current Universe will eventually pass away—along with the objective knowledge derived from it. Even the objective proof of Jesus’ resurrection disappeared for the time being upon His ascension.

Subjective Proof Yields Subjective Knowledge

Subjective proof is evidence that demonstrates truth in a way of which only the knower can be certain. It boils down to sure memory of a thought, a conversation, an event, or some other experience that is not otherwise established in a reliable, externally material way. For example, the memory, by itself, of the lightning striking the pond is subjective proof that generates subjective knowledge of that event. Forgetting the memory, however, extinguishes the proof and so the knowledge. Thus, subjective knowledge is the mental state of certainty about truth that someone can prove only to himself.

Scripture contains many examples of subjective knowledge. Consider the first discussion (although not the first mention) of knowledge in the Bible. In Genesis 3, Eve and then Adam come to know righteousness and iniquity through an act of rebellion. Characteristically, Satan, through the serpent, lies to Eve in verse 4, telling her that she will not die when she eats the fruit that God has forbidden. He shrewdly switches to a half-truth in verse 5, however: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Of course, this is almost what happens in verses 6-7. By disobeying God’s command, they gain and comprehend proof of evil’s existence and absorb a shattering dose of it—in contrast to their experience up to that point of all the good things, and only good things, that God has created. They are now like God, knowing good and evil, but only partly so because, although they know the distinction by concept, observation, and experience, He knows it not in the third way, that of sin. With their depravity clearly exposed, they realize they are naked, an event that they can relate to their children someday but cannot prove to them as an objective fact.

Here are other instances:

- Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4:17).
- God’s parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army within it (Exodus 14:15-31).
- The appearances by the Angel of the LORD to Gideon (Judges 6:11-22) and Manoah (Judges 13:9-21).
- God’s incineration on Mount Carmel of a bull drenched in water (1 Kings 18:20-39).
- Joseph’s dream of the angel who encouraged him to wed Mary despite her pregnancy (Matthew 1:20-21).
- Mary’s waking encounter with the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:28-38).

- The spectacle of countless angels announcing Christ's birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-20).
- The sight of Jesus miraculously curing someone (e.g., Matthew 8:1-4).
- The dazzling display of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah speaking together (e.g., Luke 9:28-36).
- Jesus' resurrection (e.g., John 20-21) and then ascension (Acts 1:1-10).
- Jesus' appearance to Paul on the way to Damascus (e.g., Acts 9:1-9).

Moreover, Jesus' miracles proved subjectively to anyone who saw them that He was the Son of God because they left no objective proof that *He* did them.

Imperfect Memory Limits Human Subjective Knowledge

Impediments to memory obviously restrict how much people can and do know subjectively. Even at the peak of health, they remember imperfectly, while fatigue, illness, injury, and aging can curb it temporarily or permanently. Moreover, Satan's deceptions complicate matters. People sometimes need significant spiritual maturity to distinguish their own thoughts (which immediately become memories) from his guile.

Thus, at some point, memories fail. People usually understand this limitation and lower their expectations accordingly. Even so, within reason, they can rely on their memories and know subjectively. God, moreover, obviously expects them to remember things, especially experiences related in some way to Him, and to continue knowing the truth. He also can intervene to restore a memory that someone can no longer dredge up on his own (John 14:26).

Unlike the eventual passing away of current objective knowledge, some subjective knowledge evidently will last forever. True Christians, for example, currently know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 1:34; John 10:14, 36; John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). The proof for this proposition comes to them from the Spirit, Who confirms its truth in a subjective way of which they are certain but cannot prove to unbelievers around them. True Christians, it seems obvious, will continue to know Jesus' identity subjectively, even after God destroys the present Universe, and will also gain objective knowledge of Him when, for example, God dwells with them in the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:3).

Two Outstanding Exemplars

Among other passages, in Romans and 1 Corinthians, God profoundly and wonderfully conveys subjective and objective knowledge. First, Romans 1:18-20:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

In this passage, Paul attests to subjective knowledge of God in verse 19 and objective knowledge of Him in verse 20. This is general revelation, of course—knowledge of Him in an impersonal way that does not save a person from the eternal consequences of his sin. Paul states or implies here, within the context of Romans 1-2, at least 20 propositions that people know directly or by deduction. A study of the Greek text illuminates.

