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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STATEMENT THAT GOD IS OMNISCIENT?

It means that God possesses (without prior discovery of facts) complete universal knowledge of all things past, present, and future. This includes not only the actual, but also the possible. This total and immediate knowledge is based on his eternality (he has always and will always exist) and his omnipresence (he has been, is, and will always be everywhere at the same time).

In essence, God knows everything completely, perfectly, independently, simultaneously, and innately. Thus:

- The quantity of his knowledge—complete
- The quality of his knowledge—perfect
- The source of his knowledge—independent
- The time involved concerning his knowledge—simultaneous
- The method of his knowledge—innate

A. W. Tozer has written:

> God perfectly knows Himself and being the source and author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and 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 yet unborn. God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all beings and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.
> (*The Knowledge of the Holy,* p. 62).

"Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Psa. 147:5).
"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?" (Isa. 40:13-14).

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psa. 104:24).

Here it should be said that omniscience embraces the actual and the possible, but not the self-contradictory and the impossible because those are not objects of knowledge. Example: God does not know what the results would be if two and two made five!

WHAT ARE SOME EXAPLES OF GOD'S OMNISCIENCE?

He sees all things—"*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Prov. 15:3). See also 2 Chron. 16:9.

One of our former teachers at Liberty University was conducting a men's spiritual retreat in California and, upon attempting to call his wife in Virginia was accidentally connected into an intense conversation between a man and woman who were apparently having an illicit sexual affair. The woman seemed greatly concerned that their sin would be discovered. But the man however brazenly assured her this could never happen.

"Look," he said, "your husband doesn't know, my wife doesn't know, our kids don't know. So just relax, for no one sees us."

Unable to hold his peace, the professor literally shouted into the phone, "BUT GOD SEES YOU!" and quickly hung up.

It would seem safe to assume that affair was terminated immediately!

He knows all things—"*He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names"* (Psa. 147:4).

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:29-30).

He knows mankind:

Our thoughts—"*… thou understandest my thought afar off* " (Psa. 139:2b).

"Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psa. 44:21).

Our words—"*For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether"* (Psa. 139:4).

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

Our deeds—"*Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising"* (Psa. 139:2a).

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience …" (Rev. 2:19). (See also Psa. 139:3a; Rev. 2:2, 9, 13; 3:1, 8, 15)

Our sorrows—"*And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows"* (Exod. 3:7).

Our needs—"*(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"* (Matt. 6:32).

Our devotion—"*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him"* (Gen. 18:17-19).

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:11-12).

To illustrate this, imagine yourself in the vicinity of the Garden of Gethsemane on a warm April night some 2,000 years ago. As you watch, a man walks up to Jesus and begins kissing him. You would probably conclude, "How this man must love the Master!" Shortly after this you are shocked to hear another man

bitterly cursing Christ. Now your conclusion would be, "How this man must hate the Master!" But both times you would be wrong. Judas, the man who kissed Christ, really hated him, and Peter, the one who cursed him, really loved him.

Our frailties—*"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (*Psa. 103:14).

Our foolishness—*"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee"* (Psa. 69:5).

He knows his own—*"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine"* (John 10:14).

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

He knows the past, present and future—*"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"* (Acts 15:18).

He knows what might have been—What would life be like today if Judas Iscariot had not betrayed Christ? Or, if the South had won the Civil War? Or, if Adolf Hitler had died at birth? Or, if you had been born a boy instead of a girl, or a girl instead of a boy? Or, a black instead of a white, or a white instead of a black? One can only speculate, but God knows exactly what would have been the case! In fact, we are told what would have happened:

If Jesus had preached to three wicked Old Testament cities, Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom (Matt. 11:21-24).

If Old Testament Israel had repented (Isa. 48:18).

If New Testament Israel had repented (Matt. 23:37).

—Prepared by Dr. H. L. Willmington, Dean
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