

## 5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

# Are You a 'Know It All'?

George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982) was a distinguished New Testament scholar and theologian. Ladd made a special study of the Kingdom of God. Avoiding technical discussions and long arguments about interpretation, Ladd sought to explain the Kingdom of God and the urgency of its meaning and message for our time.

As stated in Ladd's own words, "The Kingdom is a present reality (Matthew 12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (1 Corinthians 15:50). It is a spiritual redemptive blessing (Romans 14:17) which can be experienced by way of the new birth (John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world (Revelation 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Matthew 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (Matthew 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present (Mark 10:15). Obviously no simple explanation can do justice to such a rich but diverse variety of teaching.

God has permitted us to attain something of the knowledge of divine truth here and now; yet at best, it is partial and incomplete. Nevertheless, it is real. Although imperfect, it is the greatest and most wonderful reality in life, because the truth of God brings men into fellowship with God.

The partial character of this knowledge creates practical problems. It will indeed be a wonderful day when all of God's people can agree in their understanding of God and of God's truth. That day lies in the future; it is not yet here. Many problems arise because God's people do not recognize the teaching of Scripture about the incompleteness of Christian knowledge. Sometimes, people insist that there ought to be a complete conformity in all details of understanding of God and of Christian doctrine which is not warranted by the Word of God. The Scripture is clear that our knowledge is partial. It is because of the very imperfectness of our knowledge, says Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, that we must exercise the gift of love. The various ministrations of the Holy spirit in the early church in prophecy, tongues, knowledge (supernatural disclosures of divine truth) were given to men because now we know in part (1 Corinthians 13:12). They belong to our 'childhood,' that is, to our earthly life. When we attain perfect maturity, when we see face to face, and know fully even as also we were fully known (1 Corinthians 13:11-12), we shall put away childish things. We shall no longer need these aids of the Holy Spirit to help fill in our ignorance. However, when other gifts have passed away, love abides. Love is that gift of the Spirit, above all others, which will characterize our perfected fellowship

in the Age to come (His Kingdom). This love we now enjoy, in advance of the life of the Age to come to that extent to which we permit the Holy Spirit to manifest the gift of love in our mutual relationships, especially in those areas where our imperfect knowledge leads to differing interpretations of the Word of God in the details of theology.

Paul clearly asserts this fact in 1 Corinthians 13:12. Now in this age 'we see in a mirror, dimly.' The ancient mirror was a piece of polished metal which tarnished and pitted easily. It gave an imperfect image. One could recognize the reflection, but it was far from perfect. Now in this fallen age we see in a mirror, imperfectly; 'but then face to face.' Then we shall not have Presbyterians and Baptists, Calvinists and Arminians, premillennialists and amillennialists and postmillennialists, but we shall all understand perfectly what the truth of God is, for we shall be taught of God. In the Age to come, we shall no longer see a reflected likeness, we shall see face to face.

There is no man who ever lived, apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, who can say, 'I am the truth. You must follow Me!' The inspired Apostle Paul said, 'Now I know in part.' This puts us all in a place of humility before God. We must search the Scriptures, we must study God's Word, and we must wait on God. But because we are still in this evil Age, when we have done our best, we are compelled to say, 'Lord, I have searched Thy Word; but I know only in part; I do not perfectly understand.'

'Now I know in part,' this lays a demand upon us that we hold the Word of God both in humility and in charity: in humility towards God and in charity (love) towards our brethren." (The Gospel of the Kingdom by George Eldon Ladd, pages 73-74).

## Questions

**1** Read 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (Living Bible)

*"<sup>2-3</sup>Fourteen years ago I was taken up to heaven for a visit. Don't ask me whether my body was there or just my spirit, for I don't know; only God can answer that. But anyway, there I was in paradise, <sup>4</sup>and heard things so astounding that they are beyond a man's power to describe or put in words (and anyway I am not allowed to tell them to others). <sup>5</sup>That experience is something worth bragging about, but I am not going to do it. I am going to boast only about how weak I am and how great God is to use such weakness for his glory." - 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (Living Bible)*

Paul was caught up to heaven and heard things beyond man's power to put in words.

True or False

**2** Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 (Living Bible)

*“In the same way, we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see him in his completeness, face-to-face. Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly, just as clearly as God sees into my heart right now.”*

*- 1 Corinthians 13:12 (Living Bible)*

Paul was taught directly by the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12 Living Bible),

*“For my message comes from no less a person than Jesus Christ himself, who told me what to say. No one else has taught me.”*

*- Galatians 1:12 (Living Bible)*

yet he said his revelation here on earth was:

- A. full and complete
- B. known only in part
- C. enough to win most arguments about religion

**3** Read Acts 15:36-41 (Living Bible)

*“<sup>36</sup>Several days later Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return again to Turkey and visit each city where they had preached before, to see how the new converts were getting along. <sup>37</sup>Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. <sup>38</sup>But Paul didn’t like that idea at all, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia. <sup>39</sup>Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40-41</sup>while Paul chose Silas and, with the blessing of the believers, left for Syria and Cilicia to encourage the churches there.”*

*- Acts 15:36-41 (Living Bible)*

Paul and Barnabas were missionary companions an:

- A. Always agreed about everything
- B. Didn’t see eye to eye sometimes

**4** Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 (Living Bible)

*“In the same way, we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see him in his completeness, face-to-face. Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly, just as clearly as God sees into my heart right now.” - 1 Corinthians 13:12 (Living Bible)*

The phrase ‘know in part’ means:

- A. to see clearly as if you were in heaven with Jesus
- B. to know only a little fraction of the truth

**5** Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NIV)

*“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”  
- 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NIV)*

If we don’t see eye to eye with others, we need to:

- A. jump all over them
- B. seek peace and pursue it

**6** Read 1 Peter 3:15 (Living Bible)

*“Quietly trust yourself to Christ your Lord, and if anybody asks why you believe as you do, be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle and respectful way.” - 1 Peter 3:15 (Living Bible)*

In dealing with others concerning our hope in Christ we need to be:

- A. harsh and bold
- B. in their face
- C. gentle and respectful

**7** Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 (Living Bible)

*“Let love be your greatest aim; nevertheless, ask also for the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives, and especially the gift of prophecy, being able to preach the messages of God.” - 1 Corinthians 14:1 (Living Bible)*

One of the greatest gifts you can give people is:

- A. love and understanding
- B. a Hersey’s candy bar

**8** Read (Galatians 5:19-20 from the King James & Living Bible).

*“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;...seditions, heresies, (the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group — and there will be wrong doctrine”*  
*- Galatians 5:19-20 from the King James & Living Bible*

When religious people have a ‘know it all’ and an unloving attitude, their life will manifest:

- A. seditions, (the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group)
- B. heresies, (wrong doctrine)
- C. joy and peace

**We want to hear from you!**

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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## Answer Key

**1** Read 2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (Living Bible)

Paul was caught up to heaven and heard things beyond man's power to put in words.

**True**

**2** Read 1 Corinthians 13:12 (Living Bible)

Paul was taught directly by the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12 Living Bible), yet he said his revelation here on earth was:

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**B. known only in part**

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