

**The
Knowledge
of
God**

By Stephen M. Golden

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Unlimited God—Our limited minds

“We cannot presume to understand an unlimited God with our limited minds.”

Some say we cannot understand the mind of God or his attributes because our minds are so limited, and therefore any exploration of the mind of God is fruitless. I disagree with this. I believe we can understand the mind of God because He has revealed Himself to us. Saying we cannot understand the mind of God or His attributes because they are beyond our capacity flies in the face of God’s creation and His revelation. God gave us minds enabling us to think and reason. God also gave us His revelation of Himself. If we are not able to use our minds to understand God’s revelation of Himself, then God’s revelation would be inadequate; a conclusion I cannot accept. This does not mean it is necessarily easy for us to understand God’s nature—only that it is possible to the extent to which God has revealed Himself.

God gave us His indirect revelation through what He has created, and His direct revelation through His

Word. We have to look closely and study with diligence. Many things are mysteries, but that does not mean we cannot uncover the mysteries through His revelation—whether about God’s creation, or about God Himself. He even gave us a book specifically about revelation of His plan for the future.¹ If He expected us to study this book with our minds and gain understanding, it follows that we should use His revelation of Himself to understand Him. God *expects* us to study and understand His revelation.

“The extent to which the Word of God is incoherent to us is the extent to which it is no use to us.”²

In our age, we need the humility and the courage to take a step back from our conceptions and conclusions if they prove to be wanting. If we study and still do not understand, or if we reach contradictions or absurdities in our conclusions, we need to check our premises—the beliefs we brought into the study when we began it. Many of these

¹ Many consider the book of Revelation too difficult to understand, yet God says we are blessed if we study it. (Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (KJV))

² *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, *Baker Books*, Second Printing July 2000, p.92

premises are doctrines of man that we have come to believe as truth.

Let's examine some doctrines of man.

Doctrines of Man

What do I mean, “Doctrines of Man?” Over the ages and for various reasons such as misunderstanding, changes in the meaning of words over time, or perhaps a desire to romanticize the truths God has given us, man has inserted his own flavors of thought into Christian teachings. This is not necessarily harmful in itself, and in many cases, it is completely innocuous, but there is a danger that, as a result of our inserted ideas, we may obscure some truth in God’s word. Perhaps as a result of our ideas we may unintentionally change the meaning of what God has said.

Whether due to imprecise translation, misunderstanding, or wishful thinking, these ideas and traditions that have crept into our belief structures bias our understanding of what God has said, obscuring His truth and causing confusion. This is what I mean by “Doctrines of Man.” In some cases, doctrines of man have supplemented or supplanted doctrines of God.

The word ‘mansion’ is a good example of an innocuous insertion of man’s doctrine. It is an example of a Greek word being assigned an English word with meanings of its own, which has changed our understanding of the verse itself. We sing songs with phrases like “I’ve got a mansion...” and “He’s prepared each of us a mansion...” and many believe that Jesus promised each of us a luxurious dwelling (by our standards) consistent with our idea of a mansion. Jesus promised no such thing. Let’s take a closer look at the single passage from which some have extracted this belief.

Jesus said in John 14:2

In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (KJV)

Strong³ defines the word given as “mansion” as follows:

3438 mone (mon-ay'); from 3306; a staying, i.e. residence (the act or the place): KJV— abode, mansion.

3306 meno (men'-o); a primary verb; to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): KJV

³ Strong’s Greek & Hebrew Dictionary as presented in the *PC Study Bible New Reference Library* computer Software program, version 2.1c, Copyright © 1988-1996, James Gilbertson, BibleSoft, 22014 7th Ave. South, Seattle WA 98198

— abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own.

Strong⁴ defines the word given as “house” as follows:
3614 oikia (oy-kee'-ah); from 3624; properly, residence (abstractly), but usually (concretely) an abode (literally or figuratively); by implication a family (especially domestics): KJV— home, house (-hold).

Although many have taken this verse to mean each of us is going to receive individual separate dwelling places, “mansions,” patterned after our idea of wealthy residences from our human experience, this is not what Jesus is saying. He is trying to say there is room for us all. The verse really says, ‘In my Father’s abode are many staying places.’ “Rooms” would probably be a more appropriate translation. So we see that the idea of heaven being a place with millions of “mansions” is a doctrine of man that has been incorporated into the belief system of many Christians.

⁴ Ibid, Strong’s

We have taken a Greek word, translated it loosely with an English word, and changed our doctrine to fit the English word.

Another doctrine of man is “The Sanctity of Life.” It encompasses viewpoints on issues such as abortion, adoption, aid to the poor, self-defense, capital punishment, and even vegetarianism. This has its roots in a mistranslation of the commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” Such a viewpoint renders many Christians helpless in defending actions they intuitively know to be right, such as self-defense and punishment of evildoers, because they have been misled. The commandment should be translated, “Thou shalt not commit murder.”

At the flood, God Himself killed all the men, women, and children alive in the world except for Noah, his wife, three of his sons and their wives. God instructed the Children of Israel to kill all of the men, women, and children, and even the livestock of the people they battled upon entering the Promised Land. God’s own Law clearly establishes the death penalty for numerous offenses. The commandment means those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob are not to take human life for their own purposes.

The Doctrine of the “Omnis”

In a similar manner, we have taken attributes of God and summarized them with man’s words. While such encompassing categorical words are convenient descriptive devices, we must be careful to not define more than is warranted.⁵ In some cases, the words we apply may express more than God has revealed. In other cases, after we have attributed the words to God, we ascribe additional attributes to the words, causing those new attributes to also be applied to God, even though such new attributes are not found in His revelation.

In the case of the “Omni” words like Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient, we have done this very thing.

For example:

1. Omnipresent – “always everywhere”

Is God OMNIPRESENT? The Scriptures do *not* say He is. Consider the following verses:

1. Genesis 3:8–9 8 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of

⁵ 1 Corinthians 4: 6 "Do not go beyond what is written."

the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? (KJV)

If God is always everywhere, He could not walk “in the garden in the cool of the day” and ask, “Where art thou?” with any sincerity at all. There is nothing in the text that would require this question to be rhetorical.⁶

2. Exodus 33:17-23 17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. 18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. 20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. 21 And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: 22 And it

⁶ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.59

shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: 23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen. (KJV)

If God were in all places all the time, He could not show any “real” part of Himself to Moses. God could not do this without manipulating the truth.

3. Exodus 30:36 And thou shalt beat *some* of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where **I will meet with thee**: it shall be unto you most holy. (KJV)

If God were in all places, all the time, there would be no significance to the Holy of Holies that was the innermost chamber of the Temple.

4. Exodus 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of **communing with him upon mount Sinai**, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. (KJV)

What would be the significance Moses going up to the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments?

5. Luke 1:19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. (KJV)

If God is in all places all the time, there would be no significance in Gabriel standing in the presence of God. We all stand in the presence of God.

6. John 16:16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. (KJV)

If God is in all places at all time, where would Jesus be going?

7. Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

If God is always everywhere, Jesus would not have shouted out, "...Why have you forsaken me?"

8. Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (KJV)

If God is always everywhere, there would be no significance to Jesus being in the midst of two or three gathered in His name. He would be there for even one person, and He would even be in the midst of unbelievers.⁷

9. John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (KJV)

If God is in all places at all times, Jesus would not have needed to send the Holy Spirit.

The above verses are difficult to reconcile with today's definition of OMNIPRESENT—"always everywhere." They indicate, first for "God" (the Father), then for Jesus, and finally for the Holy Spirit instances where God is not everywhere.

⁷ Contrast this with Matthew 28:20 "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (KJV) In Matthew 18:20 Jesus says he is where two or more are, in Matthew 28:20 He says He is with each of them. Obviously there is a difference in His meaning. I maintain "with you" in Matthew. 28:20 means "available to you."

A verse typically used to justify the concept of OMNIPRESENCE is 1Kings 8:27

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (KJV)

This verse does not say he is in all places at all the time, it says God cannot be contained even by the heavens, let alone a confined space.

Another verse used to justify the concept of OMNIPRESENCE is Psalm 139:7

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (KJV)

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? (NIV)

Likewise, this verse does not say he is in all places at all the time, but that one cannot go anyplace God cannot go.

I submit that God is capable of being anywhere at any time, and in multiple places at the same time, but he is not everywhere all the time.

2. Omnipotent – “all powerful”

Now, this word is found *once* in the Bible (KJV) in Revelation 19:6. When we think of omnipotent, or “all powerful,” we include more than is intended. For example, the reference is praising the awesomeness of the great God of the universe, but we take the word “omnipotent” and conclude that God can do anything! The two ideas, while not unrelated, are *not* synonymous. Our God has awesome power. He has the power to have created all we see, and the power to destroy as He chooses. There is no entity having power even nearly as great, and in this sense, God is “all powerful.” He is the ultimate in power. But God cannot do anything that is against His nature. God cannot sin, God cannot lie⁸, God cannot create a rock so big he cannot lift it, God cannot create an adversary greater than Himself, and God cannot kill Himself. I make these points to show that by assigning the Omni term to attributes of God, we can get the wrong impression. There are many things against His nature God cannot do. But He can do anything that is within His nature. So you

⁸ Heb 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (KJV) Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; (KJV)

see, the phrases “God is all powerful” and “God can do anything” are not synonymous.

Nevertheless, the reference in Revelation 19 doesn't mean “powerful” at all! Instead, it means, “having all authority.” Let's examine what Strong⁹ says about the word in Revelation given to us as “omnipotent”:

3841 pantokrator (pan-tok-rat'-ore); from 3956 and 2904; the all-ruling, i.e. God (as absolute and universal sovereign): KJV— Almighty, Omnipotent.

3956 pas (pas); including all the forms of declension; apparently a primary word; all, any, every, the whole: KJV— all (manner of, means), alway (-s), any (one), X daily, + ever, every (one, way), as many as, + no (-thing), X thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, whosoever.

2904 kratos (krat'-os); perhaps a primary word; vigor ["great"] (literally or figuratively): KJV— dominion, might [-ily], power, strength.

Strong's says the word means all-ruling as in absolute and universal sovereign. In King James' day, this was the essence of omnipotence, and yet today, it means “all powerful.” In reality, the

⁹ Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary as presented in the *PC Study Bible New Reference Library* computer Software program, version 2.1c, Copyright © 1988-1996, James Gilbertson, BibleSoft, 22014 7th Ave. South, Seattle WA 98198

scripture reference it has little to do with power, but means “ruler over all!” This is exactly the point I am trying to make about the “Omni-” words. We have taken a Greek word, assigned an English word to it, assigned new meanings to the English word, and then ascribe those new meanings to God. If the word means “power” at all, it is speaking of the power of authority over creation, not about the ability to do any little thing we can imagine.

Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36) seems to indicate the concept of omnipotence when He says of the Father, “Everything is possible for you,” but it's not clear this is what the scripture means in the original language.

Strong says

Dunatos *doo-nat-os'* (δυνατός) From G1410; *powerful* or *capable* (literally or figuratively); neuter *possible*: - able, could, (that is) mighty (man), possible, power, strong.¹⁰

So, it could also be translated “All possibilities are yours,” or “You know what is possible.”

3. Omniscient – “all knowing”

God knows all things. We hear it said frequently. The Bible does not use the word Omniscient, even though we often hear theologians use it to describe God’s sovereignty over the past, present, and future. In the same way that “omnipotent” means “all ruling” instead of “all powerful,” and that God is not “always everywhere,” I submit that God knows all knowledge, but things which are not knowledge cannot be known.

