

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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DOES GOD KNOW?

Very little is said or heard anymore about the attributes of God. Messages on this subject would probably not be appreciated by the shallow-minded Christians of today who demand a preponderance of fun and entertainment in all their superficial contacts with the things of God. They desire nothing more than the bland diet of platitudes and generalities which is regularly handed to them by those who profess to be teachers of God's Word. They readily accept the trivial ideas presented to them by those who claim to have knowledge, even though many who make this claim are Biblically illiterate. Quite often, by the simple process of memorizing a few Bible verses, these men stand out as giants among the pygmies who cannot quote accurately a single passage.

These "giants" tell the "pygmies" that God knows everything, past, present and future; that He knows everything that has ever happened or ever will happen, every incident, event, or happening that has made up the lives of all men who have ever lived, are now living, or will live upon the earth. They insist that He has both seen and foreseen; therefore, He knows it all.

This concept of God's knowledge is called His omniscience, a word that means all-knowing, and it is constantly cited as one of His attributes. This view of God is one that is seldom questioned, and anyone who acts so recklessly as to suggest that it needs to be reexamined is apt to be classed as one who is out of his mind.

It seems that the attributes of God have come to be considered as some quality in the character of God that men have attributed to Him, but this could easily lead to some very erroneous concepts. Men could be right in some things and wrong in others. Therefore, we must acknowledge that in truth the attributes of God are the qualities He has declared concerning Himself in His Word.

That God is omnipotent is a fact declared in many passages where His unlimited power is set forth. The answer to the question, "**Is anything too hard for the LORD?**" (Gen. 18:14) has to be, "No, positively no!" Nevertheless, to say that He is always exerting His power in all His acts is pushing omnipotence to an unscriptural position.

The same is true of His omniscience. We need to ask the questions: "Does God know everything, or does He know only what He wants to know?" "Does He take knowledge to Himself of every event even to the minutest detail, or does He take knowledge only of those things that are related to His purposes?" Nothing but scripture can provide answers to these questions.

At the present time quite a bit of literature is being circulated that stresses the absolute knowledge of God concerning all events - past, present and future. Certain groups are making this the one doctrine that is to be emphasized and promulgated. Furthermore, this idea is being projected to make it teach that all future events are established and fixed by the fact that God knows in advance that they will be; therefore, they must happen according to His foreknowledge of them; otherwise, His knowledge of the future would be erroneous.

In application of this idea, let us say that God knows in advance that two cars will crash head-on next month and the two drivers will die in the flaming crash (or, hundreds in a flaming airplane crash – ED.). If it is true that God has foreknowledge of this, then that accident must happen. This I do not believe, for it is my conviction that I have averted death on many occasions by safe, sane, sober and careful driving.

We are also being told that the exact moment of a person's death is fixed by the foreknowledge of God. If this is true, then we cannot extend our lives a single day by clean and careful living or shorten it one day by committing suicide. It can be seen that all of this leads to a terrible fatalism (whatever will be will be), the only variation being that everything is fixed by the foreknowledge of God.

It is also being said that God is constantly observing and storing in His memory all the wicked acts that men are committing. This is being declared in spite of the fact that we are told that **He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity** (Hab. 1:13). Nevertheless, they would have us believe that God is a front-row observer of all the impure, filthy, immoral acts that are constantly being committed all over the world.

It is, of course, to be expected that those advocating these views would turn to the Bible to find support for them. This they have done, and we are pointed to Acts 15:18, which says: "**Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.**" This is one of the most difficult passages in the Book of Acts. However, it is

clear that it speaks of God's works, and not of those of wicked men.

Ephesians 1:11 is cited as proof. This passage declares that those who qualify as believers, have "**obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.**" This passage has nothing to do with the extent of God's knowledge. It has to do only with those things set forth in the context. Furthermore, the words "all things" is *ta panta*, a Greek idiom which means "all this" or "all these" as the context may demand. (See Issue No. **SB098**.)

The strongest passage set forth in proof of the idea that God is now cognizant of every detail of our lives is Psalm 139:2. In this David says: "**Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.**" This statement of King David is extrapolated to make it include everyone. They ignore the fact that David was God's anointed king over Israel, and that He was the most important link in the theocracy that governed that nation. They also ignore the fact that the basis of this declaration was that God had searched him, as declared in the opening verse: "**Thou hast searched me, and known me.**" William Wilson says of this Hebrew word: "The general import seems to be to examine with pains, care and accuracy, in order to make a full and clear discovery, or a complete, exact calculation."

As God's anointed king of Israel, David was an absolute monarch. It was his supreme duty to interpret and enforce the laws that God had given. Being also a prophet (Acts 3:30), it was his duty to announce any new decrees or directives that God might give to Israel. In doing this he would seat himself upon the throne, an act that indicated that the royal court was in session; and when he arose from it, it signified that the session was over. Inasmuch as God (*Yahweh*) was in all this official business, it was essential that He take to Himself knowledge of each session of the divine rule in Israel. He needed to know David's thoughts and every word that was in his tongue. Everything that David did was of critical importance to God.

On my part I feel it would be insufferable pride and egotism for me to think that God takes knowledge every time I sit down or get up. I am not that important in His sight, and neither is anyone else at this time.

Psalm 147:5 is cited as proof that God knows everything about everyone, past, present and future. In this passage we are told: "**His understanding is infinite.**" But this is far removed from being proof that God took and retained within Himself knowledge of what I had for dinner two weeks ago or what I will eat for breakfast two weeks from today. These acts of mine are in no way related to His purposes and they pass by without him taking any notice.

It is evident, therefore, that the answer to the question, "Does God know?" is that He knows everything He wants to know, that He can enter into knowledge of anything He wants to search out, also that knowledge cannot be forced upon Him. However, the question that now arises is: "Is there Scripture in support of this?" I believe that there is.

Genesis 11 takes us back to a time when the human race decided to build a city and a tower, in order to make a name for themselves lest they be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. As the work progressed we are told: "**The LORD came down to see the city and tower which the children of men builded.**" From this we can see that the LORD paid no attention to their activities up to a certain point when something occurred that caused Him to look in on what they were doing. He did not like what He saw and dealt with them accordingly.

In Genesis 18, the LORD declared to Abraham: "**The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin is very grievous**" (v. 20). This the Lord knew and He so declared it. However, to this He added: "**I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know.**" (v. 21).

Not being a party to all the secrets of the Deity, I will readily admit that I cannot say what is meant by "**the cry of Sodom is great,**" but it would appear that something came to the ear of God that moved Him in regard to the grievous sin of this city. He determined to check it out and see if the inhabitants had done altogether according to the cry of it. If not, He would know.

This is a clear example of God taking knowledge to Himself. It is proof that God knows only what He wants to know. We can rejoice in this revelation of Himself, for it is impossible to conceive of One who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity being an observer of all the filthy acts that were committed daily in Sodom.

In Jeremiah 19:5 the LORD spoke of those who offered their sons as burnt offerings unto Baal. Concerning this He declared most emphatically that He had not commanded it, nor spoke it, neither had it come into His mind. How could He say this if He knew in advance what they planned to do?

Therefore, we can say on the basis of what God has revealed that He knows only what He wants to know and that knowledge cannot be forced upon Him. Furthermore, since nothing is past or future with God, He can bring every detail of anyone's life before Him in a split second, whether that one is living or dead. This is what He will

do at His blazing forth (*epiphaneia*), even His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1).

He will make a determination concerning all who are living and all who are dead. Then the life that each one lived will cry out "thief," "liar," "murderer"; or "forgiven," "redeemed."

End Issue No. SB130