The apostle implies in verse 19, taken in context, 10 propositions concerning “what can be known about God” by people⁹⁴ in a subjective way. Paul uses *gnōston*,⁹⁵ a form of *gnōstós*, to convey not merely what can be “known” about God,⁹⁶ as the ESV renders it, but more precisely what of Him can be “experientially known, i.e. through first-hand, *personal experience*” (no emphasis added) because the adjective is derived from the verb *ginóskō*, “to know experientially.”⁹⁷ This knowledge, he says, is “plain,”—*phaneron*,⁹⁸ from *phaneros*, meaning “apparent, manifest[,] evident, known.”⁹⁹ The ESV’s translation of Paul’s preposition *en* as “to,” however, appears to be imprecise. According to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, *en* here means “in”—specifically, “in the person, nature, soul, thought of anyone.”¹⁰⁰ This indicates that a better conversion of the Greek into English is the NASB’s “within them,” or “within them [in their inner consciousness]” in the AMP’s 2015 edition.¹⁰¹ Because this knowledge of God that all people have comes from an experience within them, the proof and thus the knowledge must be subjective.

Paul next states why people know of God in this way: “because God has shown it to them.” The apostle’s verb, *ephanerōsen*,¹⁰² is a form of *phaneroō* that in this instance means “to make known by teaching”—specifically, “of God teaching the Gentiles concerning himself by the works of nature.”¹⁰³ Note that, in this verse, *people* are the works of nature in view, and the

⁹⁴ This is the norm and apparently assumes enough mental function and maturity to understand.

⁹⁵ γνωστόν (*gnōston*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on June 29, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/gno_ston_1110.htm.

⁹⁶ STRONGS NT 1110: γνωστός, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 29, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/1110.htm>.

⁹⁷ Hill, Cognate: 1110 *gnōstós*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

⁹⁸ φανερόν (*phaneron*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on June 29, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/phaneron_5318.htm

⁹⁹ STRONGS NT 5318: φανερός, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 29, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5318.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ STRONGS NT 1722: ἐν, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 29, 2019, at <http://biblehub.com/greek/1722.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Bible Gateway; accessed on April 28, 2020, at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+1%3A19&version=ESV;NASB;AMP>.

¹⁰² ἐφανερώσεν (*ephanerōsen*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on June 29, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/ephanero_sen_5319.htm.

¹⁰³ STRONGS NT 5319: φανερώω, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 29, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5319.htm>.

experience of His instruction of them is both a completed action¹⁰⁴ and the proof for the knowledge of Him that is plain within them.

At least part of this teaching's substance Paul elucidates in Romans 2:14-15a:

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness

He explains in verse 14 that sometimes Gentiles follow God's written law "by nature"—*physei*,¹⁰⁵ from *phusis*, "properly, inner *nature*, underlying constitution (make-up) of someone (something)" (no emphasis added)¹⁰⁶—which means here that they are "guided by their natural sense of what is right and proper."¹⁰⁷ When they do so, they "show, demonstrate, prove"¹⁰⁸—*endeiknyntai*¹⁰⁹—the presence of "work"—*ergon*,¹¹⁰ "an act, deed, thing done"—which in this case means "the course of action demanded by the law."¹¹¹ This requirement, Paul continues, "is written on their hearts," their *kardia*s,¹¹² from *kardia*, "the center and seat of spiritual life, 'the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors.'"¹¹³ Testifying to this fact, moreover, is their conscience or "joint-knowing," "the function of the divine image which equips *all* people with the God-given *capacity* to know right from wrong . . . [and] serves as [their] 'inner witness' in acting as a *free moral agent* . . . [but] is only accurate as a person submits to God's word" (no emphasis added).¹¹⁴ Thus, the apostle says, both their behavior and conscience demonstrate to Gentiles

¹⁰⁴ ἐφανερώσεν (*ephanerōsen*), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on June 29, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/ephanero_sen_5319.htm. Hill, [Greek] Aorist, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹⁰⁵ φύσει (*physei*), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on July 4, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/physei_5449.htm.

¹⁰⁶ Hill, 5449 *physis*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹⁰⁷ STRONGS NT 5449: φύσις, Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 4, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5449.htm>.

¹⁰⁸ STRONGS NT 1731: ἐνδείκνυμι; Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on June 30, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/1731.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ ἐνδείκνυνται (*endeiknyntai*), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on June 30, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/endeiknyntai_1731.htm.