This is the essence of my thesis and the focus of the discussion for the remainder of this document: The Knowledge of God.

¹⁰ Op. cit. Strong’s Greek & Hebrew Dictionary

What does it mean to know?

There are at least five meanings for the verb “to know.”

To know – Implied expectation (or prediction) from past experience or physical laws.

“I know the ball will fall to the floor if I drop it.”

“I know the sun will rise tomorrow.”

“I know she’ll be here on time. She’s never late.”

“I know it is going to rain when the clouds look like this.”

To know – Familiarity with a person, place or thing.

“I know Joe Hyssel. He’s a great guy!”

“I know this trail turns here because I’ve been on it before.”

To know – Euphemism for sexual intercourse.

“And he knew his wife, and she bore him a child.”

To know – To be aware of (circumstances)

“I know the possible consequences.”

“I know how a person reacts to such situations.”

“I know this is a complicated issue.”

To know – An immutable understanding of facts

“I know what I have done. It cannot be changed.”

“I know a cat has four legs.”

“I know this book is made of paper.”

For our discussion of the knowledge of God, I will use the most stringent definition of “know.” That is, an immutable understanding of facts. I will use this definition because it is in this certain form of knowledge that the problems with our theology arise.

Consider the following questions for a moment:

Does God know when I will die?

Does God know who will go to heaven and who will not?

Did God know these things from before creation?

Can God change His mind?

Can prayer change things?

The Knowledge of God: A Conundrum

The idea of the knowledge of God—that God knows the future—presents us with a theological conundrum: If God knows the future, do we have free will or are we predestined? Much of our dilemma arises out of a theological assertion and a derived assumption:

The generally accepted theological assertion: God is omniscient.

The derived assumption: Knowing all things *includes* knowing the future.

Is this assumption necessarily so? No human knows the future, so it cannot be demonstrated in the human experience. Scriptures do not indicate the future can be known, *except* where God has declared what He will do. The assertion that the future can be known is extrapolation on our part. We can predict events based on things we do know, but we cannot know the future. We have a romantic idea of future being knowable, but each of us has a different idea of what the future is. Is there *one* future, or are we free to make our own choices? Is our path through existence

mapped out in a predetermined manner, or do we have free will? Are we free to choose the course we will take?

I believe that when God placed Adam and Even in the garden, they had the freedom to obey God and live indefinitely in the beautiful garden God made for them, or to disobey God and suffer the consequences. We all know the choice they made, but to believe God knew in advance whether Adam and Eve would disobey Him destroys the concept of free will. I believe we have free will.

Therefore, if we have free will, each of us can contribute to making our projection of the future a reality. Whether or not we act, the future continues to become reality moment by moment. We call this “time.” Some have said, “God is outside of time,” but that is a statement not easily supported by scripture.¹¹ Such a conclusion is usually a simplistic attempt to reconcile the very issue we are about to address without consideration given to the conflicting

¹¹ This is another idea that has its roots in man’s doctrine, but not God’s truth. Even the thought of time ceasing to exist is a contradiction in terms. Time is the measure of existence. As long as God exists (or anything exists, for that matter), time will exist. The Bible does not say time will cease to exist. Man’s time (the “time of man”), on the other hand will end, both individually and collectively. (*See Appendix B.*)

premises of this discussion: God knowing the future vs. man having free will.

To further indicate this, consider that God's years will never end.

Psalm 102:27 "But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

Unless I'm mistaken, "years" is a measurement of time. Therefore, Time itself is not going to end.

Are We Predestined?

The free will of man cannot coexist with the concept of an "all knowing" God. Some will say God's knowledge of the future has no effect on free will because His knowledge does not cause the person to act. God's knowledge does not determine man's behavior. To this I say, "Nonsense!" If the act is known in advance, the entity performing the act no longer "decided" to act, but was predestined. Individual decision cannot exist where there is immutable knowledge of the future. If anyone knows for certain what is going to happen, decision ceases to exist because the only possible occurrence is the chain of events that is already known. This is predestination. Whether or not it was known by

those involved is irrelevant. If even a video recording of the future were to exist, and that recording was certain, then the events on the recording are predestined, and so are the actors in the recording. The knowing itself, by anyone or any thing, is the determining factor. If no other course of action is possible, it is predestined. The knowledge therefore becomes the “cause,” if you prefer. If God knows the future, God’s knowledge of our future not only affects our reality, it becomes our reality.

Is God Predestined?

Think about this for a moment. If God knows the future, He can not do anything He doesn’t already know He will do—God himself is predestined! He knows exactly what He will do from now through eternity. He cannot change His mind. This has serious implications to prayer because although Jesus said prayer will accomplish much, if God knows the future, our prayer changes nothing, even the very prayer will have been predestined and is fixed in its place in time.

If God knows everything from before the creation of the world, then

He knew when I will die.
He knew whether I will go to heaven.
He knew all who would go to heaven and hell.
He knew Adam would sin and how.
He can never change His mind.
Prayer has no effect on anything.
Those who are going to hell cannot repent.
Those who are going to heaven cannot fall from
grace.¹²

If any entity—even a non-living one—knows the future, then nothing can be changed. At the moment something is known for certain, the future is predestined. Prayer can have no effect, a person has no free will, and God himself becomes **limited** by this knowledge. On the other hand, if something is then changed from what was “known,” the entity did not truly know it, and the “knowledge” was incorrect.

There is a story about two men watching a newscast of the launching of an experimental ocean-going vessel. The first says to the second, “I’ll bet you twenty dollars that ridiculous thing will sink.” The second man says, “You’re on.” The vessel is

¹² But you do not know this until after this life!

launched, and immediately begins to sink. They watch until the vessel is completely under water and out of sight. The second man, seeing that he has lost the bet, hands the first twenty dollars. The first says, "I can't take your money, I saw it on an earlier newscast." The second man replies, "So did I, but I thought they would have fixed it before they launched it again." You see, the both men should have known the vessel would sink on the newscast. Nothing could change it. It was recorded. The second man however, refused to accept the reality of the knowledge. The video recording did not cause the vessel to sink, but knowing it immutably precludes any other result.

Now, if God knows before you were born everything you're going to do, then you are just like the video recording. Your whole life is known. You can't change it. You might as well do what you think you want to do because it's what you're going to do anyway. You have no choice. If the future is known, your actions are not important because, in God's eyes, you've already done them. If God knows our actions at any point of our existence, real existence has no meaning. You can't separate the time in

which you're living from the times you're being "replayed."

I will concede that God CAN know the future, by determining it, and God can determine the future by invoking His will, but the future can only be known if God decides to cause it. In the general case however, God allows the "If" and the "Unless" ("If my people..." and "Unless you repent..." etc.). This is *not* to say God does not "hold the future." Indeed! God holds the future, but He does not know it. Am I contradicting myself? Not remotely! My meaning should become evident as you read further.

Regarding God's power, you might say, "Well, I believe God can do anything!" Even so there are a number of things you would agree God cannot do, such as make a rock so big He couldn't lift it, or make a round triangle. These are logical contradictions. In the same way, knowing the future can be viewed as a logical contradiction, especially if we have been given free will. That being the case, "...it does not insult God's wisdom to say that He 'can't' know it." ¹³

¹³ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.126

A close analogy can be drawn between knowledge and truth. “A statement is true if it corresponds with reality, false if it does not.”¹⁴ There can be no “truth” to a statement about the future because there is no reality to which it corresponds. Similarly there can be no knowledge of the future because it has not yet occurred.

You might conclude what I have said so far is conjecture and opinion, but this was all necessary to set up my argument. Now that you have the scenario in mind, let’s examine why I say these things are so.

Defining some terms:¹⁵

Know – *tr.* **1.** To perceive directly; grasp in the mind with clarity or certainty. **2.** To regard as true beyond doubt. **3.** To have a practical understanding of, as through experience; be skilled in. **4.** To have fixed in the mind. **5.** To have experience of. **6.a.** To perceive as familiar; recognize. **b.** To be acquainted with. **7.** To be able to distinguish; recognize as distinct. **8.** To discern the character or nature of.

¹⁴ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.124

¹⁵ Taken from the American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd edition.

Future – *n.* **1.** The indefinite time yet to come. **2.** Something that will happen in time to come. **3.** A prospective or expected condition, especially one considered with regard to growth, advancement, or development.

The common use of “Know” as related to God indicates the certain understanding of future events.

Concerning Knowledge, consider the following words or Phrases generally thought to be found in the Bible:

All knowing – not found

Omniscient – not found (in fact, the only “Omni” anything in the whole Bible is in Revelation 19:6 as omnipotent.)

Future – Not in KJV. In the NKJ, all references either refer to hope (Jeremiah 31:17) or to what God will do.

Knows all – in the Bible only once: 1 John 3:20 (KJV & NKJ)

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

Taken in context, this passage is talking about knowing what is in our hearts.

As you can see, none of these terms exist in God's Word in the manner we typically think of them.

What does God know?

Premise 1:

God knows completely the past and present of all events, and of what is in the hearts and minds of all men. He knows their mental states, emotions, tendencies, thoughts, and desires.

Premise 2:

God is so in tune with the past, present, and what He plans to do that He can **direct** the future. God is in control of the future, but He does not **know** the future with a certainty such that what He knows cannot be changed.

Premise 3:

God knows all **possible** futures but not “**the** future” because it has not happened. God has not predestined it.

As I have said before, if God were to know the future with certainty, then God could not change His mind from what he knew. He would be controlled by His own knowledge, and would have no autonomy; He

therefore would not be sovereign, only His knowledge would be.

“...[E]very other understanding of divine providence to some extent diminishes the sovereignty and glory of God. It brings God's wisdom and power down to the level of finite human thinking. *We* would need to control or possess a blueprint of all that is to occur ahead of time to steer world history effectively. But the true God is far wiser, far more powerful, and far more secure than we could ever imagine.”¹⁶

This viewpoint of God’s knowledge and the future is not a new concept. It’s how most Christians have generally viewed God’s knowledge of the future until recent times. One reason I say this is because if you ask a Christian whether God can change His mind, the answer is almost always “yes.” I submit that the belief in a rigidly, completely known future is one that, having its basis perhaps in Calvinism, has slowly made its way into our theological system, but not into our true belief system.

¹⁶ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, *Baker Books*, Second Printing July 2000, p.68

For example: In the mid 1950's, the late Dr. R. C. Foster, professor at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary described God's knowledge¹⁷ as follows (paraphrased): If you were standing on the top of Carew Tower, in Cincinnati, Ohio, watching the intersection of 5th and Vine streets below, and you saw two vehicles approaching the intersection at high rates of speed, you could say that if these two cars continue on their present course, and nothing changes, they will impact with each other. Amplify this tremendously, and you have some insight into the manner in which God knows the future.

Another example would be that of a Chess Master who can envision the possibilities up to ten or fifteen moves in advance.¹⁸ He can see the possible moves at the moment, and visualize the moves that can follow after each given move would be taken.

Consider the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep (an analogy Jesus Himself used): The shepherd knows his sheep. The sheep hear his voice and know it. The shepherd leads them to pastures and water.

¹⁷ In his three-year "Gospels" class (circa 1951-1953) covering the life of Christ, as related by Willman R. Golden, Evangelist.

