

Introduction

Rudolf Bultmann

Rudolf Bultmann was a 20th century New Testament theologian. He committed his life to studying, teaching, and writing about the New Testament. Here are a few things that Rudolph Bultmann taught.

First, he taught that Scripture was not God's revealed word. He wrote, "Scripture is not revelation; it is the human witness to revelation" (*Faith and Understanding*, Vol 1, 289). "The Bible's statements about the past are not inspired reports; they are the church's proclamation" (*Faith and Understanding*, Vol 1, 293). In other words, Bultmann believed that Scripture was human words, not God's words.

Second, he taught that Jesus was not the man we read about in Scripture. He wrote, "Christ is not a pre-existent divine being come to earth" (*Theology of the New Testament*, Vol 1, 302). "The New Testament speaks of Christ's pre-existence mythologically" (*New Testament and Mythology*, 44). "The incarnation is not a historical event..." (*Kerygma and Myth*, 42). Bultmann did not believe that Jesus was God who became a human. He rejected the supernatural claims of Scripture.

Related to this, Bultmann taught that Jesus did not die to atone for sins or resurrect. He wrote, "The cross is not a historical payment for sins but the call do die to the world" (*Theology of the New Testament*, Vol 2, 49). "I do not deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ; I deny only that it is an event of past history" (*Kerygma and Myth*, 44). In other words, Bultmann believed that the New Testament was trying to teach ethical and metaphysical truths, but he denied belief that anything the Bible teaches about Jesus is true.

Summary: Thus, Bultmann believed that a person could know God apart from knowing Jesus and apart from believing Scripture. Yet, he devoted his life to an intellectual understanding of the New Testament.

Knowing God

*How does a person **actually** come to know God?* Can we know God experientially as Bultmann taught, without believing Scripture and without faith in Jesus? Can we know God by intellectual study, without any supernatural change?

Rudolf Bultmann knew a lot about God, but based on his own professions, I doubt that he actually knew God. *Do you know **about** God or do you **know** God?*

Atonement of sins, peace with God, and eternal life do not come from knowledge about God; they come from a relationship with God. We don't know God through intellect; we know God through His revelation of Himself. Knowing God is a supernatural work of God.

How do you come to know God? [1 John 4:13-15](#) teaches that **those who know God confess faith in Jesus through Scripture's testimony by the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Do you know God?

[1 John 4:13-15](#) “13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

The gift of the Spirit

How does a person come to faith in Jesus? If faith in Jesus was an **intellectual** event, we might say that a person comes to faith when someone **convinces** him that the gospel is true and he **confesses** belief in that truth. However, faith is a spiritual matter; therefore, faith requires more than intellectual interaction. **We know God by the gift of the Holy Spirit.** [1 John 4:13](#) “13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is a person of the Triune God. He is a **person**, not a force. Scripture uses personal pronouns that defy grammar in [John 16:14](#) to show that He is a person. The Holy Spirit is presented in lists in Scripture in the same category as the Father and Jesus ([Matt 28:19](#); [1 Cor 12:4-6](#); [2 Cor 13:14](#); [Eph 4:4-6](#); [1 Pet 1:2](#)), suggesting that He is a person just like the Father and Son.

The Holy Spirit is **God**. He possesses the **attributes** of God. He is eternal ([Heb 9:14](#)). He is all knowing ([1 Cor 2:10-11](#)). He creates and gives life ([Gen 1:2](#); [John 6:63](#); [Rom 8:11](#)). [Acts 5:3-4](#) refer to the Holy Spirit as God. [1 Cor 3:16-17](#) and [1 Cor 6:19-20](#) refer to the Holy Spirit as God. **The Holy Spirit is a person of the Triune God.**

He has given us

The Holy Spirit is a **gift** from God. [1 John 4:13](#) “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has **given** us of his Spirit.” Jesus told His disciples that it was necessary for Him to leave (death, resurrection, & ascension) to prepare the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit ([John 14-16](#)). [John 14:17](#) “... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him

nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” God gives the Holy Spirit those who have faith in Jesus and the Spirit dwells in us (cf. [1 Cor 3:16](#)).

Relation to confession of faith

Verses 13 and 15 parallel. We know that we abide in God because we have the Holy Spirit (4:13). We know that we abide in God because we confess that Jesus is the Son of God (4:15). *How does the gift of the Holy Spirit relate to confession of faith in Jesus?* Faith is not the result of **intellectual** or **ethical** ascent ([1 Cor 1:26-31](#)). Faith is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture describes the Spirit’s contribution to faith in three ways. First, the Spirit **convicts** a person of his sin and impending judgment. [John 16:8](#) “8 And when he comes, he will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (cf. [John 16:8-11](#)). Second, the Spirit enables us to **understand and accept** the truth of the gospel. [1 Corinthians 2:12-14](#) “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.” Third, the Spirit empowers us to have **faith** in the gospel. [1 Corinthians 12:3](#) “... no one can say “Jesus is Lord” **except** in the Holy Spirit.” We are sinful people who seek self, not God ([Rom 3:11](#)). We need more than a changed mind to believe the gospel; we need the Spirit to **change our hearts**.

