

# The Unknown One

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon explores the identity of Jesus as the Unknown One, emphasizing His divine nature, miraculous works, and the importance of faith in recognizing Him.*

**Scripture:** John 1:10, John 4:48, John 6:9, John 8:19, 1 John 2:3, 1 John 5:20

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ", "Divine Authority"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the unknown One, Jesus Christ, who knew all men and all things, yet was unrecognized by the world He created. Despite performing miraculous signs and revealing God's love and light, many remained in darkness, not recognizing Him. Jesus, the true Light, displayed His power through various acts of grace, demonstrating His authority over sickness, hunger, death, and darkness. Although rejected by some, those who believed in Him became children of God, experiencing His forgiveness, compassion, and life-transforming power.

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## Transcript

Who "Knew all men" and "all things"

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not!" (John 1:10). He bestowed favours far beyond the power of any earthly sovereign to grant, and He was accessible to the most lowly and sinful, yet He was unknown in the world He had made!

He shone as the true Light amidst the darkness of mankind, showing the state of everything, manifesting the proper relations of all in regard to God, making Him known, too, as both light and love, showing by His works and words that the Creator was present amongst men. Yet they knew Him not!

His works of grace were signs which showed forth His glory. The wine ran out at the marriage feast at Cana. He more than met the need, by Creatorial power.

The son of a certain nobleman lay sick unto death in the same town, but a word from the Lord was enough to restore the ebbing life and bring faith to the nobleman and his whole house. For thirty-eight years the impotent man lay almost hopeless, for there was no man who could help him at the pool of Bethesda. He was immediately made strong when the Lord said to him, "Arise, take up thy couch and walk." A vast throng of five thousand men beside women and children were fainting with hunger, from a boy's five barley loaves and two small fishes He more than met their need! Still He was unknown! Some said, "This is truly

the Prophet which is coming into the world." And when they would have seized Him and made him King, He departed from them, for He knew them; and "Jesus did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men," and also "what was in man" (see John 2). They were not born again. But some sought Him and received Him in faith, because they recognized the true Light shining in the midst of the darkness; to them was granted the wonderful right "to be the children of God," who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They received Him! They were God's children!

When the multitude found Him He said, "Ye seek Me not because ye have seen signs, but because ye have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto life eternal." Where there was true faith which appropriated Him and the words of eternal life which He communicated that life became theirs; but "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe" and even the one who should betray Him. But a sinner from the streets could respond to His grace. She had no merit or works of righteousness, but He could say to her, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace." He never spurned or turned aside those who came in need. She loved much because she had been forgiven much. The reasoning and objections of the Pharisee's heart against the rich grace of God then shown in Jesus was known and answered by Him (Luke 7:36-50).

"I am the Light of the world" said the Saviour, and before Him and His disciples at that time was a blind beggar sitting--blind from his birth. The Lord gave him sight in such a way that questions as to who it was that did so would inevitably be raised! The answers showed Him not only to be unknown in all the activities of His grace and love, but as Isaiah had foretold seven centuries before, "Despised and rejected of men." The religious leaders said to the once blind man, "Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner." He was the unknown One! Yea, and the rejected One! They even cast out the subject of His gracious power! Such is the religious heart of man when in darkness--when in ignorance of God revealed in the Son.

Lazarus had lain four days in the tomb! Not only had mortality claimed the body, but also corruptibility, nevertheless, One who could say, "I am the resurrection and the life" appeared upon the scene of sorrow. He showed His love by His tears, and His power by His Word, and Lazarus, hearing His call, came forth, leaving the tomb and death and corruption behind! Thus He showed Himself to be greater than any other who had appeared on earth. A Man truly, but more than a man! "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." At that very time the chief priests and religious leaders called a council, saying, "What do we? for this Man does many signs"; and the chief priests took counsel to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus! Showing the dilemma in which they were and the wickedness of their folly. Did they put Lazarus to death?--He who raised him to life before could do so again and again! Did they slay Jesus?--He had power to rise again, for He could not be holden of death, and indeed He did rise again, as He often told His disciples beforehand. Men knew Him not. The Light shone, but the darkness apprehended it not.