¹⁸ Doug Turner

When he leads the sheep or herds them, the shepherd knows from experience how they will respond to a given stimulus, but he really does not know which way any individual sheep will go at any given time. Still, he is able to lead them to pasture, water, and shelter. When individual sheep go astray, he retrieves them. The flock may want to go a particular way, or some may start to go a direction away from the flock, still he herds them. He doesn't predestine them, he leads them. He can predict how they will respond. He can determine where they will go, but he doesn't know the future. If the shepherd commands his sheep to go a particular direction, but the sheep see a wolf in that direction the shepherd has not seen, the sheep will most likely scatter. The shepherd determines what he will do, and where he will lead the sheep. He may "predestine" in the morning that he will take them to another pasture in the afternoon. In that way, he "knows" they will go to that pasture in the afternoon. Individual sheep may go their own way. The shepherd may change his mind, but if all stays as it was, they will go to that pasture in the afternoon.

“If God knows a future event, it must either be because He determined it or because it is an inevitable effect of past or present causes.”¹⁹

What do the Scriptures say?

Let’s examine some of the scriptures on God’s knowledge. In each case, the knowledge concerns either past or present events, what is in the hearts of men, or what God is going to do.

God knows:

Here are some passages indicating what God knew in specific situations:

The hearts of men:

1Kings 8:39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, **whose heart thou knowest**; (for thou, *even* thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) (KJV)

2Chronicles 6:30 Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, **whose**

¹⁹ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.23

heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:) (KJV)

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

Luke 16:15 And he said unto them, **Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts:** for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. (KJV)

Act 15:8 And God, **which knoweth the hearts,** bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he* did unto us; (KJV)

Rom 8:27 And he that **searcheth the hearts** knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.* (KJV)

What He plans:

Isaiah 14:24-25 24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, **Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:** 25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. (KJV)

Isaiah 42:9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, **and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.** (KJV)

Isaiah 44:7 And who, as **I**, shall call, and **shall 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 unto them. (KJV)

Isaiah 45:11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning **the work of my hands** command ye me. (KJV)

Isaiah 46:9-10 9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10 **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things that are not yet done***, saying, My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all my pleasure:** (KJV)

Isaiah 48:5-7 5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I showed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. 6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it*? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. Only **now am I making them happen**; nothing like this took place in the past. If it had, you would claim that you knew all about it. (KJV)

Our deeds:

Psalm 69:5 O God, **thou knowest my foolishness**; and **my sins are not hid from thee**. (KJV)

Our thoughts and words:

Psalm 139:1-4 1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, **thou understandest my thought afar off**. 3 Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and **art acquainted *with* all my ways**. 4 For *there is* not a **word in my tongue**,

but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
(KJV)

Psalm 94:11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity. (KJV)

Psalm 44:20–21 20 If we had stopped worshiping our God and prayed to a foreign god, 21 you would surely have discovered it, because **you know our secret thoughts.** (KJV)

Jesus Knew:

Here are some passages indicating what Jesus knew in specific situations:

The hearts of men:

Matthew :26:21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. (KJV)

Mark 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? (KJV)

Mark 8:16–17 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? (KJV)

Mark 14:18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. (KJV)

John 13:21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. (KJV)

John 2:24–25 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. (KJV)

John 6:64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. (KJV)

Some will say, “Peter's denial was foretold. Doesn't that indicate God knows the future?”

Matthew 26:33–34 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended. 34 Jesus said unto him, **Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.** (KJV)

Luke 22:31–32 31 And the Lord said, **Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:** 32 **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.** (KJV)

Luke 22:34 And he said, **I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.** (KJV)

God knows the hearts of men and knows how they will likely respond to various stimuli. In this case, I believe Jesus understood Peter would be hanging around the palace and God arranged with Satan the

questions that would be asked, thereby fulfilling Jesus' prophecy.

The past and the present:

John 1:48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. (KJV)**

John 2:24–25 24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. (KJV)

Matthew 19:8 He saith unto them, **Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. (KJV)**

Mark 10:6 **But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. (KJV)**

Jesus on Earth

While the next few examples do not prove God does not know the future, they lend support to it, or at the very least, that Jesus did not know all things while He was on the earth.

Who touched me?

The first example is that of the woman who touched His clothes and was healed.

Luke 8:43–48 43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44 Came behind *him*, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. 45 And Jesus said, **Who touched me?** When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press *thee*, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46 And Jesus said, **Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.** 47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before

all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48 And he said unto her, **Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.** (KJV)

Did Jesus really know who touched him? Was he playing “mind games?” Some might say Jesus used this as a teaching technique.

However, even after His disciples asked Him “how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” Jesus continued to look around. This indicates that perhaps He had to find that person rather than knowing exactly who it was who touched Him.

If Jesus “knows all things” there would be no point in his statement, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.” He did **not** say, “I know someone touched me for I know all things.” He also did not say, “Bring me the person who touched me.” He said, “Who touched me?” indicating that He did not as yet know who touched Him *with intent to be healed*. Jesus then tells us **how** He knew someone touched him. It was *because*

power had gone out of Him. Jesus' own statement contradicts the view that Jesus said it for instructional value. He is saying the reason He knew someone touched Him in a special way was not because of omniscience, but because power went out from Him. To say otherwise would assert that either Jesus was attempting to deceive us in His question, or that the revelation of the incident we have is hopelessly inadequate to fully understand the event.

I saw you

Consider again the example of Jesus calling Nathanael to follow Him:

John 1:47-48 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, **Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!** 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** (KJV)

Jesus did **not** say, “I know all things,” or “I knew you before you were born,” but instead said, “When you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

Unity

Jesus also prayed for unity of those who will follow him.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: (KJV)

If Jesus knew the future, or if Jesus knew God knew the future, He would not have prayed for unity. There will either be unity or there will not be unity depending on what God already knows.

With a kiss?

Even though it appears as genuine surprise, when Judas kisses Jesus, Jesus' remark is often explained as more of a rhetorical statement.

Luke 22:48 But Jesus said unto him, **Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?** (KJV)

Nevertheless, it seems disingenuous for Jesus to feign surprise when being presented with Judas' method of betrayal. I suppose Jesus could be saying this for Judas' benefit, but what benefit would there be since Jesus also would have had to know Judas was doomed to do this very act from before creation.

You Loved Me

In the next passage, Jesus refers to His existence before the creation of the world.

John 17:24 **Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (KJV)**

It's interesting Jesus phrased it this way because of what He does *not* say. He says "you loved me before the foundation of the world." He does *not* say, "You loved them before the foundation of the world." If God knew the future, Jesus could have easily said the latter.

If it be possible

Consider again is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. I mentioned this in the previous discussion on Omnipotence, but it adds some insight to the Knowledge of God as well. In this example, Jesus asked God to alter the plan if possible.

Matthew 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, **O my Father,**

if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Mark 14:35–36 35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him 36 And he said, **Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. (KJV)**

Jesus pleads with the Father, since “all things are possible,” to remove this trial. If God’s knowledge of the future is absolute, it seems to me Jesus would have known that it cannot be taken away. Two conclusions can be drawn from this petition, 1. Jesus actually believed God could have removed the necessity of His sacrifice on the cross, and 2. Jesus believed God could change his mind, indicating that God’s knowledge of the future is not knowledge of what will happen, but what He will cause to happen.

Objections

Passages often cited to demonstrate God knows the future:

People have often said to me, "The Bible says God knew you *before* you were in your mother's womb!" That's simply incorrect. God says to Jeremiah he knew him

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (KJV)

This verse does **not** say: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew everything you would do;" It doesn't even say He knew **anything** he would *do*. It also doesn't say "I knew you before you were in your mother's womb." Instead it says that before God *formed* him "in the belly," He knew him. That is, God knew what he would be like. God knew about his genetic makeup, his personality, his traits, and his being. He had to! He was making him! This verse does not address knowledge of the future, but the plan God had for Jeremiah.

At other times, some have said to me, "The Bible Says God knows all things!" and cited 2Samuel 14:20.

2 Samuel 14:20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, **to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.** (KJV)

This scripture is talking about *David* knowing all things that are in the earth according to the wisdom of an angel of God.

Does God have knowledge?

Psalm 73:11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? (KJV)

This is men remarking on the extent of God's knowledge. Yes, indeed! There is great knowledge in the most High. This says nothing about knowing the future.

God's knowledge is deep and He is wise.

Romans 11:33 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! (KJV)

However, this verse indicates nothing about God knowing the future. Nevertheless, the completeness of God's knowledge is vast and incomprehensible to us.

God's knowledge destroys opinion!

2Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (KJV)

No source of information or knowledge matches God's own complete knowledge, and yet, no knowledge of the future is indicated by this verse.

Some will say, "God has already made his plans for us."

Jeremiah 29:11-13 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and

find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (KJV)

The NIV and other versions say, “I know the plans I have made for you.” However, by saying God has made plans, and by referring to this passage, they make my point. God knows what He has planned for our futures, but they are still contingent upon our seeking God with all our hearts.

There is an analogy here between this and the idea that even though we will die, everyone will actually live forever, some in a place of reward and the rest in a place of punishment. We use the words die and death—even Jesus did when Lazarus died—from an earthly perspective, and this is the default meaning. However, Jesus certainly knew that every human will exist forever in either Heaven or Hell. The analogy is that even if we say God knows all things, we can say it with the understanding that the future is not knowledge, and therefore there is no contradiction even if a passage were to ascribe God as saying, “I know all things.”

Passages often cited to demonstrate Jesus knew the future:

Some will say, "You see, Jesus knew Judas was a devil beforehand!"

John 6:70 Jesus answered them, **Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?**
(KJV)

However, the point at which Jesus knew this is uncertain. This verse can be taken to mean at the time of choosing the twelve,

1. that Jesus knew Judas was a "devil" from before creation, making the statement simply informational because He intentionally chose Judas with full knowledge he was a devil,
2. that Jesus knew Judas was a "devil" at the time of creation, also making the statement simply informational because He intentionally chose Judas with full knowledge he was a devil,
3. that Jesus did not know one of them would be a devil, or
4. that Jesus did not know Judas was the one who would turn against him.

Only the first of these possibilities would indicate Jesus knew the future, although such a conclusion

is unwarranted from the verse. It is unclear at what point Jesus knew Judas was a devil, only that at some point, Jesus detected Judas was a traitor by knowing his heart.

Let's consider more closely The identification of Judas as our Lord's betrayer.

John 13:26–27 26 Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. 27 **As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.** "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him,

Based on these passages, John 6:70 and John 13:26-27, I do not believe Jesus knew, at the time he selected the disciples, that it would be one of them who would betray Him, or how it would come about. The scripture indicates Satan entered into Judas at this point.

You might think John 6:64 would shed some light on this:

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were

that believed not, and who should betray him.
(KJV)

Yet even this is unclear. The uncertainty involves the words "from the beginning." Does it mean the beginning of creation, the beginning of the Apostle selection process, or the beginning of Jesus' ministry?

The Greek word *arche* can mean "early on" as it does in Philippians 4:15 rather than from an exact starting point.

"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."
(KJV)

It could be Jesus knew it from the moment Judas decided to betray Him.²⁰

Jesus' own words give us some insight:

John 15:26–27 26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. 27 And you also must

²⁰ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.37

testify, for you **have been with me from the beginning.**

From this, I believe John is referring to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, after the selection of the twelve. He obviously was not referring to the beginning of Creation.