¹¹⁰ ἔργον (*ergon*), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on July 7, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/ergon_2041.htm.

¹¹¹ STRONGS NT 2041: ἔργον, Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 7, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2041.htm>.

¹¹² καρδίας (*kardia*s), Englishman's Concordance; accessed on July 7, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/kardiais_2588.htm.

¹¹³ STRONGS NT 2588: καρδιά, Thayer's Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 7, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2588.htm>.

¹¹⁴ Hill, 4893 *syneidēsis*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

that the demand of the law is inscribed on their souls. By their inner sense of morality, they sometimes obey the law, even when they do not have Scripture in their lives.

At this point, 10 propositions that people know from proof within themselves become evident (see Table 6). Paul indicates that they know two inherently; and from them, by pure reason and implicitly, they deduce the existence of God. Again, they know about Him subjectively, from experiencing their innermost selves. As John MacArthur sums up this aspect of knowledge in the passage, “God has sovereignly planted evidence of his existence in the very nature of man by reason and moral law ([Romans] 1:20-21, 28, 32; 2:15).”¹¹⁵

Table 6: Ten Propositions Implied in, Intuited from, or Deduced from Romans 1-2

Proposition known innately	The law exists.	The law is written on my heart.
Proposition intuited and retrospectively known in context	The law is a rational concept that only an intelligent mind can produce.	This action was done to me, not by me.
Proposition deduced and thus known	Therefore, a Law-maker must exist.	Therefore, a Law-writer must exist.
Proposition intuited and retrospectively known in context	The Law-maker must be God.	The Law-writer must be God.
Proposition intuited and retrospectively known in context	The Law-maker and Law-writer are indistinguishable.	The Law-maker and Law-writer are indistinguishable.
Proposition deduced and thus known	Therefore, God is One.	Therefore, God is One.

Second, the apostle discloses knowledge of God that He imparts to all humans by objective means—namely, the Universe and all that is in it. As Paul explains in verse 20, God has set before them proof of “his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature.” This proof is “the things that have been made” by Him and that they have “clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world” by Him. This is proof because they cannot deny its truth—because it leaves them “without excuse.” Again, consider the Greek.

Paul uses three words that reinforce each other to convey the profundity of the proof and hence the knowledge involved here. The first two are the key verbs in this verse, which the ESV renders in one phrase, “have been clearly perceived,” possibly because one succeeds the other in the original syntax: “For the invisible qualities of Him from the creation of the world by the

¹¹⁵ MacArthur, commentary on Romans 1:19, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ESV, p. 1649.

things made being understood [*nooumena*¹¹⁶] are clearly seen [*kathoratai*¹¹⁷]”¹¹⁸ In other words, all people clearly see God’s invisible qualities by understanding what He has made.¹¹⁹ *Kathoratai*, a form of *kathoraó*, appears in Scripture only in this verse and means “to see thoroughly . . . , perceive clearly, understand.”¹²⁰ Going deeper (with no emphasis added):

2529 *kathoráō* . . . [means,] properly, look *down* (from a higher vantage point), i.e. see *clearly, with perception* This compound Greek term . . . literally refers to “*seeing* something from a *higher* (spiritual) plane” which renders the beholder[s] fully responsible for what they *adequately perceive* about the hand of the Creator in His creation. 2529 (*kathoraō*) means to “acquire *definite* information, focusing upon the *perception*” (*L & N*, 1, 27.7).¹²¹

Nooumena, from *noeó*, means in this case “to perceive with the mind, to understand.”¹²² More specifically (with no emphasis added):

3539 *noiéō* . . . [means,] properly, to apply *mental* effort to reach ‘bottom-line’ conclusions. 3539 (*noeō*) underlines the great *moral culpability* all people have before God for *every decision (value-judgment)* they make. This follows because each is created in the divine image and hence possesses *inherent capacity* for moral and spiritual reasoning (cf. Gen 1:26,27 with Jn 1:4,9).¹²³

The third word Paul employs is the adjective *anapologētos*,¹²⁴ from *anapologētos*, meaning here “without defense or excuse,”¹²⁵ or (with no emphasis added):

properly, without rationale; lacking a justified defense (argument) – hence *inexcusable*, what is *utterly inadmissible*, i.e. impossible to accept because [it is]

¹¹⁶ νοούμενα (*nooumena*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on July 1, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/nooumena_3539.htm.

