

God's Foreknowledge

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Job 12:13, "With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding."

Psalm 147:5, "Great is our Lord and mighty in power. His understanding is infinite."

In this lesson we will review some of the Scriptures as they relate to God's knowledge of all things — the past, present, and the unending future eternity.

- 1) *Is there anyone like God in personality, or in the capacity of wisdom and understanding?*
- 2) *Does God know what is going on in the whole universe?*
- 3) *Does God know everything about us?*

Questions and uncertainties have occupied the minds of people since the beginning of human history. After Adam and Eve sinned, they were hiding themselves from God. Genesis 3:9,10, "The LORD God called to the man, where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Cain concluded that God did not know what happened to his brother Abel. Genesis 4:9, "Then the LORD said to Cain, where is your brother Abel?" In the time we are living in people in general have even less confidence that God knows everything about them. However, there are satisfying answers in the Bible to questions like these, where God revealed himself to his faithful servants in the past, when he spoke, "at various times and in various ways." —Hebrews 1:1

But people who have no Biblical knowledge of God often exercise their own, or other's, incorrect ideas in representing or describing him — his likeness and his character. Romans 1:23, "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." Also Acts 17:29, "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man."

The prophet Isaiah, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, asked, "To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?" (Isaiah 40:18) And verse 25, "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? says the Holy One." The question is, then, is there anyone as great in personality, in knowledge, or in power, in the whole universe that can be compared with God? The challenge was presented twice in Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah asked, and then Jehovah himself inquired. This exposes the folly of those who are making visible images of the invisible God according to their imaginations.

It is blasphemy to the divine and glorious nature of God to make created things equal with the Creator of all things.

For Christians to esteem or trust anything as more important than God would be a sin. Whether it's love of money or possessions, or whatever else it might be, it would become an idol.

The Biblical Description of God

First: The Bible states that our God is one God! This we read in Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." This firmly establishes the doctrine of monotheism, that is, one God — not a deceptive doctrine of a trinity, three equal gods in one. There is one God whose name is Jehovah, and his will should be the supreme law of all our activities, and the center of all our sympathies of love and service.

Deuteronomy 6:4,5 (WEB), "Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God. Yahweh is one. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, "Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that an idol has no real existence, and that there is no God but one. For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. "

Second: The Apostle Paul writes that the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge is beyond human understanding or comprehension. Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" This shows that there are secret things regarding God's glory, knowledge, and his personality far greater than mankind knows now. We understand from the context of the preceding verses, that the wisdom and knowledge of God in verse 33 is a reference made by the Apostle Paul to the divine plan of salvation for the human race.

The word "unsearchable" means that it cannot be fully understood, beyond what God was pleased to reveal in his Word to his church. "His judgments" in this verse means his arrangement and his righteous acts as they apply to the salvation according to the election of the Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel Age, and the remaining part of mankind in the Millennial Age. We read in Reprint 793, "The boundless, unsearchable riches of God's wisdom and favor will be manifested from the church to Israel, then to the world in general."

Further, the Bible informs us that God is invisible. Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” I Timothy 1:17, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.” Exodus 33:20, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” This is the reason that no one can make a representation of God’s glorious and awesome personality. 1 Timothy 6:16, “Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.” To compare him with some creature or creation, as stated in Romans 1:23, is dishonoring the true God.

Yes, we can describe God by the immensity of his creative works. The vastness and grandeur of the universe fills our minds and hearts with awe, wonder, and praise. All the stars in their constitution operate so harmoniously and uniformly. The whole machine shows in all its parts and revolutions that it had but one Architect and Maker, and that such an immense universe he confidently controls.

God challenged Abram to count the stars if he could. Genesis 15:5 (WEB), “Yahweh brought him outside and said, look now toward the sky, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” So, we may ask, is there someone today who has spent his life in study of the universe that is able to give an exact account of the galaxies, stars, and all that exists there? Yes, technology has opened many further windows by which one can see some of the wonders of heaven like never before. However, the discoveries of the greatest marvels of God’s creation will be revealed in the future, in God’s Kingdom. The best of what we have now are only partial estimates and are always changing. Only he who created all these things knows, and for what purpose all that was created and exists.