There is a great misunderstanding in modern Christianity about the Holy Spirit. **Charismatic theology** teaches that the Holy Spirit reveals **new things**. One thing you will see consistently throughout the New Testament is that the Holy Spirit is given to people for the purpose of pointing people to Jesus through Scripture. **The Holy Spirit was not given to believers for the purpose of revelation.** Scripture is God’s revelation. Scripture points to Jesus. And the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus through Scripture.

We see this described in [1 John 4:2-3](#) “2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” Jesus likewise taught that the Spirit would **testify about Him**. [John 14:26](#) “26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that **I have said** to you.”

[John 15:26](#) “26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about **me**.” **The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus through Scripture.**

Summary

The Pharisees knew Scripture well. They were the experts. Jesus told a Pharisee in [John 3](#) that what he lacked was new birth (new creation) from the Holy Spirit. We do not come to know God through intellect or morality. **We know God by the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The testimony of Scripture

What is the basis of our faith in Jesus? The Holy Spirit convicts us of truth, enlightens us to what is truth, and empowers us to faith in the truth of Jesus. The truth which is the basis of our faith is **not subjective**, meaning, the Spirit does not lead each individual to faith in **unique** truth. Scripture, not subjective revelation, is the basis of our faith. **We know God through Scripture’s testimony.** [1 John 4:14](#) “14 And we have **seen** and **testify** that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”

We testify

Based on the introduction to 1 John, I think “seen and testify” here refer to what is written in Scripture about Jesus. *Why should we believe the testimony of Scripture?* First, Scripture’s testimony about Jesus was from **eyewitnesses**. This letter began by arguing that the written testimony about Jesus was from eyewitnesses. [1 John 1:1-3](#) “1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you...” The events of Jesus’ life were written by **eyewitnesses**, not historians or theologians centuries later.

Second, we should believe Scripture because Scripture’s testimony about Jesus is **inspired** by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is the **testimony of God**, not men. [2 Timothy 3:16](#) “16 All Scripture is breathed out by God ...” Scripture was written by men who were directed by the Holy Spirit. [2 Peter 1:20-21](#) “... no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” We can believe Scripture because it is **God’s word** and God **knows all things** and is **true**.

The Father sent His Son

What is the testimony of Scripture? All of Scripture points to Jesus. [1 John 4:14](#)
“14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”

The **story** of the Bible is **redemption through Jesus**. God created everything, including humans made in His image. We sinned and lost our relationship with God and our source of life. All of Scripture points to the need and the promise of a Redeemer, One who would come to save us from our sins. The New Testament’s message is that the Redeemer, Jesus, has come. He has atoned for our sins; therefore, through faith in Him, we can once again know God and have eternal life. We return to [Genesis 2](#).

This story of Redemption through Jesus is displayed throughout all of Scripture. Jesus pointed this out. He taught that all of the Old Testament pointed to Him. [Luke 24:25-27](#) “... “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” [Luke 24:44-45](#) “... “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” [John 5:39](#) “39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,” [John 5:46](#) “46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.” All of Scripture points to Jesus, the One who came to redeem us from our sin.

Conclusion

Why do we at BBC make Scripture such a priority? We begin our services with Scripture. We attempt to make all of our sermons expository, shaped by the text, not our own ideas. In our small groups (Sunday School, auxiliaries, discipleship groups), Scripture is the focus of our study. *Why do we make Scripture a priority?* We make Scripture a priority because **it is the revealed Word of God**. While we may come to know **about** God through creation, we do not come to **know God** through creation. We come to know God through His revelation of His plan of redemption through Jesus. **We know God through Scripture’s testimony.**

Faith in Jesus

How do we come to know God? How can you know God? So far, we have looked at two aspects of coming into a relationship with God. Scripture reveals the truth;

that is, salvation through Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts of truth, enlightens us to truth, and empowers us to faith in Jesus. Both Scripture and the Holy Spirit point to Jesus. **We come to know God through faith in Jesus.**

Son of God

Genuine faith believes that Jesus is who He and Scripture claim He is. This passage tells us two things about Jesus. First, Jesus is the **Son of God.** [1 John 4:15](#) “15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the **Son of God**, God abides in him, and he in God.” This does not mean that Jesus is less than God. **Jehovah’s Witnesses** teach that Jesus was the first created being. He is not “God;” He is “a god.” **LDS** teach that Jesus is the Son of God in the same way that other humans are the sons of God. He is unique in some ways, but He is not God.