Peter, through Luke, provides additional insight into the way they commonly referred to Jesus' ministry:

Acts 1:21-22 21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole **time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.** For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

The apostolic selection process began before John's baptism of Jesus, but was not complete until well after. So, some time shortly after the selection of the apostles, Jesus began to see how things were going to unfold, and who would betray Him.

Does Jesus Know All Things?

“But Jesus knows all things! The scriptures say so.”

John 16:30 Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee... (KJV)

First of all, Jesus didn't say He knows all things, His disciples said it. This is a case where others are speaking of God's knowledge of things. A similar situation arises in the statement that God does not hear a sinner's prayer (John 9:31). That was a doctrine of men in Jesus' day. Nevertheless, in this case, no knowledge of the future is necessarily indicated. Keep in mind, our interpretation of the disciples' statement in this verse is not necessarily what they meant and is likely a cultural translation discrepancy. This is indicated by the statement immediately following, "...needest not that any man should ask thee." In our 21st century English understanding, why would Jesus have needed anyone to ask him anything?

Does “all” always mean “all?”

In statements regarding “all things” it is important to consider the context of words like “all,” “everyone,” and “everything.” For example,

Mark 1:37 and when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. (KJV)

Obviously, all men were not looking for Him. It doesn't even mean everyone in the nearby towns at that moment. In the same way "all men" doesn't literally mean all men, all isn't always absolute. Instead “all” must be considered in context.

Mark 13:23 But take ye heed, I have foretold you all things. (KJV)

Jesus did not foretell them ALL things. So we see that all does not always mean *all* in the context of the scriptures. It's like our common use of ‘every.’ When we say, “Everyone is going,” or “Everything got wet,” we don't mean *every* one and *every* thing.

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** (KJV)

Clearly, even though Jesus said “every creature,” He does not mean we should preach the gospel to animals.

John 4:29 Come, see a man which told me all things that I ever did: Is this not the Christ? (KJV)

Likewise, Jesus didn't tell her *all things* that she *ever* did.

“No man knoweth the day nor the hour”

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (KJV)

Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (KJV)

In Jesus' statement above, He is talking about the circumstance upon which the return will take place, not a specific day and hour set in future time. Note that the verses say “**of** the day and hour” not “the day and hour.” The Father alone knows of, or about, the day and hour. It does not say the Father has determined the day and the hour, but the Father is the

only one who knows anything about it. It does not mean God has already set the date. If it did, you would have difficulty reconciling it with 2Peter 3:9 which describes the Lord delaying His return; wanting everyone to come to repentance. It's the Father's decision how and when it will occur. God has set His plan in motion, but to say God has irrevocably chosen a specific moment, a date and time, for Jesus' return and cannot change His mind is absurd.

“Jesus' statement can be easily understood as an idiomatic way of saying that *it lies in the Father's authority*, no one else's, to finally decide when the second coming will occur. It need not mean that the Father has *already set* the exact date.”²¹

Consider the following verse:

2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (KJV)

²¹*God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p. 72

This indicates God has not made a final decision, but is waiting for as many to come to repentance as his patience and our faithfulness will allow.

Examples of using day to mean an uncertain, but particular moment can be taken from various scriptures:

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (KJV)

Here God says that “in the day,” Yet He means from the moment of the condition, you will begin to die. Translated literally, it means, "Dying, you shall die."²²

In the following verses, God and Pharaoh each use the clause “that day” to mean some non-specific point in time:

Exodus 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou

²² AnswersInGenesis.org <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/05/02/dying-you-shall-die>

mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. (KJV)

Exodus 10:28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. (KJV)

When we think of “day” or “hour” in our culture, we think of “date” and “time.” This was not necessarily so in Biblical times.

Matthew 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. (KJV)

Matthew 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (KJV)

Luke 22:53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. (KJV)

John 2:4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. (KJV)

John 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in

this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (KJV)

John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (KJV)

In these verses, the reference is not to a “clock-time” or a point in time but to a time span of incidence. Surely Jesus didn't mean these worshippers would only worship for an hour.

Vine says of ‘hour:’

HOUR

hora ^{^5610^}, whence Lat., hora, Eng., "hour," *primarily denoted any time or period, especially a season.* [*emphasis added*] In the NT it is used to denote (a) "a part of the day," especially a twelfth part of day or night, an "hour," e. g., <Matt. 8:13; Acts 10:3,9; 23:23; Rev. 9:15>; in <1 Cor. 15:30>, "every hour" stands for "all the time"; in some passages it expresses duration, e. g., <Matt. 20:12; 26:40; Luke 22:59>; inexactly, in such phrases as "for a season," <John 5:35; 2 Cor. 7:8>; "for an hour," <Gal. 2:5>; "for a short season," <1 Thes. 2:17>.

RV (KJV, "for a short time," lit., "for the time of an hour"); (b) "a period more or less extended," e. g., <1 John 2:18>, "it is the last hour," RV; (C) "a definite point of time," e. g., <Matt. 26:45>, "the hour is at hand"; <Luke 1:10; 10:21; 14:17>, lit., "at the hour of supper"; <Acts 16:18; 22:13; Rev. 3:3; 11:13; 14:7>; a point of time when an appointed action is to begin, <Rev. 14:15>; in <Rom. 13:11>, "it is high time," lit., "it is already an hour," indicating that a point of time has come later than would have been the case had responsibility been realized. In <1 Cor. 4:11>, it indicates a point of time previous to which certain circumstances have existed.²³

On a particular occasion where "clock time" or precision was the salient issue, a different word was used:

Matthew 2:7 Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what **time** the star appeared. (KJV)

Time here is the Greek word "chronos."

²³ Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers

Vine says of ‘time:’

TIME

5550 chronos (khron'-os);

of uncertain derivation; a space of time (in general, and thus properly distinguished from 2540, which designates a fixed or special occasion; and from 165, which denotes a particular period) or interval; by extension, an individual opportunity; by implication, delay:

KJV— + years old, season, space, (X often-) time (-s), (a) while.²⁴

Foreknowledge of God

"But the Bible talks about foreknowledge!"

I propose “foreknowledge,” as scriptures use the term, is the result of the accumulated knowledge of all past and present events throughout the universe, including all actions, thoughts, and tendencies of man. For example, in our human sense, a copper wire, when bent a number of times, will break. We know this. If we have tested a particular type of wire many times, we can determine the number of times

²⁴ Strong’s Greek & Hebrew Dictionary as presented in the *PC Study Bible New Reference Library* computer Software program, version 2.1c, Copyright © 1988-1996, James Gilbertson, BibleSoft, 22014 7th Ave. South, Seattle WA 98198

we can bend it before it will break. Thus, we have foreknowledge such that if the wire is bent the certain number of times it will break. Now, expand this to the complete knowledge of God, and you have an example of God's incomprehensible knowledge. The term "infinite knowledge" is meaningless. Knowledge by its very nature is finite. Even though knowing everything is incomprehensible to our minds, the quantity of things that can be known MUST be finite. This does not limit God, it describes reality.

Consider the following scriptures in this light:

1Samuel 23:10-12 10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down. 12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver *thee* up. (KJV)

God knows how men think and behave.

Isaiah 42:9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. (KJV)

God tells the prophet of what will spring forth because He knows what He will do and how men will likely respond.

Isaiah 44:7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall 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 unto them. (KJV)

God proclaims. He declares. He appoints.

Isaiah 45:11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. (KJV)

God says, "Ask me about what I have done and what I will do."

Isaiah 46:9-10 9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10 Declaring the

end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all my pleasure:** (KJV)

God has a plan from “of old” but He still decides His action as He sees fit.

Isaiah 48:3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; **I did *them*** suddenly, and they came to pass. (KJV)

Though God declared them, he still had to do them. He could have changed His mind.

Isaiah 48:5-7 5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I showed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. 6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it*? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. 7 **They are created now, and not from the beginning;** even before the day when thou

heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say,
Behold, I knew them. (KJV)

God works new things that had not been “known” before. If God knew the future this would not be possible.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (KJV)

Yes, while Jeremiah was being formed in the womb, God knew all about him and then determined what He would do for him.

Daniel 2:28-29 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. (KJV)

These secrets concerned what God will do.

Matthew 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (KJV)

Yes, God knows what we need. Jesus does not say, “Your Father knows what you're going to ask before you ask Him.”

Acts:2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (KJV)

Jesus was crucified by the plan (counsel and foreknowledge) of God.

Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (KJV)

God knows what he planned to do from the beginning of the world.

Romans 11:2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, (KJV)

Romans 11:2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what

the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, (NKJ)
God has not turned away from his chosen people.

1Peter 1:2 [the aforementioned believers are] Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (KJV)

1Peter 1:2 [the aforementioned believers are] elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (NKJ)

Elect, that is, chosen—but not as individuals. Rather, as a group, as those who believe in Him and are willing to obey.

None of these passages indicate an immutable knowledge of the future. Instead, they indicate a perfect understanding of past and present, with a definite plan for the future.

Examples of Predestination

"But the Bible has specific examples of predestination!"

There are indeed examples of predestination in the Bible. Yes, there are cases where God imposed His will on individuals, often by hardening their hearts. It is likely God just enhanced or facilitated a tendency already present in the individual. The following verses are such examples. You will see that in each case God planned and directed the event.

God decided that through Isaac Abarham's seed would be called.

Genesis 21:12–13 12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the bondwoman **will I make** a nation, because he *is* thy seed. (KJV)

Exodus 9:16 "But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. (NKJ)

Exodus 9:16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to show *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (KJV)

Exodus 10:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: (KJV)

And...

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (KJV)

God is speaking of Pharaoh here and saying that from the very beginning God had a plan for him. God is saying He planned and did something, not that he knew the future.

They did not listen to wisdom because God desired to kill them.

1 Samuel 2:25 "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them. (NKJ)

1 Samuel 2:25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. (KJV)

God hardened the hearts of the leaders of the cities surrounding Israel.

Joshua 11:20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, *and* that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses. (KJV)

God directed Samson to move against the Philistines.

Judges 14:4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD— that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. (NKJ)

Judges 14:4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. (KJV)

God appointed Benhadad for destruction. Because Ahab let him go, God said he would have to take Benhadad's place.

1Kings 20:42 Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" (NKJ)

1Kings 20:42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of *thy* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. (KJV)

God brought destruction to pass.

2Kings 19:25 'Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins. (NKJ)

2Kings 19:25 Hast thou not heard long ago *how* I have done it, *and* of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities *into* ruinous heaps. (KJV)

The LORD decided to cut off the house of Ahab.

2Chronicles 22:7 His going to Joram was God's occasion for Ahaziah's downfall; for when he arrived, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. (NKJ)

2Chronicles 22:7 And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. (KJV)

God decided Amiziah would be given over to his enemies because of their evil ways.

2Chronicles 25:20 But Amaziah would not hear, for it came of God, that He might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom. (KJV)

The Lord has made some for the day of doom.

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. (NKJ)

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. (KJV)

God chose Abraham.

Nehemiah 9:7-8 7 Thou *art* the LORD the **God**, who didst **choose Abram**, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it, I say*, to

his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous: (KJV)

God chose them.

Haggai 2:23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for **I have chosen thee**, saith the LORD of hosts. (KJV)

Jesus chose them.