¹¹⁷ καθορᾶται (*kathoratai*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on July 1, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/kathoratai_2529.htm.

¹¹⁸ Romans 1:20, Interlinear Bible; accessed on July 1, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/1-20.htm>.

¹¹⁹ As in verse 19, this is the norm and apparently assumes enough mental function and maturity to understand.

¹²⁰ STRONGS NT 2529: καθοράω, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 1, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2529.htm>.

¹²¹ Hill, 2529 *kathoráō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹²² STRONGS NT 3539: νοέω, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 1, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3539.htm>.

¹²³ Hill, 3539 *noiéō*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹²⁴ ἀναπολογήτους (*anapologētos*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on July 2, 2019, at https://biblehub.com/greek/anapologe_tous_379.htm.

¹²⁵ STRONGS NT 379: ἀναπολόγητος, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on July 1, 2019, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/379.htm>.

without solid logic or genuine *foundation*. 379 (*anapologētos*) then refers to what completely lacks merit.¹²⁶

This combination of clear perception on the basis of understanding that leaves no good reason for doubt or denial equals proof that induces rational surety of the truth—knowledge of at least four initial propositions:

1. God is.
2. God is Creator.
3. God is eternally powerful.
4. God is divine by nature.

People cannot claim ignorance of what God has proven empirically. No one (whose senses and mind work well enough) can miscomprehend, reasonably doubt, or justly reject the evidence that He has presented. Thus, everybody knows *about* Him, indirectly, through the concrete proof of creation. It reflects His glory and reveals Him in part, since everything He made points to Him (Psalm 19:1-4, 50:6, 97:6; Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19-20). Generally and impersonally, God has disclosed Himself in nature. People know that He is the Creator because His handiwork proves it, and they can defend no claim to the contrary.

This passage implies a great deal. From it, people normally know an additional seven propositions at least (with three falling within number four):

1. Reality is really real. In verse 20, Paul appears to describe an inductive process: gathering sensory data about the Universe to conclude that God exists and has particular qualities. Since induction, at best, produces only probability, however, the conclusion of God's existence, which Paul implies all must reach from observing the data, must be a sound deduction, yielding certainty. Hence, Paul implies the existence of one or more unnamed, true premises as a sure basis for deducing that God is. Scripture suggests that these are the incontestability of reality and the normally reliable function of the human body.
2. Certainty, not probability, is God's standard of proof for knowledge. People do not know merely that God probably exists, even to a very high degree of likelihood. They know it for certain—having "rational surety," as defined above.
3. People can meet this standard of proof for knowledge. God tells them they have no excuse for denying His being. When Judgment comes, their claims of ignorance about God will not hold up in Court. The evidence before them leaves no defense for doubting what it proves, no good reason to proclaim atheism or agnosticism—not because they have yet to discover such a reason, but because none is there to find. They know this beyond a reasonable doubt because only bad reasons to doubt it exist.

¹²⁶ Hill, 379 *anapológētos*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

4. God expects them to exercise reason and observation to know truth subjectively and objectively. In the passage, Paul speaks of people being sure of God's existence because He manifests Himself in two impersonal ways, by what is inside of them and outside of them each day, that verify the truth. His general revelation stands on its own and proves the point, even in the absence of exposure to and comprehension of His special, specific revelation. Ordinary experience with the moral law on their hearts and with the stuff of nature testifies without fail to His existence—and to theirs, and to that of all other created things. They perceive creation and deduce from it God's being. This means, in turn:
 - Normally, people can rely on their bodies to function correctly—their senses to take in reality and their minds to process the data collected.¹²⁷ They have no excuse for denying the truth that comes from experiencing Creation. God fully expects them to believe their eyes and holds them accountable for the truth that He has illuminated.
 - Laws of logic exist that they can employ to understand what is real, what is true. Indeed, this they must do to conclude from their interaction with the evidence before them that God is the Creator.
5. Because all know of God's existence and at least two of His "invisible qualities," atheists know more than they believe is true and agnostics know more than they believe is possible to know.

Unbelievers, of course, often do not acknowledge some or all of these propositions because they "by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

In 1 Corinthians 2, God offers an exemplar of subjective knowledge that penetrates even more deeply than the one for subjective and objective knowledge in Romans 1.