He was the unknown One. He knew all, but men loved darkness rather than the Light which shone in Him. The Light was perfect in every way, but they hated the Light.

We have spoken of but a few of His works of power--the signs of the presence of God amongst men--the activities of the true Light making all things manifest. It is thus, too, that the works of true believers are connected with light, for it is said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good (or upright) works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Again we read of "the unfruitful works of darkness" whose true character is exposed by the light which makes everything manifest. "The fruit of the

light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." This was seen in abounding perfection in the Lord Jesus. His words also told that God was amongst His creatures. Wonderful as these were, they were refused also. The Son brings both together in John 13:22-25. What He had "spoken" left them without excuse for their sin, and what He had "done" also--"the works which none other had done." "But now," He added, "they have seen and hated both Me and My Father," for God had been fully declared in Him.

As the One through whom the world received its being, He was unknown by men when here, but as come of royal David's line according to the flesh the sceptre, the crown and the throne of Israel were His by right. The Jews should have known this. He was their promised Messiah--He was both God's King according to Psalm 2, and God the King according to Psalm 43, yet when He came to "His own" things--the sceptre, the crown and the throne--"His own" nation received Him not! By the world He was unknown; by Israel He was not received. His forerunner, John the Baptist, when asked if he were the Christ, or Elias, or the promised Prophet, replied, No! but "In the midst of you stands One whom ye know not." He explained to them that though Jesus (1) "came after" him, He took a place (2) "before" him, because He was (3) before him (John 1:30). As to the first, we know that. Jesus was born in time after John, who was sent to "prepare the way of Jehovah," and the ministry of Jesus came after him too. In regard to the second, John owned His pre-eminence in rank, or dignity, or position, giving the true reason, because He was before him in the eternity of His Person. Little wonder then that John immediately adds, in the presence of such an One, "And I knew Him not!" John was of the priestly family, and Jesus was of the royal family, and after the flesh they were related to each other. John knew Him in this way, but as the One who combined in Himself (1) subsequence in time to John (2) pre-eminence in dignity, and (3) precedence in the past--the One who was in the beginning with God, and was God (John 1:1)--He was unknown even to John, until the Spirit descended upon Him as a dove--marking Jesus out as God had told him--then he said, "I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God."

John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is here to glorify the Son. Jesus said of Him, "He shall not speak of (or from) Himself . . . He shall glorify Me." It is because the Spirit has been given since Christ finished the work upon the cross and set Himself down on the right hand of the throne on high that those who are redeemed and sealed can enter into these things. The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God. In his natural state man cannot know them. He must be born of water and of the Spirit before it is possible. Then the Spirit given to those who believe in Christ leads them on not only to know the blessings but the Blessor Himself. How deeply thankful we should be that this is so. Christ was the hidden Wisdom before prepared for our glory. He is ours. But none of the princes of this world knew Him, we are told, or "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). He was the unknown One to them; but since He has ascended up on high, of God are we "in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us Wisdom, . . . that, according as it is written, He that glories, let Him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

Now when "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" was here we might reasonably expect words to fall from His lips that excel all that men have ever uttered. Nor is our expectation disappointed. Even His enemies bear witness--"Never man spake like this man." Men wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. A friend told me he had just been to hear an address on Christ, Confucius and Mohammed. I inquired if the speaker found any point of comparison between them. "Oh," he replied, "the lecturer gave the pre-eminence to Christ, and showed that His teachings were far higher than the others." "Then," I said, "how do you account for the fact that those utterances came from His lips before He was thirty-four years old?" "I had not thought of that," he answered. "He must have been more than a

man," I said, "God Himself was here in Christ."