John 13:18 I speak not of you all: I know **whom I have chosen**: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. (KJV)

God chose these men.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but **I have chosen you out of the world**, therefore the world hateth you. (KJV)

The older shall serve the younger because God loved Jacob.

Rom 9:12-13 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, **Jacob have I loved**, but Esau have I hated. (KJV) ²⁵

Chosen in the Lord: a blessing

Rom 16:13 Salute Rufus **chosen in the Lord**, and his mother and mine. (KJV)

God called him.

Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and **called me by his grace**, (KJV)

"The Bible even uses the word 'Predestinate'!"

Yes, it does. However, 'predestinate' in King James' time did not carry the narrow meaning of 'predestine' we have today. Instead it indicated a strong, well thought-out plan to be carried into action. God knew his creation would be many. He also knew many of these would believe. For these many, he planned them to be confirmed to the image of his Son.

²⁵ Note: "Hated" here means "loved less"

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (KJV)

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. (NKJ)

God did not predestine individuals; instead, He predestined the plan, that is, He decided beforehand that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. The plan existed before the fall. However, if man had not fallen, while we still would have been conformed to the image of his Son according to the plan, it would have happened in a perfect world in which Jesus would not have had to come and redeem us.

This is made clearer by two passages in Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:4-5 4 According as he hath chosen us **in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:** 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (KJV)

He chose us “in him” before the foundation of the world. In other words, before the foundation of the world, through Jesus, he planned for us to “be holy and without blame before him in love.” He “predestinated us unto the adoption....” In other words, from the beginning, God's *plan* (“the predestination”) was for His creation to be His children through Jesus! It wasn't the plan from the beginning that we would have to be redeemed by Jesus' death. Jesus created us²⁶ and it was God's plan for us to be His children; adopted by Jesus Christ. We were already there! Then we rebelled. He purposed to redeem us.

Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (KJV)

You see, God is working things out "after the counsel of his own will"! If it were truly predestined, there would be nothing to work out.

²⁶ John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16

Some cases in which God did not appear to know the future

The situation does not only involve Jesus. Many scriptures indicate God Himself does not know the future.

God Tests Adam

Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, **Where *art* thou?** (KJV)

Genesis 3:11 And he said, **Who told thee that thou *wast* naked?** Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (KJV)

Either God did not know, or He was just playing a game.

God Tests Abraham

In Genesis 22:1-19 When Abraham obeyed God and prepared to sacrifice his own son, scripture indicates

God did not know whether Abraham would obey. If God knows the future, this test was meaningless.

Genesis 22:12 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. (KJV)

Taken at face value, this verse indicates God did *not* know what the outcome would be. God said, "...for now I know...."

Testing Love

In this passage God tests the love of His people.

Deuteronomy 13:3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, **to know whether ye love the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul. (KJV)

If God knows all things, He should not need to test the love of men for their God.

Other Testing

God tested the Israelites:

Exodus 16:4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, **that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.** (KJV)

God tested the people in the wilderness to see whether they would obey.

Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, **to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.** (KJV)

Apparently, God had to test them to know what was in their hearts.

Judges 2:21-22 21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: 22 That through them I may prove Israel, **whether they will keep**

the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. (KJV)

God left other nations in Canaan in order to test whether Israel would remain faithful. (also see Judges 3:4)

The verses clearly indicate the purpose of the testing was for God to know, not for man to know his own heart.

Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:5 And **the LORD came down to see** the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. (KJV)

This implies the Lord had to come down to see, and He would only need to see if he did not know.

Balaam

Numbers 22:9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, **What men *are* these with thee?** (KJV)

Did God know who these men were? If so, why did God Ask Balaam who they were? —Another game? Why should God ask such questions?

The Wicked

Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, *As I live*, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; **but that the wicked turn from his way and live**: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (KJV)

If God knows whether they will turn then God's sentiment that he wants the wicked to turn has no meaning.

David

Related to this, when God found David, as related in Acts 13:22,

Acts 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. (KJV)

Can we say God knew at the time He declared David to be a man of His own heart how David would deceptively take Bathsheba as his wife?

2Samuel 12:9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his

sight? **thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite** with the sword, and **hast taken his wife *to be thy wife***, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (KJV)

This only becomes a problem if we assume God knows the future.

Some cases in which Jesus did not appear to know the future

Jesus seems genuinely surprised

If Jesus' knowledge included each individual's future thoughts, He could not be surprised by anything, and yet, Jesus seems genuinely surprised at His disciples.

Matthew 15:15-18 15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, **Are ye also yet without understanding?** 17 **Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?** 18 **But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.** (KJV)

Matthew 16:6-8 6 Then Jesus said unto them, **Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.** 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread. 8 *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, **O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?** (KJV)

Matthew 16:11 **How is it that ye do not understand** that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? (KJV)

Mark 8:17 And **when Jesus knew *it***, he saith unto them, **Why reason ye, because ye have no bread?** perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? (KJV)

He doesn't even appear to know what His disciples are going to think or whether they will understand a parable in advance.

When the Centurion came and asked Jesus to heal his son, but said that Jesus just needed to say the word, Jesus marveled.

Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard *it*, he marveled, and said to them that followed, **Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** (KJV)

Consider another incident in which Jesus expresses frustration with the people. This is recorded in three of the four Gospels:

Matthew 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, **O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.** (KJV)

Mark 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, **O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.** (KJV)

Luke 9:41 And Jesus answering said, **O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.** (KJV)

If Jesus (being God) knew the future, He would have had to know how this generation would respond to Him.

Immediately following the above account, in Mark 9:21, Jesus asks, “How long has the child been like this?” Some will say, “Jesus just wanted the man to make a testimony before the others who were around.” If that were the case, why did Jesus not say, “Tell these around us how long the child has been like this?”

Jesus’ words are not the words of one who “knows everything” as we use the term today.

Mark 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, **being grieved for the hardness of their hearts**, he saith unto the man, **Stretch forth thine hand**. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.
(KJV)

Jesus was distressed at men, and yet, if He knew the future, He should have known in advance they would be so. This distress implies surprise or an unexpected

condition which would not be possible for someone who knows the future.

Mark 6:6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. (KJV)

Jesus could not marvel if He knew the future. (See also Mt. 8:10 and Lk. 7:9)

Jesus, when mourning over Jerusalem, said,

Luke 19:42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from *thine eyes.* (KJV)

This indicates that up to this point a different outcome was possible. There was a condition that would have brought Israel peace. As if, when Jesus came, there were two contingencies with two possible outcomes. If God knows the future, this statement becomes meaningless.

Can these words be based on knowing the future? Even though this is a rhetorical question, it becomes

nonsensical if Jesus knew the future. Is Jesus playing “mind games?”

Jesus is Troubled

Luke 22:1-3 1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. 2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. 3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. (KJV)

Satan entered Judas at this time.

John 13:18-21 18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.[*] 19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. 21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. (KJV)

*Psalm 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me. (KJV)

Jesus was troubled. Jesus could not be troubled if He knew all along whom it would be and how it would take place.

Not wishing that any should perish

God doesn't want anyone to perish and go to Hell, a place "prepared for the devil and his angels". (Matthew 25:41).

2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (KJV)

If God knows the future, this verse is meaningless. He already knows who will and who will not come to repentance, and who will and who will not perish!

Jesus said the Father wants all to come to repentance.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and

believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (KJV)

This statement is meaningless if God already knows who will and who will not be saved.

If God Knows the Future...

If God knows the future, He cannot be sorry or change His mind at all. It would not be possible for Him to change His mind, or to be sorry (or “repent”) for anything because He would have already known it, and yet the Scriptures tell us He has done both.

Genesis 2:15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Genesis 3:9-11 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (KJV)

Genesis 3:17-18 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also

and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; (KJV)

Genesis 3:23-24 Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (KJV)

Did God really plan for Adam and Eve to live their lives in the Garden of Eden, or did He know in advance He would have to expel them?

God regrets making man

Genesis 6:5-6 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (KJV)

Genesis 6:6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (NKJ)

How can God regret or be sorrowful about something he would have known from the beginning? Did He not believe His own knowledge? God could not be sorry or grieve over the outcome of creating man if He already knew how it would turn out.

Moses & the children of Israel

Exodus 32:10-14 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And

the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (KJV)

Is God a liar? Was God playing games with Moses, saying that he would destroy the people, but after Moses appealed, God relented and changed his mind? Did God really know He wouldn't destroy the people, but just wanted Moses to react in a way that He knew he would?

Here is the previous scenario documented again in scripture:

Deuteronomy 9:14: Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 9:25: Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the Lord had said he would destroy you. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 9:26: I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast

brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.
(KJV)

In Numbers 14:1-20 God and Moses discuss the congregation of Israel. Moses got God to change his mind again...

Numbers 14:11-12: And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. (KJV)

Numbers 14:19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. (KJV)

Numbers 14:20: And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: (KJV)

Numbers 14:27: How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. (KJV)

Verse 11 implies God is undecided about whether to destroy Israel. Moses influences God to spare them.

Verse 27 reinforces the idea that God is still not pleased with Israel.

In another event, God was going to consume the entire “congregation,” but for Moses’ plea:

Numbers 16:19-32 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan,

and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. (KJV)

Instead, He caused the ground to swallow up the offenders.

The Censer: God allowed Moses' petitions to mitigate His anger:

Numbers 16:45-46 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. (KJV)

The Brass Serpent: Again, God allowed Moses' petitions to mitigate His anger:

Numbers 21:4-9 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth

this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (KJV)

God regrets making Saul King

1Samuel 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now **would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever.** (KJV)

1Samuel 13:13 “How foolish!” Samuel exclaimed. “You have disobeyed the command

of the LORD your God. Had you obeyed, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. (NIV)

God tells Saul He *would have* established Saul's kingdom over Israel forever, but not now. If God knew this would happen, He could not honestly say He *would have* established Saul's kingdom over Israel forever.

1Samuel 13:14 **But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart,** and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee. (KJV)

1Samuel 13:14 But now your dynasty must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart. The LORD has already chosen him to be king over his people, for you have not obeyed the LORD's command.” (NIV)

If God knew the future, He would not have had to *seek* a man after His own heart to replace Saul. He would have simply known who was to come next.

1Samuel 15:10-11 10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11 **It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king:** for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. (KJV)

1Samuel 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and **the LORD repented that he had made Saul king** over Israel. (KJV)

Again, if God knew how it would turn out, he could not be regretful over the outcome.

Other regrets

In Ezekiel 22, God sought for just one Israelite who would pray and stand up for righteousness, but found no one. (Ezekiel 22:30-31) God could not genuinely *search* for someone to intercede if He knew there was no one. “The fact that God *tried* to raise up an

intercessor suggests that He knew it was possible that an intercessor would have responded.”²⁷

God asks, “How long?”

Hosea 8:5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off; mine anger is kindled against them: **how long will it be** ere they attain to innocency? (KJV)

God is surprised

In Isaiah 5:2-5, the Lord raised up a vineyard, a reference to Jerusalem and Judah, but was surprised to find it had yielded wild grapes.

There are passages where God is speaking to one of His Prophets in which He says He thought something would occur, but it didn't.

Jeremiah 3:6-7 - “I thought she would return to me.”

²⁷ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.63

Jeremiah 3:19-20 “I thought you would call me, 'My Father' ”

“If God tells us He thought something was going to occur while being eternally certain it would not occur, is he not lying to us? If God cannot lie (Heb.6:18) and yet tells us He thought someone would occur that did not occur, doesn't this imply that the future contains possibilities as well as certainties?”²⁸

Other times God changed or promised to change His mind.