⁶Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts

¹²⁷ While this is the norm, obviously exceptions arise. Fallen humans have, and must be wise and discerning toward, their physical and spiritual limits—specifically, the tendency at times of organs to malfunction and of "hearts" to sin—succumbing to Satan's duplicity, which sows distrust in the truth of one's experiences.

except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

First, in verse 11, Paul indicates the existence of subjective knowledge by implying through a rhetorical question that no human knows (*oiden*,¹²⁸ from *eidó*) the thoughts of another; he knows only what the other person says they are. Then, the apostle goes deeper:

- By His Spirit, Who alone knows (*egnōken*,¹²⁹ from *ginóskó*) His thoughts, God has revealed to Christians truth that He has previously hidden (verses 7, 10-11).
- We Christians have received the Spirit so that we would indeed know and understand (*eidōmen*,¹³⁰ from *eidó*) what God has “freely given” to us (verse 12).
- An unbeliever, however, shuns the Spirit’s teaching because he sees it as foolish and is unable to know and understand (*gnōnai*,¹³¹ from *ginóskó*) it because he remains an old creation who lacks the Spirit’s help to discern the truth (verse 14).

¹²⁸ οἶδεν (*oiden*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 12, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/oiden_1492.htm.

¹²⁹ ἔγνωκεν (*egnōken*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 12, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/egno_ken_1097.htm. Judging by the differences over this word in the 12 Greek texts provided at https://biblehub.com/texts/1_corinthians/2-11.htm and accessed on January 12, 2020, modern scholars have concluded that Paul originally used *egnōken*, not *oiden*, a word substituted by a copyist, perhaps in an effort to “correct” an earlier “mistake” that violated parallel construction.

¹³⁰ εἰδῶμεν (*eidōmen*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 12, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/eido_men_1492.htm. This is another instance of the subjunctive mood that conveys surety because the verb appears in the sentence’s clause that expresses the purpose or result of the stated action, namely, the reception of the Spirit. Thus, the text means that people who have received the Spirit do know for certain “the things freely given . . . by God.”

¹³¹ γνῶναι (*gnōnai*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 12, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/gno_nai_1097.htm.

- We Christians can appraise all things because we have the mind (*noun*,¹³² from *noús*), or understanding,¹³³ of Christ (verses 15-16).

Thus, in effect, the Spirit imparts knowledge to Christians by helping them to understand proof of truth that they have acquired. This knowledge, according to the passage, pertains to spiritual matters—“a secret and hidden wisdom of God” (verse 7) and “the things of the Spirit of God” (verse 14)—and it is subjective because the Spirit explains and affirms the proof in their hearts and minds in an immaterial way. Although sometimes able to remember the experience, they cannot show this proof to others.

For example, a Christian man acquires the truth when he reads in Genesis 1 that God created the heavens, the Earth, and everything in them. The Spirit then chooses how and when to illuminate and authenticate the truth of this passage to him, part of which is this: these events occurred in six ordinary days, not six undefined but long periods of time (or some other misinterpretation). If he is spiritually willing and mature enough to learn this truth, the Spirit teaches—for example, through a pastor or the man’s own study—and the opposite of 1 Corinthians 2:14 occurs: He welcomes what the Spirit reveals because it is wisdom to him, and he understands it because the Spirit helps him to evaluate it. This subjective experience proves to him the truth, and thereafter he knows it, although he may not be able to express to others how the Spirit taught it to him. When he tells this truth to unbelievers, they scoff because their souls remain unredeemed and the Spirit resides not in them. When he discusses it with other Christians, he encounters some who fail to recognize its truth because they doubt the passage’s clear meaning and assume the verity of scientists’ opinions that oppose it. They remain spiritually unready for the truth, unwilling to abandon corrupt elements of their worldview, even to the dishonor of Scripture and its Author. So, as a result, they fail to know the truth, either because the Spirit withholds His guidance or, despite His provision, they refuse to believe the proof and deny what they know, suppressing it in the unrighteousness that remains in their flesh.