Therefore, all these things are testifying to God’s infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power. Isaiah 40:26, “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

Further testimony about God came to us from his beloved Son, who was dwelling with God from the beginning of his creation. Proverbs 8:22, “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old.” Our Lord came to this earth and revealed his Father to us. His revelation mostly relates to God’s character and his great attribute of love, his goodness, and his will for us, but not so much as God’s personality is concerned. John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”

“The bosom” represents his closeness to the Father, and favor in his previous life in his spiritual condition. He was the beginning of God’s creation before anything else existed.

Revelation 3:14, “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” In seeing Jesus, the disciples had seen the most that was possible to see of the divine character — its likeness, its perfect image in the flesh. John 14:9, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

The man Christ Jesus was the perfect representation of the heavenly Father in his character, so that he who had seen the Son, who was the express image of the Father's nature, had seen also the Father. Hebrews 1:3 (NLT), “The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.” The words “express image” in the KJV come from G5481, “character representation” as is properly translated in the NLT.

But, we read in Hebrews 10:12 that the true image or representation of his Father’s personality was from the time when, “He [Lord Jesus] sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

There are Scriptures describing God’s glorious personality and character, and only on the descriptions of these Scriptures can we perceive how truly great God is. Let us read just a few verses that describe God’s glorious character, personality, and his wisdom.

Psalm 145:5, “I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works.” God’s wonderful works and acts are mentioned in this Psalm a few times. These works and acts of God are also shown in the creation of man, in his fall, and in the redemption, and finally the attaining of everlasting blessings.

Exodus 15:11 (NIV), "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" Jehovah is the only one that draws such appeal of worship, praise, and honor from his subjects.

2 Kings 17:36, “But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and an outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices.”

Does God know what is going on in the whole universe? This question often occupies people’s minds. Many conclude that God does not know what is going on here on earth so how can he know what is going on in the whole universe.

Psalm 73:11, “They say, how can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?"

Job 22:12-14, “Is not God high in the heavens? See the highest stars, how lofty they are! But you say, what does God know? Can he judge through the deep darkness? Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see, and he walks on the vault of the sky.”

Isaiah 40:22, “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth....”

These doubts continue to this day: *How can God know?* Even if God exists, they say, how can he know everything that is going on, especially when they see that so much evil and injustice are prospering in this world. These things reinforce the perception of many, that if God knows, he would not permit such things to go on. We read in Ecclesiastes 8:11 (TLB), “Because God does not punish sinners instantly, people feel it is safe to do wrong.” Isaiah 29:15, “Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their works in darkness and think, who sees us? Who will know?”

Does God know everything about us? Does God know our weak points, our secrets? It would be useless to hide anything, when the Scriptures say that God will find out whatever we do.

Psalms 44:21, “Would not God search this out? For he knows the secrets of the heart.” Proverbs 5:21, “For the ways of man are before Yahweh’s eyes. He examines all his paths.” Proverbs 15:3, The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

Yes, the Bible in so many passages shows the infinite knowledge of God, that he possesses infinite awareness of what is going on in the whole universe. It shows his knowledge from many standpoints. It states this as a fact in general, and then gives a great many particulars. Isaiah 40:14, “With whom did he take counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” In such Scriptures as this one, in a general way God’s knowledge and wisdom are stated.

Job said in amazement, in Job 11:7 (NASU), “Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?” No human being with their limited comprehension is able to discover unlimited depths of God’s omniscience.

When we are confronted with the vastness of his creation not only here on earth but also in the whole great universe, we are forced to admit that his understanding is infinite — literally, there is no number or measure of God’s knowledge that is exhibited for us in his creation everywhere. As the psalmist David writes in Psalms 19:1,2, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.”

The Scriptures definitely show that God has perfect knowledge of the past, present, and future history of the whole universe. Isaiah 46:9,10 (NLT), “Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.”

Yes! There is one infinite mind in the whole Universe that comprehends all, moves over all space, and over all durations. Such a fact frustrates all our attempts at comprehension. The whole history of the universe, from the beginning to end was in his mind before it took concrete forms.

From the beginning, in various passages, the Bible points out God's knowledge and shows that he is omniscient, having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight. The use of his knowledge in practical forms in making, preserving, and operating his creatures in the inorganic, organic, and spiritual kingdoms displays intelligence that surpasses our comprehension.

Because of his infinite knowledge we can be sure that:

- ✓ God can have no surprises
- ✓ God cannot have disappointments
- ✓ God does not need contingency plans or extension plans

God's omniscience (infinite knowledge of all things) as the attribute of his person implies three things, that he:

- perfectly and completely perceives all things
- remembers all things
- reasons out all things

All of these intellectual powers of God are infinite in their capacities, infallible in their uses.