Exodus 33:1-14; 1Samuel 2:27-31; 1Kings 21:21-29; 2Chronicles 12:5-8; Jeremiah 26:2-3; Ezekiel 4:9-15

Jeremiah 18:8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, **I will repent** of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (KJV)

Jeremiah 18:10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then **I will repent** of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (KJV)

²⁸ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.60

Jeremiah 42:10 If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for **I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.** (KJV)

Amos 7:3 **The LORD repented for this:** It shall not be, saith the LORD. (KJV)

Amos 7:6 **The LORD repented for this:** This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD. (KJV)

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and **God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.** (KJV)

2Samuel 24:15-16 15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, **the LORD repented him of the evil,** and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite. (KJV)

Judges 2:18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for **it repented the LORD** because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. (KJV)

God changed His mind and extended Hezekiah's life after God told Hezekiah he was going to die soon and Hezekiah petitioned Him. 2Kings 20:1-6

God indicates that the very book of life can be changed.

Exodus 32:33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him **will I blot out of my book.** (KJV)

Revelation 3:5 **He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.** (KJV)

Revelation 22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of**

the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.
(KJV)

This would not even have been necessary if God knew the future. God would not put names in the book of life if He knew He was going to blot them out later.

God promised disaster.

Jeremiah 26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and **the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them?** Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. (KJV)

But He relented.

If God knows the future, He could not genuinely become angry.

If God knows the future, He could not ever become angry because He would have known all events since the beginning of time. He would also know that the objects of His anger would have been able to do

nothing else than the actions they took which kindled His anger. And yet, in the Old Testament, we see God's anger numerous times:

Exodus 4:14 And **the anger of the LORD** was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.* (KJV)

Numbers 11:1 And *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and **his anger was kindled**; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp. (KJV)

Numbers 12:9 And **the anger of the LORD was kindled against them**; and he departed. (KJV)

Numbers 22:22 And **God's anger was kindled** because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him.

Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him. (KJV)

Numbers 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and **the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.** (KJV)

Numbers 32:10 And **the LORD's anger was kindled** the same time, and he swore, saying, (KJV)

Numbers 32:13 And **the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel**, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed. (KJV)

Judges 2:14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. (KJV)

2Samuel 6:7 And **the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah**; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God. (KJV)

Isaiah 5:25 **Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people**, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses *were* torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still. (KJV)

There are more than 100 verses speaking of the anger of the Lord in the Old Testament.

In Hebrews, the writer indicates that because of the generation of Israel that left Egypt, God became angry and declared an oath as the result.

Hebrews 3:11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) (KJV)

Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although

the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (KJV)

God made this decision only after Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. God's original intent was for them to proceed to the Promised Land (even just before the 40 years punishment), but their hearts were hard and unbelieving.

God is Grieved?

If God knows the future, He could not become grieved, yet God is grieved when we resist Him

Psalm 78:40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* **grieve him** in the desert! (KJV)

Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled, and **vexed his Holy Spirit**: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them. (KJV)

Ezekiel 6:9a And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because **I am broken with their whorish heart** (KJV)

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (KJV)

God and the Holy Spirit cannot honestly grieve if they already knew what would take place.

Furthermore, God would not create people He knew would not believe and try to get them to believe if He already knew they were going to hell.

If God knows the future, conditional statements are moot

If God knows the future, conditional statements made by God are moot. If God knows the future there can be no conditional situations. There should never be an “if” because He already knows “**whether.**” For example, it wouldn’t be “if” His people will humble themselves and pray. (2 Chronicles 7:14) He already knows “whether,” so the “If” should be a “When.” If God knows the future, what good is a conditional statement? He already knows whether they will, and the alternative is ***not possible.***

2Chronicles 7:14: **If** my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked

ways; then will **I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin**, and will heal their land. (KJV)

Jeremiah 18:8 **If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil** that I thought to do unto them. (KJV)

Jeremiah 26:3 **If so be they will hearken**, and turn every man from his evil way, **that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them** because of the evil of their doings. (KJV)

God expresses uncertainty

God says “They *may* believe ...”

Exodus 4:1 And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

Exodus 4: 5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

Exodus 4:8-9 8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice

of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. 9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*. (KJV)

God says they may turn back

Exodus 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, **Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:** (KJV)

God says "it may be"

Ezekiel 12:3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: **it may be** they will consider, though they *be* a rebellious house. (KJV)

Was God being disingenuous when he said this?

Hezekiah: God does not lie!

God adds 15 years to Hezekiah's life:

2 Kings 20 1-6 1 About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: **“This is what the LORD says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.”**

2 When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 3 “Remember, O LORD, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight.” Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

4 But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the LORD: 5 “Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, **“This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the LORD. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do**

this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.””

If God knew the future and He knew He was going to add fifteen years to Hezekiah’s life, it would have been a lie for Him to tell Hezekiah that he would not recover and was going to die of his illness. God does not lie!

God and Prophecy

“If God doesn’t know the future, how can he make prophecy about things that will happen many years in the future?”

God actively works His plan to fulfill His prophecy

Prophecy on God’s part is not prediction of the future, but determination of particular events of the future. God works directly with the necessary individuals and with nature to make His plan a reality. Remember the example of the shepherd leading his sheep described earlier? God is able to decide on His action and lead events according to His desires. When God predestines, He does so by making a plan, then acting in order to make all things

work together for good. (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20).

When God makes prophecy, He essentially tells us what He is going to do. Let's consider, for a moment, a passage that seems to indicate God knows the future. (There are not many such passages.)

Genesis:16:11-12 To Hagar:

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And **he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him;** and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. (KJV)

However, with a closer look we can see past the apparent inconsistency. We know God knows the personality He gives to each person even when he or she is still in the womb. He also knows the behavior of those around each person. He can therefore prophesy the direction of specific individuals in general terms. He conducts perfect analysis of the situation and knows how man thinks. In this case, God is telling Hagar the way things are and how her

son will fare based on his personality and how others will respond to him.

In this example, God tells Abram what He will do:

Genesis 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. (KJV)

Genesis 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; (KJV)

Genesis 26:4 And **I will make** thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; (KJV)

Concerning Daniel's prophecy of the end times, (Daniel 2:28-45, and other passages), God is presenting of the "destiny" of man. He knows this because he knows how the mind of man works. He knows all the tendencies of every heart, and he

knows how men will interact with each other. God also knows the things which must "come to pass."²⁹

There are many other passages in which God makes prophecy, but in every passage, the viewpoint is the same. God tells us what He will do.

Consider these Old Testament verses concerning fulfillment of prophecy.

God raised up Pharaoh for a purpose:

Exodus 9:16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to show *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (KJV)

David was God's chosen even though he was not of proper lineage. David was the tenth generation from Judah and Tamar's illegitimate child Pharez (Perez). He could not "enter the congregation of the LORD."

Deuteronomy 23:2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth

²⁹ Matthew 24:6; Revelation 1:1

generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. (KJV)

And yet, David was selected to be king over Israel. Can we say God planned this from the beginning? Moreover, through this line, Jesus was brought into the world. Can we really say God knew all along Jesus was to be born through a line of illegitimate birth?

Consider these New Testament verses concerning fulfillment of prophecy.

Matthew 1:22-23 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (KJV)

Matthew 26:53-54 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (KJV)

Jesus states He can invoke power, but admits His actions must be tempered by the intentional actions required to fulfill prophecy. The implication is that God doesn't know the future but that God determines portions of the future, and Jesus must comply or the prophecy will not be fulfilled.

Matthew 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. (KJV)

Mark 15:27-28 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. (KJV)

John 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast

lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.
(KJV)

At this point, we could say either, “God knew these things would take place,” or “God is working directly with individuals to accomplish His plan.” If the former, it wouldn't be His "plan" if He knew it was already going to happen. No planning would have been involved. If the latter, it means God plans the fulfillment of prophecy and works to make it take place.

God works with men to affect an outcome

Consider this passage indicating how God works with particular men to affect the outcome:

John 12:37-40 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor

understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. (KJV)

If God knew the future of these men, He wouldn't have to harden their hearts. Things would just be. Nevertheless, God acted in order to achieve His desired outcome. So we have clear indication God actively works in the lives of men.

In this instance, God Changes His Plan and makes a Second Covenant. In spite of what has been said many times about messianic prophecies, the specifics of God's plan for fellowship with man and the plan of salvation have been changed from the original plan:

Hebrews 8:6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the **covenant** of which he is mediator **is superior to the old one**, and it is founded on better promises.

Hebrews 8:7-8 7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But **God found fault with the people** and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Why was there ever a need for the second covenant if God knew he would find fault with the people?

Of course, the *original* plan was for God and man to have fellowship together with His creation in a perfect world. That is, unless you believe God knew the future, in which case God knew in advance that was never going to happen.

The question is again brought to mind, “Why would God bother to create man at all if He knew man would fall?”

He would not.

Jesus and Prophecy

Jesus was restricted from action by the necessity to fulfill prophecy. This was a voluntary self-limitation. If it were not so, Jesus was not being honest in His statements. Jesus coordinated His actions with the actions of the Father to fulfill prophecy. God also works with the hearts and minds of specific individuals to fulfill prophecy. Consider these examples.

Jesus referring to prophecy

The reference:

Matthew 26:53-56 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? 55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. 56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. (KJV)

The scripture that was fulfilled:

Jeremiah 23:2: Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. (KJV)

Jeremiah 31:10: Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. (KJV)

Ezekiel 34:6: My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. (KJV)

Ezekiel 34:12: As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (KJV)

The reference:

John 13:18: I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be

fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. (KJV)

The scripture that was fulfilled:

Psalm 41:9: Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. (KJV)

Obadiah 1:7: All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; that they eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. (KJV)

The reference:

Matthew 27:9-10 9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me. (KJV)

The scripture that was fulfilled:

Zechariah 11:13: And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of

silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. (KJV)

God knows men's hearts **and** God carries out his plan.

The reference:

Mark 14:27: And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. (KJV)

The scripture that was fulfilled:

Zechariah 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. (KJV)

Jesus actively worked to fulfill prophecy.

Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy was the result of direct action. He did not just blindly act, or act outside of His own will, and thereby fulfill prophecy. Jesus' responsibility was to perform the actions that would

fulfill the scriptures. Consider the following verses concerning Jesus' working to fulfill scripture.

Matthew 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (KJV)

Matthew 4:13-16 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. (KJV)

Matthew 8:16-17 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet,

saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (KJV)

Matthew 12:15-18 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. (KJV)

Matthew 13:13-15 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and

should be converted, and I should heal them.
(KJV)

Matthew 13:34-35 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (KJV)

Matthew 21:1-5 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. (KJV)

Mark 14:49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. (KJV)

Luke 4:18-21 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (KJV)

Luke 21:21-23 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in

those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. (KJV)

John 18:8-9 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. (KJV)

John 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. (KJV)

These verses show Jesus taking active steps to fulfill prophecy. The last verse in particular indicates He was following a plan or a “script” of things that had to be done to fulfill scripture. Once the list of necessary actions was complete He was freed from the “script” somewhat.

(Also see “Predestination” below (p.201) for instances where God directed human behavior.)

Twelve Thrones

Matthew 19:28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son

of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus is speaking specifically to the twelve chosen disciples. Jesus said twelve thrones, not eleven. I suggest that at this particular time, Jesus did not yet know it was one of the twelve who would betray him.

