Knowing God of the Bible: Understanding Historically & Theologically

Passages Addressing Knowing God

There are several passages in the New Testament that address the idea—that if one rejects Jesus Christ, they cannot truly claim to know or have the God of the Bible. The New Testament consistently teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament revelation of God and that to know the Father, one must know the Son. Here are some key scriptures:

- 1. **John 5:23 (KJV)** *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*
    - **Comment:** Jesus makes it clear that honoring the Father requires honoring the Son. One cannot claim to worship the God of the Bible while rejecting Christ.

2. John 8:19 (KJV)

> *"Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."*

- **Comment:** Jesus directly confronts the Pharisees, stating that their claim to know God is false because they reject Him.

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3. John 8:42 (KJV)

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.”

- **Comment:** Jesus asserts that genuine love for God is inseparable from loving Him, as He came from the Father.

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4. John 14:6-7 (KJV)

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”

- **Comment:** This verse plainly states that access to the Father is only through Jesus Christ.

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5. 1 John 2:22-23 (KJV)

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.”

- **Comment:** John directly ties the denial of Christ to the

spirit of antichrist and affirms that rejecting the Son means one does not have the Father.

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6. 2 John 1:9 (KJV)

> *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."*

- **Comment:** Abiding in the teaching of Christ is essential to truly knowing God.

From a New Testament, covenantal perspective, the scriptures emphasize that rejecting Jesus as the Messiah means one cannot claim to know or have the true God of the Bible. Jesus Himself addressed the religious leaders of His day, who claimed to worship God, but rejected Him as the Messiah.

For example, in **John 8:44 (KJV)**, Jesus speaks directly to the Pharisees:

> *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him."*

This statement was made specifically to those religious leaders who rejected Jesus while claiming to follow God. It wasn't a condemnation of every ethnic Jew but of those who rejected the Messiah. Paul makes it clear that God's covenant people are now defined by faith in Christ, not ethnicity:

- **Romans 2:28-29 (KJV)**:
  "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly… But he is

a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."

- **Galatians 3:28-29 (KJV)**:
  "There is neither Jew nor Greek… And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So, the New Testament teaches that true covenant identity is through faith in Christ. As for those who reject Christ, Jesus and the apostles indicate they do not truly worship the God of the Bible.

This aligns with what you've mentioned about spiritual deception and the influence of false doctrine. It also ties into Paul's warning in **2 Corinthians 4:4 (KJV)**:

> *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ… should shine unto them."*

The "god of this world" is understood to be Satan, who blinds people to the truth of Christ. This spiritual deception applies to anyone—Jew or Gentile—who rejects the Messiah, not just an ethnic group.

Would you like to explore more historical or theological context around how religious groups have understood this concept throughout history?

1. Early Church Understanding (1st–4th Century)

Jewish-Christian Divide

In the early church, Jewish Christians (like the apostles) accepted Jesus as the Messiah, while the majority of the

Jewish religious leadership rejected Him.

- **John 1:11 (KJV)**: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”*

Early church fathers, such as **Justin Martyr (2nd century)**, argued that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. He contended that Jews who rejected Jesus did not know the true God, as they were clinging to the old covenant which was fulfilled in Christ.

- **Ignatius of Antioch** and others emphasized that the new covenant had replaced the old system, and that salvation was only through Christ.

Key Theological Point: The early church saw itself as the true inheritor of God’s covenant, with the old covenant being obsolete without Christ.

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2. Augustine and Covenant Theology (4th–5th Century)

Historical Context

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) significantly influenced Western Christian theology. His writings, particularly in *The City of God* and *Against Faustus the Manichaean*, laid a foundation for understanding God’s redemptive plan through covenants rather than ethnicity.

Core Teachings

- Augustine saw the Old Testament as pointing toward Christ and the church.
- He taught that Israel's role in God's plan was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and through Christ, both Jews and Gentiles were brought into one covenant community.
- This view was rooted in passages like **Galatians 3:28-29 (KJV)**:
  "There is neither Jew nor Greek… for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Key Distinction

Augustine did not say the church "replaced" Israel; instead, he taught that the church is the **continuation and fulfillment** of Israel through Christ.

Misunderstanding: Replacement vs. Fulfillment

Replacement Theology (a pejorative term):

- Suggests the church replaces Israel and God has abandoned ethnic Jews.
- Implies God broke His promises to Israel, which contradicts scripture about God's faithfulness.

Fulfillment Theology (the accurate description of Augustine's view):

- Teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.
- Israel's identity was always meant to culminate in Christ, with believing Jews and Gentiles forming one people of God.

