

Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture.

Topic 2 - The Doctrine of God

Lesson 23 - The Attributes of God: Omniscience

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Omniscience

- God's omniscience is His perfect knowledge of Himself, all actual things outside Himself, and all things possible and actual in one eternal and simple (not having any parts but having distinctions) act (or exertion of energy). - MacArthur (Berkhof), pg. 175
- God is always at all times perfectly aware of everything. - Grudem, pg. 192
- Job 37:16 Do you know how the clouds are balanced, those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?
- 1 John 3:20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.
- 1 Cor. 2:10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Is it a Possibility?

- In God's eternal plan there are only actual things, not possible things. He does know what would have occurred if circumstances had been different, but since, in His mind and plan they never would occur then they are not "possibilities." Only what is in God's plan is "possible," because only that could ever become reality in time.
- Actual things are all things that exist or that happen.
- God's knowledge is eternal, just as He is eternal.
- God's knowledge never increases. If He could learn or become aware of something new then He was not omniscient or perfect. He cannot change.
- God's knowledge is intuitive, inherent, and immediate. It does not result from observing or reasoning in successive moments of time.
- God's knowledge does have logical structure.
- God fully knows Himself and therefore knows everything He is able to do.

All Knowledge

- God's knowledge is definite, clearly defined, precise, certain, sure, and comprehensive. It is also eternally active and never passive.
- Because God's knowledge is active it is also effective - it produces effects.
- God's natural knowledge is His self-conscious knowledge of Himself.
- God's free knowledge is His knowledge of all things that become actual in time by His free, sovereign will based on His decree, all things that do not become a reality, and how He is manifested and not manifested by all things outside of Himself.
- God's perfect knowledge of Himself includes knowing how to reveal Himself to His creatures resulting in the greatest glory to Himself.

Foreknowledge

- God knows the future because He is not bound by time but is eternal, seeing the beginning from the end and everything in between.
- God predicts the future because He is telling us what He has decreed or brought about, and as it happens the prophecy is fulfilled.
- The term foreknowledge, especially in relation to salvation, is not a description of God's knowledge of events. It is a relational term, wherein God "knows" certain people, even before they exist in time.
- God foreknew those He predestined to call, justify, and glorify.
- Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What Does God Know?

- He knows Himself as Triune.
- Matt. 11:27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.
- John 10:15a As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father;
- 1 Cor. 2:10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

What Does God Know?

- God knows all things.
- Isaiah 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him?
- Romans 11:34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?”
- 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.

What Does God Know?

- God knows all our needs.
- Matthew 6:8b For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.
- Matthew 6:32b For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- God knows even the smallest physical things.
- Matthew 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

What Does God Know?

- God knows the hearts of men.
- 1 Kings 8:39 then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men),
- Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.
- Luke 16:15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

What Does God Know?

- God knows the thoughts and meditations of man.
- Psalm 139:2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.
- Ezekiel 11:5 Then the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said to me, “Speak! ‘Thus says the Lord: “Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.
- 1 Cor. 3:20 “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

What Does God Know?

- God knows things that are contingent from a human perspective.
- 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, “O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the Lord said, “He will come down.” 12 Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the Lord said, “They will deliver you.” 13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

What Does God Know?

- God knows things that are contingent from a human perspective.
- Jeremiah 38:17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live. 18 But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.’ ” 19 And Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me.” 20 But Jeremiah said, “They shall not deliver you. Please, obey the voice of the Lord which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live.

What Does God Know?

- God knows people before they are conceived.
- Psalm 139:13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.
- Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

What Does God Know?

- God knows future things.
- Isaiah 44:6 “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. 7 And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. 8 Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.’ ”

What Does God Know?

- The days and limits ordained for each person.
- Psalm 39:4 “Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. 5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.
- Job 14:5 Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.
- Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

Omniscience

- God's knowledge is the pattern for all things outside Himself. God knows the universe in its eternal idea, logically prior to its final existence in time and space. God's knowledge is from Himself, independent of any outside source, and so prior to all things outside Himself. - Berkhof, pg. 66