His knowledge of sin and evil, human and spiritual beings, moral and religious laws, and the remedy for fallen men and angels, are further remarkable displays of Jehovah's knowledge. His wisdom devised the great plan of salvation for man long before his creation. 1 Peter 1:19-20 (NLT), “It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days.”

And when we consider the past, present, and future things, principles, and beings — that all are in Jehovah's grasp, this helps us to see the point that the Apostle Paul is making in Colossians 2:3, “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Psalm 147:5, “Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; his understanding is infinite.” So, how can such a creature like man ask a question of God? How much does God know about us? Job said that God knows of every step he (man) makes. Job 31:4 “Does he not see my ways, and count all my steps?” When we truly think about this, we feel insufficient in our own righteousness, realizing how imperfect we are and how much we need of the covering of Christ’s righteousness, how much we need of God’s mercy and forgiveness. Isaiah 61:10, “I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.”

Hebrews 4:13, “And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Knowing that nothing is hidden from his all-seeing eye, the psalmist David realized that all his thoughts were as an open book before God. Psalms 139:1-6, “O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in — behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

Then he proceeds further, in verses 12 and 14: “Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ... I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” This fact inspired the psalmist to praise God — the thought of how marvelously he had been made. Psalms 139:17,18 (NIV), “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.”

David's basic, simple knowledge of the marvels of the human body led him to wonder at the Creator's wisdom. Verse 14, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” The word “wonderfully” shows the recognition of God's marvelous knowledge.

Continuing in Psalm 139, verses 15,16, “My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” David stressed certain features of God's oversight over him. How he was woven together, embroidered, knit. When David was formed in his mother’s womb, he was as remote to the human eye as the lower part of the earth. Still God saw every detail of David's frame — his skeleton, and his unformed body, and character in his embryonic stage.

Similarly, we read about such knowledge in the Apostle Paul’s statement in reference to Jacob and Esau. Romans 9:11,12, “Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything

good or bad — in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she was told, the older will serve the younger.”

Then St. Paul writes about himself, that God had a plan for his life before he was born. Galatians 1:15, “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” Paul, in his testimony before King Agrippa, presented the biography of his life, that since his youth he lived as strict as a Pharisee, that he violently persecuted Jesus’ followers, not only in Israel, but also in foreign cities. Acts 26:9, “I [Paul] too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” He did this because of ignorance. In 1 Timothy 1:13 we read, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I obtained mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.”

When on the way to Damascus the Lord Jesus revealed himself to Paul, and he immediately responded to his call, as we read in Acts 26:19: “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” We too, perhaps in our lives did things in ignorance that were contrary to God’s will, but we also obtained mercy. In his wonderful knowledge, God knows the desires of our hearts, and knows our faults and failures resulting from ignorance. We may not be aware of them, just like the Apostle Peter, recorded in Matthew 26:33-35. “Peter replied, even if all fall away on account of you, I never will. I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. But Peter declared, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. And all the other disciples said the same.”

We are living in the time when the prophecy of Daniel makes effect on our lives in so many ways. Daniel 12:4, “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

The invention of many kinds of medical instruments has given much insight into the human body. Science is able to tell us a lot about our bodies. However, science never will be able to come even close to such knowledge as our Creator has. In Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV) we read, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Matthew 10:30, “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” This statement may have a symbolic meaning, that the smallest interests of God’s people are under his careful supervision. Acts 27:34, “Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.”

He especially knows those who are his, those he has a special relationship with — and he loves them. Psalm 1:6, “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.”

Ah, yes! There is great assurance in the words of St. Paul in 2 Timothy 2:19, “Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his.” This solid foundation is Christ and the ransom price he paid for all. 1 Timothy 2:4-6, “[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.”

We know that the Lord can read the hearts and render proper judgment. We cannot do that, but as mature Christians we should be able to discern the fruits of the spirit and teachings of others, in the light of the Truth. Matthew 7:16-20, “By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

We are invited to keep Jesus’ commandments and, as his disciples, to enjoy a close relationship with him. John 15:14, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” Hebrews 2:11,12, “So [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.”

So dear brethren, let us press upward on the narrow way for the promised reward. Watch and pray for God’s sustaining grace when difficulties arise.

In conclusion: Hebrews 10:36, “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”