

ATTRIBUTE OF OMNISCIENCE

Psalm 139:1-6; 147:5; Isaiah 40:13,14; Romans 11:33,34

Omniscience is another essential attribute of God. "Shall any teach God knowledge? . . ." (Job 21:22). "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:4,5). "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? . . ." "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding" (Isaiah 40:13,14,28; 42:9; 46:9,10: 48:3).

We read the same thoughts in the N.T. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15;18). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11:33,34).

A. Omniscience defined.

It means "all knowledge," or God is "all-knowing." It is to say God possesses perfect knowledge, and therefore has no need to learn, but it is more, it is to say that God has never learned, and cannot learn. As the verses above ask, "Shall any teach God knowledge?" This tells us that God has never learned, and His eternity assures us of this truth. Could God at any time, or in any manner have received into His mind knowledge that He did not possess, and had not possessed from eternity, He would be imperfect and less than Himself. To think of someone who must sit at the feet of a teacher and learn is to think of someone other than the Most High God.

We find David through the Holy Spirit describing the omniscience of God (Psalm 139:1-6). God, the eternal I AM had no beginning, as the Creator He had no helpers, as the unchangeable One could know no change, and as the omnipotent One could know no limitations. I AM changes not, He cannot lie, and nothing is impossible with Him (Luke 1:37). God perfectly knows Himself, and being the Source and Author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. What God knows, He instantly knows, with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists, or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past, or that may exist in the centuries or ages to come.

God knows everything, everything possible, everything actual, all events, and all creatures, past, present, and future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:7,11-16). Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him (Hebrews 4:13), and nothing is forgotten by Him (except our sin Hebrews 8:12). He calleth all the stars by their names (Isaiah 40:26), and all the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). Because God is omniscient and knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, and knows all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised by anything. He is never amazed at anything. He never wonders about anything (the god of most of Christendom does). God is self-existent and self-contained, and knows what no creature could ever know---Himself perfectly (1 Corinthians 2:10,11,16). Only the Infinite can know the infinite.

The apprehension of the Divine omniscience ought to bow us in adoration before Him. Nothing can be concealed from God. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7). "And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me,

and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezekiel 11:5). Though God be invisible to us, we are not so to the eyes of omniscience. Adam could not hide from God, no human eye saw Cain murder Abel, but God saw it. Achan stole a wedge of gold and hid it in the earth, but God saw it. David tried to cover his wickedness, but God saw it, and uncovered it. "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

B. Infinite understanding.

"Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5). No account can exactly be given of His understanding. It is infinite, has no measure, and no bounds. God's knowledge of the past, the present, and the future are all alike to Him because **this knowledge is in Himself the eternal God**. If anything were to occur apart from His direct agency or permission, it would be independent of Him, and He would at once cease to be God. The Divine knowledge of all things past, present, and future is inseparably connected with, and accompanied by, His counsel and purpose. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand" (Proverbs 19:21).

What God hath purposed is absolutely guaranteed. It is no more possible for the Divine Counsels to fail than for God to lie. Nothing in the future is uncertain for God's purpose and decrees are separate from the creature or any secondary causes. There is no future event which is only a mere possibility, i.e. something which may or may not come to pass. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). The things which are to come to pass will come to pass. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; . . ." (Revelation 1:1).

God's omniscience is exemplified and illustrated in the perfect fulfillment of every prophecy recorded. The predictions, beginning with Genesis 3:15, of the birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were fulfilled to their minutest detail centuries after they were made. So with those to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the history of Israel. Shall those yet unfulfilled concerning them go unfulfilled? Such could only have been given by One who knew the end from the beginning, and whose knowledge rested upon the unconditional certainty of the accomplishment of everything foretold. Thus with the same certainty must all prophecies yet future be fulfilled because they are foretold by God who decreed them. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

Nothing has ever come to pass, or ever will, merely because God knew it. The **cause** of all things is the will of God. God's knowledge does not arise from things because they are or will be, but because God has **ordained** them to be. God knew, and foretold, the crucifixion of His Son hundreds of years before He became incarnate, and this, because in the Divine purpose, He was foreordained (1 Peter 1:20), He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), and so we read, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

We see this same truth illustrated in Paul's preaching at Antioch. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Also when Paul was in Corinth. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have

much people in this city" (Acts 18:9,10).

C. Practical application.

God's omniscience is a comfort to the believer in many ways. "If a man had thought he had to deal with an ignorant Deity, there could be no practical religion." (Charnock) But because we deal with the living God who is an omniscient Deity, there are practical applications.

(1) In our infirmity. God knoweth our infirmity, our frame, that we are dust (Psalm 103:14). He knew our inborn corruption and treachery, and yet for His own name's sake engaged to save us (Isaiah 48:8-11; Psalm 79:9; 106:8; 1 John 2:12). When Christ walked among men He felt their pains, knew their afflictions and adversities, and was compassionate (and is still), knows and cares as no one else can. To those in Christ how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15), and helpeth our infirmities (Romans 8:26).

(2) In prayer. We know not what to pray for as we ought and the Spirit helpeth our infirmity in prayer. We are heard for He knows the thoughts and intents of our heart (Hebrews 4:12). The lack of proper words, or the inability to express the deepest longings of our soul, does not jeopardize our prayers. Hannah prayed without the use of oral words, and was heard (1 Samuel 1). As for the elect of Israel, we read, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). We are to bring everything by prayer and supplication to God knowing that He will supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

(3) In times of perplexity. How often we don't know what path to trod, or what to do, but He knoweth. "But he knoweth the way that I take: When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Through the intercession of the Holy Spirit who knows the mind of God we can be assured that it will all work out for our good and His glory. "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

(4) In times of weariness and weakness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13,14). He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

(5) In times of doubt. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50). "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26). The appeal is made for God to search our heart (Psalm 139:23,24).

(6) In times of failure. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Psalm 90:8). When we fail, or our actions are ungodly, or our devotion weak, our comfort is as was Peter's when the Lord asked him this question. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I

love thee. . . Lord, thou knowest all things; . . ." (John 21:15-17).

D. God's omniscience should fill us with wonder.

God's omniscience should fill us with amazement. How far exalted above the wisest man is the Lord. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:20,25). While we know not what a day may bring forth, all the future is known to God, and we can trust Him.

God's omniscience should fill us with holy awe. Nothing we do, say, or even think, escapes God with whom we have to do. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). Meditation on this thought will check our conversation. ". . . Thou God seest me: . . ." (Genesis 16:13).

God's omniscience should fill us with adoration. All our life stood open to God's knowledge from the beginning. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). God knew we would be born in Adam's sinful nature, He foresaw our every fall, our every sin, our unbelief, our slothfulness, and yet nevertheless set His love upon us. May we bow in wonder and worship.

E. A word to unbelievers.

Because God is omniscient the unregenerate may well tremble that God knows all his sin and ungodliness which he does both in light and in darkness despising God's laws. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? (Isaiah 29:15). "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Corinthians 4:5). Men despise God's omniscience and would strip Him of it if they could. ""Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Wicked men hate God's omniscience as much as they are compelled to acknowledge it. They wish there might be no Witness of their sins, no Searcher of their hearts, and no Judge of their deeds. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They try to banish God from their thoughts and consider not that their thoughts and deeds are known to Him. "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face" (Hosea 7:1,2).