Ephesians 2:14-16 (KJV):
"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us… for to make in himself of twain one new man."

Key Insight: Covenant Theology doesn't teach replacement but fulfillment.

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3. The Medieval Church (5th–15th Century)

The Roman Catholic Church solidified the idea that salvation came through Christ and the church's sacraments. Jews were often seen as spiritually blind for rejecting Christ, which led to theological debates about their role in God's plan.

Key Theological Argument: God's covenant with Israel was fulfilled in the church, and those outside Christ were not in covenant with God.

Romans 2:28-29 (KJV):
"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly… But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit."

Olive Tree Analogy (Romans 11)

Paul's analogy of the olive tree clarifies this relationship:

- Natural branches (unbelieving Jews) were broken off due to unbelief.
- Wild branches (believing Gentiles) were grafted in by faith.
- Believing Jews can be grafted back in if they accept Christ.

Key Insight: The tree remains the same; there is one people of God—those who believe in Christ.

Scriptural Support:

- **Matthew 21:43 (KJV)**: *"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."*
- Jesus speaks to the Jewish leaders, indicating that God's kingdom would be given to a people defined by faith, not ethnicity.

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4. Reformation Era (16th Century)

Reformers like **Martin Luther** and **John Calvin** reiterated that faith in Christ alone was the basis for covenantal relationship with God.

- Calvin's writings strongly supported the idea that anyone rejecting Christ, regardless of ethnicity, was not in relationship with the God of the Bible.
- Luther initially supported Jewish evangelism but later wrote against their rejection of Christ, though his later writings became controversial.

Key Scripture:

- **1 John 2:23 (KJV)**: *"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."*
- **Romans 11:20 (KJV)**: *"Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith."*

Theological Development: The Reformation highlighted that

God’s promises to Israel were never about ethnicity but about faith. The term *“true Israel”* referred to believers in Christ, not a national identity.

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5. Dispensationalism and Zionism (19th–20th Century)

With the rise of dispensational theology (popularized by John Darby and C.I. Scofield), a significant shift occurred in the understanding of Israel’s relationship with God.

Dispensational Claims

- Dispensationalists argued that ethnic Israel still had a special relationship with God, distinct from the church.
- They promoted a literalist interpretation of prophecies and saw a future earthly kingdom for national Israel.

Key Misinterpretation (from a covenantal perspective):

- Misapplication of **Genesis 12:3** to modern-day Israel, despite it being originally given to Abraham personally, not the future state of Israel.
- Dispensationalism tends to separate God’s plan for Israel and the church, contradicting passages like **Galatians 3:28-29 (KJV)**.

Theological Rebuttal:

- **Galatians 3:16 (KJV)**:
  “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made… And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

- The promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ, not in a physical nation-state.

Covenant Perspective: Ethnic distinctions no longer determine covenant identity; faith in Christ does.

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6. Modern Theological Debates and Misunderstandings

Today, many evangelical Christians, especially those in dispensational circles, view the Jewish people as still "God's chosen," despite their rejection of Christ.

The Core Misunderstanding: "Replacement Theology"

The term "replacement theology" is often used to misrepresent covenant theology.

Key Clarifications:

1. **Covenant Theology does not teach replacement.**
   - God's covenant people have always been those who live by faith.

2. **The church is not a new entity.**
   - It is the continuation and expansion of true Israel through faith in Jesus Christ.

3. **Promises were always Christ-centered.**
   - The promises to Abraham find their fulfillment in Jesus, not in national Israel.

Galatians 3:7 (KJV):
“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

Acts 15:14-17 (KJV) (James quoting Amos 9):

- Gentiles being brought in is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the “tabernacle of David” being rebuilt in Christ.

Spiritual Deception and False Worship

The New Testament warns repeatedly about spiritual deception and the influence of Satan:

- **2 Corinthians 4:4 (KJV)**:
  “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.”

Jesus told the Pharisees that their rejection of Him aligned them with the devil’s purposes (**John 8:44**). This doesn’t mean every unbeliever consciously worships Lucifer, but spiritually, rejecting Christ means they are not in relationship with the true God.

Conclusion

The claim that covenant theology is “replacement theology” misrepresents the core teaching. Covenant theology teaches **continuity and fulfillment**: God’s promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ, and all who believe in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—are heirs of those promises.

Augustine’s framework didn’t promote the idea of a new entity

replacing Israel but clarified that **the true Israel was always those of faith**. Ethnic heritage was never the determining factor, as Paul repeatedly emphasizes in Romans and Galatians.

Would you like to incorporate this distinction into your course content on dispensationalism and Zionism? This historical context could help clarify how these theological perspectives have shaped modern views.