Jesus is the eternal God. Scripture teaches that **God is Triune.** There is **one God** ([Deut 6:4](#); [1 Cor 8:4](#)). The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct from one another ([Matt 3:16-17](#); [John 14:16-17](#)); yet, they are all one God. **Athanasius** wrote “But the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty. What the Father is, the Son is, and so is the Holy Spirit. Uncreated is the Father; uncreated is the Son; uncreated is the Spirit. The Father is infinite; the Son is infinite; the Holy Spirit is infinite. Eternal is the Father; eternal is the Son; eternal is the Spirit: And yet there are not three eternal beings, but one who is eternal; as there are not three uncreated and unlimited beings, but one who is uncreated and unlimited” (*Athanasian Creed*).

One of the clearest expressions of Jesus’s deity is [John 1:1-3](#) “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (1) Jesus **existed** before the beginning. (2) Jesus was with God and **was** God. (3) Jesus **created** all things. None of these things can rightly be said of someone who is **less than God. Jesus is the eternal God.**

Savior of the world

Second, Jesus is the **Savior of the world.** [1 John 4:14](#) “14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the **Savior of the world.**” God created us and gave us life. Because we all sin, we are all separated from God and are eternally dead ([Eph 2:1](#)). No person can atone for the sins of another person, including ourselves. God is merciful, gracious, loving, and faithful ([Exod 34:6](#)). Jesus became a man to bear the guilt of our sin in His death so that those who believe in Him would be forgiven of sin and restored into an eternal relationship with God.

Jesus's deity and His humanity are **both necessary** for our salvation. Jesus's **humanity** was necessary to face temptation and to die ([Heb 2:14-18](#)). Jesus's **deity** was necessary to resist temptation and bear the guilt of our sins. Only God can bear the guilt of sins ([Exod 32](#); [Ezek 18](#)). Only Jesus, both God and man, can rightly atone for our sins.

We cannot claim to know God while denying Jesus's deity ([1 John 5:5, 12](#)), denying that His humanity ([1 John 4:2](#); [2 John 7](#)), or denying that Jesus is the Christ (the Savior) ([1 John 2:22](#)). Our relationship with God comes **only** through our relationship with Christ ([John 14:6](#); [17:3](#)). If we deny Jesus as He is presented in Scripture, our faith can only be in a god that we created - the Jesus we have created in our own minds. That is idolatry, not faith.

Conclusion

In part, the Reformation was a rejection of the teachings of the Catholic Church that salvation was by both faith and works and that the church held power over salvation. The reformers argued that salvation was by faith alone through Christ alone.

Here are a couple of examples from the Catholic Church's rejection of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone. **Council of Trent, Canon 9:** "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by **faith alone**, ... let him be anathema." **Council of Trent, Canon 11:** "If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the **righteousness of Christ** or by the **sole remission of sins**, ... let him be anathema."

Martin Luther wrote, "The papists make the mass a work whereby one obtains grace ... But **Christ alone** has made satisfaction for all sins, and **He alone** is our righteousness. Nothing else is needed for salvation" (*Babylonian Captivity of the Church*).

John Calvin wrote, "The Romanists [Catholic Church] babble that we are justified partly by God's grace and partly by our own works. But Scripture cries out that we are justified by **faith alone**, and that all works are excluded (*Institutes*, 3.11.14).

Salvation is not a work of man or a work of the church. Salvation is a work of God. When I stand before God in final judgment, I will not be judged innocent by the way I have lived my life. I will only be judged as guilty ... because I AM guilty. When I stand before God in final judgment, I will not be judged by my connection to a church. No church can atone for my sins. **I will be judged solely on how I have responded to Jesus.** He is the Son of God and He is the Savior whom God has sent to atone for my sins. **We come to know God through faith in Jesus.**

Conclusion

Response

*Do you know **about** God or do you **know God**?* The message of the gospel, the story of the entire Bible is that God has revealed a way for you to have an intimate relationship with the God who created you.

We do not come to know God through our own works or effort. We know God through faith in Jesus alone. True faith is not blind, misplaced, or humanly accomplished (by the flesh). The Holy Spirit leads us to faith in Jesus as revealed in Scripture (God's Word).

*How can **you** come to know God? **We know God by confessing faith in Jesus through Scripture's testimony by the gift of the Holy Spirit.***