

- I. Session 73: The Omniscience of God Part 1: Old Testament
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall study what Scripture in the Old Testament has to say about God's omniscience.
  - b. What is the omniscience of God? Definitions:
    - i. John Frame: God's "knowledge of everything."<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. Wayne Grudem: "God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act."<sup>2</sup>
    - iii. Another popular view: "Divine omniscience means God knows all true propositions."<sup>3</sup>
    - iv. John Feinberg has several pages in his book on God on the difficulty of defining God's omniscience and concludes with this definition: "Hence, we can say that divine omniscience means at least knowing everything a being with attributes such as God's can know."<sup>4</sup>
  - c. What does the Bible in the Old Testament teach about the omniscience of God?
    - i. God's knowledge is perfect:
      1. "*Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of one perfect in knowledge,*" (Job 37:16)
        - a. This here is Job's friend Elihu testifying that God's knowledge is perfect.
        - b. Job's friends might not have applied the truth of their theology correctly in every instances but they do at times utter truth of God's attributes correctly.
      2. "*For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.*" (Job 36:4)
        - a. Again this here is Job's friend Elihu testifying that God's knowledge is perfect.
        - b. Notice here Elihu describes God as the one who knowledge is perfect.
    - ii. God's knowledge is unlimited
      1. "*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.*" (Psalm 139:17-18)
        - a. The Psalmist acknowledge that the sum of God's thoughts is a lot when he said:
          - i. "*How vast is the sum of them!*" (Psalm 139:17b)
          - ii. "*If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand*" (Psalm 139:18a)
        - b. Yet the Psalmist reaction is also to see "*How precious also are Your thoughts to me*" (Psalm 139:17a)
      2. "*He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.*" (Psalm 147:5)

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<sup>1</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2002), 414.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 190.

<sup>3</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 304.

<sup>4</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 304.

- a. Notice **verse 4** stating that God can count the stars and even names them, something humans with their limitations cannot do thoroughly.
    - b. Notice the end of verse 5 that summarizes God's knowledge as infinite.
  - 3. *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable."* (**Isaiah 40:28**)
    - a. Note how the last phrase mentions that God's *"understanding is inscrutable."*
    - b. This is one of several characteristics of God mentioned in the verse that sets God apart from His creatures.
- iii. God's knowledge includes that of the animal world: *"For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine."* (**Psalm 50:10-11**)
  - 1. Notice that these two verses teaches animals belongs to God:
    - a. *"For every beast of the forest is Mine"* (**Psalm 50:10a**)
    - b. *"And everything that moves in the field is Mine."* (**Psalm 50:11b**)
  - 2. While all creatures belong to Him God also teaches that He knows them intimately *"I know every bird of the mountains."* (**Psalm 50:11b**)
    - a. We can infer that this knowledge is true of other animals.
    - b. As hard as it is to capture birds of the mountains, yet God knows them!
- iv. God also knows individuals and details of individuals' lives
  - 1. *"The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; 14 From His dwelling place He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth, 15 He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works."* (**Psalm 33:13-15**)
    - a. Notice God *"sees all the sons of men"* (**v.13**)
    - b. Again this is reiterated: *"sees all the sons of men"* (**v.14**)
    - c. God even *"understands all their works"* and the basis of that understanding has to do with the fact that God *"fashions the hearts of them all"* (**v.15**)
  - 2. *"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all."* (**Psalm 139:1-4**)
    - a. This Psalm also shows God knowing people in a detailed intimate manner; note **verse 3b**: *"And are intimately acquainted with all my ways."*
    - b. Unlike Psalm 33 here this Psalm uses first person singular pronouns of how God knows him.

- c. The Psalmist mentioned that God even knows the inner life of himself, something other creatures can't access
        - i. *"You have searched me and known me"* (v.1)
        - ii. *"You understand my thought from afar"* (v.2b)
      - d. The knowledge of God of the Psalmist is even before things happened: *"Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all."* (v.4)
  - 3. Here we see God knowing the heart, even judging it: *"If you say, 'See, we did not know this,' Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?"* (Proverbs 24:12)
  - 4. *"Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, 'Who sees us?' or 'Who knows us?'"* (Isaiah 29:15)
    - a. Notice in this verse it describes sinners thinking no one could see them.
    - b. They even think they can hide from God.
    - c. But God does know!
- d. Implications
- i. Are you grateful for God's Omniscience?
    - 1. Imagine if God didn't know wasn't all knowing: "In fact, a relatively ignorant God with absolute power to do anything he wanted would be frightening, for his creatures might constantly fear that he would use that power in ignorance of the truth. He might not know who was truly guilty of sin, and hence might punish the righteous and bless the wicked, or without fully understanding the natural order, he might perform miracle which, because of ignorance, produces something monstrous."<sup>5</sup>
    - 2. Be thankful to God that He knows all, and praise Him that He is so!
  - ii. If God knows you more than you know yourself, do you trust what God says about you?
  - iii. If God knows everything do you believe whatever His word has to say about His creation?
  - iv. If God knows you accurately and your sins, does that bring about a healthy fear of God that drives you to His grace as given through trusting Jesus Christ and His works to save sinners?

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<sup>5</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 299.