Most profoundly, perhaps, 1 Corinthians 2 explains at least in part how Christians *know* that the Bible is true—that it is God’s inspired, inerrant, infallible, special revelation of Himself. They know God personally, directly, by experiencing the assurance of the Spirit inside of them (John 14:16-17), and thus know Him to be true (Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3, 14:6; 1 John 5:6, 20), and so recognize the Bible as the very Word of God written down—and as true—because they know Him and know His voice when they hear it (John 10:3-4, 14-16, 27-28a; John 17:3). That is, they

¹³² νοῦν (*noun*), Englishman’s Concordance; accessed on January 18, 2020, at https://biblehub.com/greek/noun_3563.htm.

¹³³ STRONGS NT 3563: νοῦς, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, accessed on January 18, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3563.htm>. According to HELPS Lexicon in *The Discovery Bible*, *noús* is the “God-given capacity to *think* (reason); the *mind*; mental capacity for reflective thinking” (no emphasis added). “For the believer, . . . [it] is the organ of *receiving God’s thoughts*, through *faith*” (no emphasis added).

know that the Bible is true not only because *it* says that they know Him—the only true God Who is the Truth—but because they themselves encounter Him directly and know Him in the sense of *ginóskó*. Thus, they not only believe and trust whole-heartedly that the Bible is true but are sure of it and can know through the Spirit's teaching all of the truth it communicates.

This personal knowledge of God and of His written Word also forms the basis and explains the certainty of the Christian worldview. While all other worldviews start with presuppositions that yield fundamentally, although not necessarily totally, false interpretations of reality, the Christian one begins with the subjective knowledge of God Himself and presupposes nothing. The degree to which individual Christians grasp and live out this worldview depends on their maturity in Christ, their comprehension of Scripture, and their obedience to the Spirit. When they make extra-Biblical assumptions, such as the veracity of secular scientific views on the origin of the Universe and the age of the Earth, they skew their perspective and distort their view of the truth. In principle, however, a thorough and proper understanding of Scripture produces an accurate understanding of the world around them, to the extent their finite minds can take it in. Fundamentally, then, non-Christians possess an un-Biblical worldview and essentially believe what they assume to be true but is not, whereas Christians with a thoroughly Biblical worldview believe what they know to be true.

Appendix A Brief Comment on Christian Faith

For a Christian, faith is neither just the content of Christianity nor only belief and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is proof of salvation. For faith is a gift that God gives to a newly reborn person (Ephesians 2:8) logically prior to justifying him.¹³⁴ The very fact that he possesses it proves to him that he knows God personally and has eternal life (John 17:3; Romans 6:23).

Specifically, as Hebrews 11:1 indicates, faith is the *hypostasis* of that for which he hopes and the *elengchos* of what he does not see. The former means “properly, possessing a guaranteed *standing under* an agreement (“title-deed”); (figuratively) “*title*” to a promise or property, a legitimate *claim* to what (literally) is, “*under legal-standing*”—what *entitles* someone to the guarantee under a particular agreement” (no emphasis added).¹³⁵ This guarantee yields “steadiness of mind, firmness, courage[,] resolution . . . confidence, firm trust, assurance.”¹³⁶ The latter means “a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested . . . that by which invisible things are proved (and we are convinced of their reality).”¹³⁷ It “refers to *divinely-given conviction*, confirming the faith (persuasion) *the Lord has already worked in the believer*” (no emphasis added).¹³⁸ And perhaps the most important thing for which a believer hopes but does not see is the reality of eternal life with his Savior. Thus, faith is proof to the believer that he knows for sure the God Who has saved him forevermore.

Hebrews 11:1, Holman Christian Standard Bible

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Hebrews 11:1, World English Bible

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1, Berean Study Bible

Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1, International Standard Version

Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.

¹³⁴ See “The Order of Salvation,” John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, general editors, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2017), pp. 567-571.

¹³⁵ Hill, 5287 *hypóstasis*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

¹³⁶ STRONGS NT 5287: ὑπόστασις, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on May 21, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5287.htm>.

¹³⁷ STRONGS NT 1650: ἔλεγχος, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; accessed on May 21, 2020, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/1650.htm>.

¹³⁸ Hill, Cognate: 1650 *élegxos*, HELPS Lexicon, *The Discovery Bible*.

About the Author

Scott Schafer follows Jesus Christ, though imperfectly, and hates sin, especially his own. He has no doctoral degree and no formal training in philosophy, theology, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. What he has learned about these topics God has graciously provided via Scripture and other resources. To Him, he is eternally grateful.