This would tie in well with the selection of Paul as a replacement to complete the twelve thrones. Paul refers to himself in this regard as “one untimely born.”

“What about Matthias?” Really?

Jesus making prophecy:

Jesus actively made prophecies based on what He knew of man and his nature, and of God’s plan for the future.

Mark 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (KJV)

Mark 13:7-14 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel

the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: (KJV)

(See also Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11)

Mark 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. (KJV)

Mark 13:24-26 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. (KJV)

Mark 14:9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. (KJV)

Jesus is speaking from His complete understanding of the hearts of *all* men and the plan God has for the future.

Implications to Prayer

There are serious implications to prayer if we say God knows the future. If God knows the future, then prayer is of no consequence; God already knows whether or not we will pray, whether or not we will ask, and whether or not He will grant the request before we ask; our prayer affects nothing. Clearly, this is not the teaching of Jesus.

Some things Jesus said about prayer:

Matthew 6:7-8 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (KJV)

Luke 11:2-4 (and Mt:6:9-13) And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (KJV)

Matthew 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. (KJV)

Matthew 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (KJV)

Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (KJV)

It is obvious Jesus taught that prayer changes things.

Mark 13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. (KJV)

This suggests that prayer provides a potential for changing when the flight will be. If God knows the future, such a prayer is inconsequential.

Pray to avoid temptation

Jesus tells Peter, James, and John to pray so they don't fall into temptation.

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

If the future was known, the exhortation would be useless.

Feed my sheep

John 21:17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

If Jesus knew the future, there would have been no reason to exhort Peter because no amount of exhortation could change what Jesus already knew.

Some things Jesus said in His own prayers:

Matthew 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, **if it be possible**, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (KJV)
Matthew 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, **if this**

cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. (KJV)

Mark 14:35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, **if it were possible**, the hour might pass from him. (KJV)

John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest **keep them from the evil**. (KJV)

John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world **may believe** that thou hast sent me. (KJV)

At the very least, these verses indicate Jesus believed His prayer could change the course of things. When He said, “If it be possible,” He was asking God whether some other plan could be put into effect, but concluded that He would do whatever God would direct. Jesus believed that there could be other possibilities. If God knows the future, there are no other possibilities.

What other NT writers said about prayer:

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh

intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (KJV)

Intercession suggests the potential for change from what might otherwise be. If God knows the future, there is no potential for change from what He knows will be.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (KJV)

Unless the prayer is moot, Paul's prayer suggests a potential for change. If God knows the future, there is no potential for change from what He knows will be.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (KJV)

Unless the prayer is moot, requests to God suggest a potential for change. If God knows the future, there is no potential for change from what He knows will be.

2Timothy 4:16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. (KJV)

Again, Paul's prayer suggests the ability to change the course of God's punishment for those mentioned. If God knows the future, there is no potential for change from what He knows will be.

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. (KJV)

If God knows the Future, He already knows whether your affliction will be relieved, prayer is inconsequential. Clearly, James did not believe this, or he wouldn't have told us to pray.

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: (KJV)

If God knows the Future, He already knows whether sickness will be relieved, prayer is inconsequential. Clearly, James did not believe this, or he wouldn't have told us to pray.

James 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (KJV)

If God knows the Future, He already knows whether sickness will be relieved, prayer is inconsequential. Clearly, James did not believe this, or he wouldn't have told us to pray.

1Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. (KJV)

Saying God's "ears are open" suggests once again the potential for changing what will be. If God knows the future, there is no potential for change from what He knows will be.

The Knowledge of God: A Solution

So, how do we reconcile God's infinite knowledge (Ps 147:5) with the free will of man? How can I say God "holds the future" but He does not know it? How can I say God is sovereign if He doesn't know the future?

This framework does not challenge God's sovereignty. God is still sovereign and because of His complete and perfect knowledge, yes, He holds the future. In fact, I will now present to you an illustration of God's knowledge. I believe this illustration is far more fitting an infinite God than the simplistic and problematic assertion, "God knows the future." The illustration does not place limits on God's knowledge in the way that immutable knowledge of the future does. Instead, this illustration opens the possibility to understand God in an entirely new light—the light He shone in His word all along that has been obscured for centuries.

Please keep in mind that this illustration is in human terms and is therefore subject to inadequacies.

Prophecy: Seeing the Future, Grounded in Past and Present

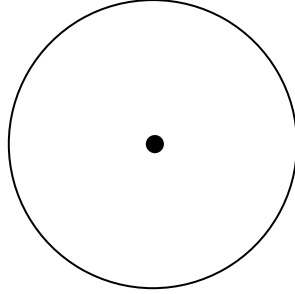
I maintain that knowledge is past and present only. Future is not knowledge. No entity knows the future. The act of **knowing the future** predestines the future.

I previously discussed my views on what God knows, so I will not reiterate them here.

Let's examine the life of an ordinary human. Consider yourself, right now. Imagine being at the center of a circle. I'll call it a "free-will" circle. A dot marks the center of the circle and represents a decision-making point. The possible decisions you can make are represented by the circle itself. There are an infinite number of decisions you can make. You could decide not to read further. You could decide to scratch your head, take a break, or stand up and shout, "This is nuts!" You can do anything your abilities allow. The possibilities are infinite. Our minds cannot comprehend them all. Some decisions will have a greater effect on your life than others. However, each of those decisions is represented by a point on the circumference of the circle.

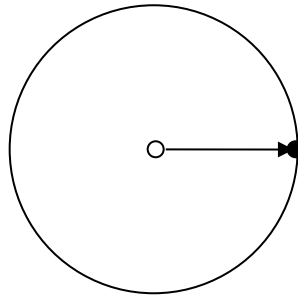
The Knowledge of God

Pre-Decision Free-Will Circle



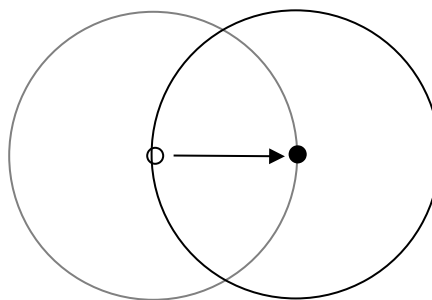
Once you make the decision, you are at a point on the circumference of the circle. All other points on the circle are now impossibilities because the decision is complete. It is past.

Post-Decision Free-Will Circle

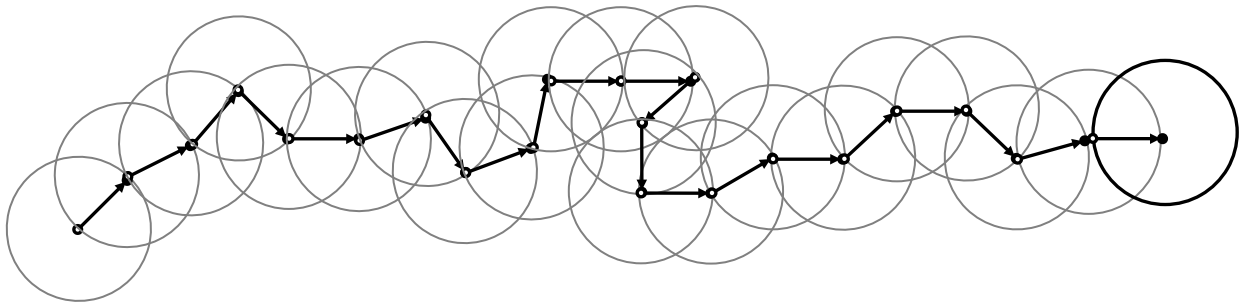


However, as soon as you make the decision, you are once again at the center of another free-will circle; another decision-making point.

Pre-Decision and Post-Decision Free-Will Circles shown together.



We could chain as many of these together as we wanted showing a path of decisions, which at each point, there were an infinite number of possibilities.

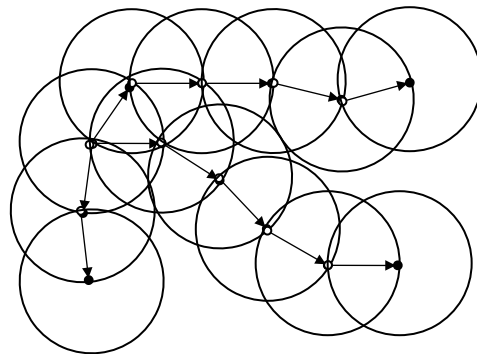


Through this series of free-will circles, we can see the path taken by the individual. If God knows the future, that person's life could be charted, even before he was born, by a line indicating the path the person would take in every circumstance. There would be no circles because there would be no

possible decisions other than what God knew. Instead of the circles, there would just be the line going from point to point.

The above diagram of free-will circles shows a very limited portion of the complete illustration. I will demonstrate what I mean.

From our perspective, one thing we cannot know is what possible paths could have opened up for us if we had made some other decision. Look at just a small example of multiple possible decisions:



You can see how it could quickly become too complicated for us to comprehend. This illustration barely scratches the surface before we humans become overwhelmed trying to take it in. Yet God comprehends it all—for everyone all at once. This is the power of God’s knowledge and wisdom. This illustrates the supreme ability and sovereignty of God. This is what I mean when I say God knows all possible futures. This is what I mean when I say God holds the future. This is also how I reconcile God holding the future while He gives us free will.

For each free-will circle, for each decision in your life, you decide, not God, what you will do. God has granted us this. God wants us to love Him and serve Him because we want to serve Him in the same way we want our children to obey and love us in free will. This is why God created man in the first place. This is why we’re here.

God could force us to serve Him. God could even control our minds and *make* us “love” Him, but then would it be love if there were not free will?

If you chose, you could chart every major free-will circle in your life and come up with a map of all your decisions. If you had a great enough mind, you might even be able to chart many of the minor free-will circles in your life. With your limited knowledge, you could even speculate on some possible alternate futures—things that might have happened if you had made different decisions. People often make such speculations. The only problem is, our knowledge is so limited, as soon as we change one of the free-will decisions, we have no idea what decisions would have faced us next.

On the other hand, God's knowledge is complete. God knows every possible decision of every free-will circle you encountered and will encounter in your life. God knows all that is possible. From that which is possible, God knows those decisions that are likely for any given free-will circle in your life.

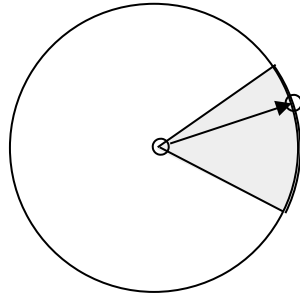
In addition to this, God knows your thoughts, past and present; your actions, past and present, and God knows the history and thoughts of all your ancestors all the way back to Adam. God also knows your personality, He knows your aches and pains, and He

knows your physical as well as your mental defects. Man does not know this, but God does. Now, here's the clincher. God knows this for every individual who ever lived. He knows the interactions between every individual, what they thought, and why they responded the way they do. He knows what every individual thinks and feels, and what every individual who ever lived thought and felt.

How then, does God make prophecy happen while not "knowing" the future? If He does not predestine individuals, how does he work it all out?

