

KNOWING IN JOHN 1

Questions and Answers in John 1: The Issue of Understanding

Copyright, Latayne C. Scott

- 1) Understanding is an issue from the beginning in this chapter. Jesus is introduced as far as His interaction with the world (kosmos) as light that is not comprehended by the darkness (verse 5). The world did not know Him (verse 10.)
- 2) The issue of any understanding of God is also introduced as being through Jesus: in verse 18, we see that no one can see (temporally understand) God the Father but Jesus must declare Him (revelation.)
- 3) A series of questions are asked of John the Baptist. They are posed by Pharisees who serve in this chapter as tropes of human observation and understanding. They ask John if he be the Christ, and he answers that he is not. Then they ask him if he is a prophet or Elijah, which he also denies. They demand a human explanation for who he is--and John instead gives them revelation: He is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.
- 4) John then later makes an amazing statement: that he did not know the One he was baptizing. That seems strange being as he was Jesus' near relative. But he clarifies this: he could only know Him through revelation ("except the One sending me said...") In that case, he was as ignorant as the Pharisees if he depended only on his earthly observations. He needed revelation to truly know Jesus. The Pharisees didn't know Him (verse 26.)
- 5) The Pharisees couldn't know Jesus because they only depended on their observations, and they thought they could arrive at the "truth" by asking questions of John. John could only know Jesus through revelation, the noncommutative (that is, uni-directional) communication of God.
- 6) Furthermore, John didn't even know himself without revelation. When he was asked if he were Elijah, he said no. But later, in Matthew 16:12, Jesus said that John was indeed Elijah.

But even as John couldn't know the truth about himself without revelation; so none of us can arrive at any truth about people, about the Lord, or about ourselves solely through earthly means. At even the most elemental level, what we know and who we know depends upon the noncommutative information that God's mind provides.