The disciples, though slow to rise to the full recognition of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, had a deep sense of His omniscience: "We know that Thou knowest all things" they said. They companied with Him, and felt and observed His perfect knowledge of God, of themselves, of men, and of all else. Some in our day question what they never thought of questioning. Nathanael had asked Him, "Whence knowest Thou me?" We find the same thing with the woman of Sychar; and she said, "Come see a Man who told me all things I had ever done; is not this the Christ?" Ah, yes, He was there, "the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5) When He was restoring Peter, after his failure which had come to pass just as Jesus told him, because of the sifting of Satan, Peter exclaimed, "Lord, Thou knowest all things!" That is the only rational explanation of His marvellous utterances; but let those who raise sceptical questions today remember His words to a similar religious class when He was here on earth, "Ye know neither Me nor My Father. If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also. These words spoke He in the treasury, teaching in the temple; and no one took Him, for His hour was not yet come" (John 8:19-20). He left them in darkness. They knew not the true God. Solemn thought for those who are turning away from the filial revelation made in the Son. Even fallen spirits "knew Him to be the Christ," and in Mark 1:24 we read of an unclean spirit crying out, "Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the holy One of God." The devils believe and tremble, we are told, yet men question now without trembling!

He knew all men," He "knew what was in man," and He knew "all things"; but "the world knew Him not"; and "though He had done so many signs before them," yet the leaders of Israel received Him not. As "the Word"--who "was God"--"become flesh"--the Logos--He was the embodiment and the utterance of all the mind of God. He told us that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How could we have discovered this had He not told us? He fully made God known, yet He was the unknown One. As we have seen, John told those of Jerusalem there was One in their midst whom they did not know; and twice, when His deity was in question, John even said, "I knew Him not," till the Spirit as a dove came and abode upon Him, as he had been told.

Are we therefore to conclude that He remains unknown? Far be the thought. The believing heart which rejoices in His grace and love rightly resents the idea that One so great and yet so loving should remain unknowable. Nay, He Himself said, when, speaking of those for whom He laid down His life, "I know those that are Mine, and am known of those that are Mine, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father" (John 10:14-15, N.Tr.). And Paul wrote, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12), and that gave him confidence. The children of God--those who are born of God and have received the Holy Spirit--know Him. John, the apostle, knew Him; and embracing all the family of God in his words, he wrote, "And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). The above Scriptures do not at all suggest that we know Him in the same measure as the Father. That were impossible. The knowledge of infinite Persons must necessarily be infinite. To that we could not attain. Yet we know Him; thanks be to the grace and love of God. In the impenetrable depths of His holy Person, however, we are told, "No one knows who the Son is but the Father" (Luke 11:22; Matt. 11:27). Nor does it add, as is often quoted, "and he to whom the Father is pleased to reveal Him." The Father does reveal Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" to souls, and this in regard to His assembly which is being built by Christ as the Son of Man. Yes, His own know Him as He said, whatever may be their measure, but the Father fully knows the Son, and that without measure, even as His love for the Son is measureless.

The "babes" in the family of God needed to be warned as to anti-Christian activities and to be encouraged in the truth. The "young men" in that family are warned against the world and encouraged in the Father's love and in the will of God. To "the fathers," however, no special warning is given, but it is twice simply stated, "Ye have known Him that is from the beginning." All the family know Him, but in a special way it characterizes those who have matured in God's family. It is in that direction all are exhorted to grow. Some are dwarfed or wrongly developed by assimilating a special ecclesiastical bias or a special school of teaching. True increase is in the knowledge of God in Christ, as made known by the Spirit in the Word. And though all His own know His voice, and know His love, and know Himself, nevertheless this is ever to be a deepening thing with us; and so it is; the more we know Him and the wonderful love He has expressed towards us at Calvary, the more we desire to know Him; and He has given a capability to us that this may be advanced. He has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. "He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Every other object--ideal or idol--which would dispute His pre-eminence is to be shunned, therefore the epistle immediately closes with these simple words to the family of God, "Children, keep yourselves from idols."

We are nearing home! soon we shall enter the prepared place in His Father's house! Very soon He will come again and take us there, that where He is we may be also. Then we shall see Him as He is! Then we shall be like Him! How blessed to see His face and to be altogether suitable to Himself! According to the power whereby He is able to put all things in the universe into accord with His holy mind, He will then transform even our bodies of humiliation and make them like His own--all glorious!

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