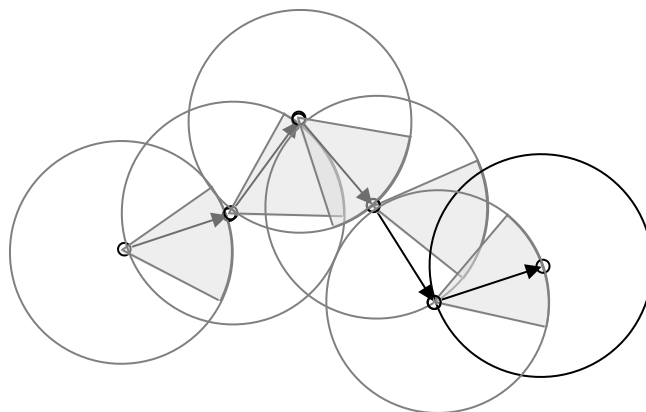
Remember, God's knowledge is complete, and He has the wisdom to be able to use it. In addition to knowing humans, God knows everything about the earth, the moon, the sun, the stars, and everything physical. He created it all. God also knows all of history. He was there. Since God knows the tendencies, thoughts, emotions, pains, feelings, fears, genetic make-up, ancestry, education, influences, and everything else that makes up each individual, He also knows what that person is likely to do in any given situation, and extending that, He knows what possibilities each decision opens up for every

situation. God knows all the possible futures. Let me demonstrate this using a free-will circle.



For a given decision, the circle represents all possible choices to a given situation. The shaded area in the free-will circle represents the likely responses an individual will make. The arrow from the center of a circle to a point on the circumference represents the decision made.

Chaining multiple circles together, the illustration would look like this:



Notice that the response in the fourth circle falls outside the range of likely responses for the individual at that moment. Yes, occasionally a particularly onerous bent to our own will may fall outside of the range of what God saw as likely. Remember King David?

Even the slightest difference in a decision among the most likely could have a significant influence on the next decision. God would have no immutable knowledge which choice we would make, and therefore would not know which outcome would follow. But He does know all the possible choices, and all the possible outcomes.

God knows all of these likely decisions due to his complete knowledge. By knowing who we are and how we think, in this way He sees our futures. In each of the decisions we make, there is the uncertainty factor of free will. There has to be. At significant points, God acts to direct decisions and other factors to produce His outcome. He also responds to prayer in this way to make His will

reality. God has made us to be independent beings and therefore, we are inherently unpredictable. If it weren't for the uncertainty factor, most of the accounts in the Bible wouldn't make sense: God being angry, God changing His mind, God using the word "if" or "unless."

One thought you should keep in mind is that each circle represents a potentially infinite number of decisions, so each additional circle represents infinite times infinite. Then you multiply this by the number of people who have ever lived and this becomes incomprehensible for us, but not for God.

A passage that fits my description especially well is 1 Chronicles 28:9. I have listed it in three translations:

1Chronicles 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. (KJV)

1Chronicles 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (NKJ)

1Chronicles 28:9 "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (NIV)

God "searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts." That's essentially what I have been saying. Then "If you seek him... if you forsake him..." makes my point that we have the choice and God leaves it up to us. God made us to be the unpredictable ones.

It is interesting to note that in Acts 21:10-12, the Holy Spirit prophesied through Agabus that the Jews would bind Paul and hand him over to the Romans.

As it turned out, the Romans rescued Paul from the Jews. This is a clear case of God knowing all the possibilities, but because individuals are free agents, the prophecy did not turn out exactly as presented. The outcome was the same in that Paul was bound for the name of Christ.

“[God] always has a plan B and a plan C. He's also wise enough to know how to weave our failed plan A's into these alternative plans so beautifully that looking back, it may look like B or C was His original plan all along. This isn't a testimony to His exhaustive definitive foreknowledge; it's a testimony to His unfathomable wisdom.”³⁰

In summary:

A pastor friend of mine says, “I'd hate to know the future and be powerless to do anything about it.”³¹ That's an oxymoron! That is exactly the position God is in if He knows the future. If you know the future, you can't do anything about it. By implication, that pastor was asserting God knows the future but can change it. Yet, if God were to change

³⁰ *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.106

³¹ Gene Barron, Pastor at Littleton Christian Church, Littleton, CO prior to 2004 and Valley View Christian Church, Littleton, CO after 2004

it, He really didn't know the future. If God knows the future, even He is powerless to do anything about it. Any other conclusion is muddled logic and sloppy thinking. He unwittingly assigned to God the very predicament he said he would hate; that God would know the future and be powerless to do anything about it.

“...[W]e should seriously question the assumption that a God who exhaustively foreknows what is definitely going to happen is wiser than a God who does not.”³² A God who allows his creation to decide on its own the direction it will take would have to be much wiser than one for whom no surprise is possible.

As we read God's Word, we see passage after passage indicating God leaves the future open. God allows us to decide for ourselves. The *entire Bible* is written from the viewpoint that people make their own choices and that their futures are yet to be decided. It is the most straightforward and sensible way to look at God's Word. Not only that, but most Christians, even if they say they believe God knows the future,

³² *God of the Possible*, Dr. Gregory A. Boyd, Baker Books, Second Printing July 2000, p.126

live their lives as if God does *not* know the future. They pray for change, they hope for the salvation of friends and family, and they even presume to make their own decisions.

Conclusion:

I believe God knows all that is knowledge. He knows the hearts of men. He knows our deeds, our thoughts, and our words. God knows everything that has ever happened and everything that is happening now. With His incredible and perfect knowledge, He also perceives *all* the possibilities for the future.

I believe God becomes angry. I believe God can change His mind. I believe the devout prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much (James 5:16).

I believe that if God were to *know* the future, we would be predestined, but more astounding than that, God Himself would be predestined. If God knew the future, prayer would be of no consequence because whatever God knew would happen before the prayer would still happen. If God knew the future, Jesus' dying on the cross was not an act of submission to His Father's will, but the unalterable result of predestination. If God knows the future, Jesus was either lying or He was wrong when he said:

Mark 10:27 ...With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.
(KJV)

If God knows the future, all things are **not** possible, only *one* thing is possible—that one future God knows.

I believe God has made us creatures with free will, and that God does *not* know from before the creation of the world who will be saved and who will be lost. I believe God truly loves His creation and wants all of us to be reconciled to him and to have communion with Him. I believe God has changed His mind in the past, and can change His mind today and in the future. I believe that fervent prayer to Him can make a difference.

So, we have these three necessary conclusions:

If God knows the future, we are predestined.

If God knows the future, *God is predestined.*

If God knows the future, *prayer is of no effect.*

I do not believe we are predestined.

I do not believe God is predestined.

I believe in the power of prayer.

Therefore I believe God does not know the future.

Rather than thinking “God knows the future,” instead, consider that God holds all possible futures and “causes everything to work together for the good of those who love”³³ Him.

With God, all things *are* possible.

³³ Romans 8:28

Appendix A—Additional Prophecy Verses

God promises, establishes, or blesses

The following is a list of scriptures that speak of prophecy made by God in the form of blessings or promises. In every case, God prescribes what he has done, will do, or what man will do based on how thoroughly God understands the hearts of man. He does not say, “You will do this in that day” but instead, “I will do....” Even the verses that talk about “foreknowing” can be seen in this light. Those verses that speak of predestination do not preclude the will of the individual to reject God’s “election.” They speak of what God has established. God sets the future in motion. He plans it out and works His will.

Exodus 33:19 And he said, **I will make** all my goodness pass before thee, and **I will proclaim** the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 4:37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore **he chose their seed** after them, **and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power** out of Egypt; (KJV)

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath **the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand**, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 10:15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and **he chose their seed after them**, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 32:8 When **the most High divided** to the nations their inheritance, when **he separated** the sons of Adam, **he set the bounds of the people** according to the number of the children of Israel. (KJV)

1Samuel 12:22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because **it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.** (KJV)

1Kings 12:15 It was **the will of the LORD to bring about what he had spoken** to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh. This is why the king did not pay any attention to the people. (KJV)

2Chronicles 6:6 ‘But now **I have chosen Jerusalem as the place where I will be worshiped,** and you, David, to rule my people.’ (KJV)

Job 23:13-14 But he *is* in one *mind*, and who can turn him? and ***what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.*** (KJV)

God does what He wants to do.

Psalms 33:12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* **he hath chosen** for his own inheritance. (KJV)

Psalm 65:4 Blessed *is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even of thy holy temple.* (KJV)

Psalm 78:67-68 67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: 68 But **chose the tribe of Judah**, the mount Zion which he loved. (KJV)

Psalm 78:70-72 70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. (KJV)

Psalm 105:17-22 **He chose David** also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to

the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. (KJV)

Psalm 135:4 For **the LORD hath chosen Jacob** unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure. (KJV)

Isaiah 44:1-2 1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom **I have chosen**: 2 Thus saith the LORD that **made thee, and formed thee from the womb**, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom **I have chosen**. (KJV)

Isaiah 44:7 And who, as **I, shall call, and shall 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 unto them. (KJV)

Jeremiah 1:4-5 1 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5 Before **I formed thee** in the belly **I knew thee**; and before thou camest forth out of the womb **I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee** a prophet unto the nations. (KJV)

Malachi 1:2-3 2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet **I loved Jacob,** 3 **And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.** (KJV)

Matthew 11:25-26 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, **I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.** 26 Even so, Father: for so **it seemed good in thy sight.** (KJV)

Matthew 20:16 **So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.** (KJV)

Matthew 20:23 And he saith unto them, **Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.** (KJV)

Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few *are* chosen. (KJV)

Matthew 24:22 And **except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:** but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (KJV)

Matthew 24:40-41 40 Then shall two be in the field; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.** 41 *Two women shall be* grinding at the mill; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.** (KJV)

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:** (KJV)

This kingdom is prepared for all who will believe from the foundation of the world. Not for specific individuals from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 26:24 The Son of man **goeth as it is written of him:** but woe unto that man by whom

the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. (KJV)

Jesus does what is necessary to fulfill prophecy.

Mark 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, **he hath shortened the days.** (KJV)

God will act on their behalf.

Mark 14:21 The **Son of man** indeed **goeth, as it is written of him:** but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. (KJV)

Jesus does what is necessary to fulfill prophecy.

Luke 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to **others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.** (KJV)

Some are allowed to understand, but others are prevented.

Luke 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that **the spirits are subject unto you**; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. (KJV)

The spirits are subject to his disciples

Luke 17:34-36 34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the **one shall be taken**, and the **other shall be left**. 35 Two *women* shall be grinding together; **the one shall be taken**, and **the other left**. 36 Two *men* shall be in the field; the **one shall be taken**, and **the other left**. (KJV)

God will actively carry out his plan.

Luke 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? (KJV)

God will avenge His elect.

Luke 22:22 And truly the **Son of man goeth, as it was determined**: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! (KJV)

Jesus does what is necessary to fulfill prophecy.

John 6:37–38 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For **I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**

(KJV)

Jesus came to do what God told him to do.

John 6:39 And this is **the Father's will** which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but **should raise it up again at the last day.** (KJV)

This was God's will, and what he will do at the last day.

John 6:44-45 No man can come to me, except **the Father** which hath sent me **draw him:** and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, **And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.** (KJV)

God draws individuals. If it were predestined, no drawing would be necessary. Also, teaching is necessary for the drawing.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but **I have chosen you, and ordained you**, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that **whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.** (KJV)

This choosing is not something that happened before the creation of the world. It happened during Jesus' efforts on Earth. Jesus indicates requests of the Father are granted upon asking. If the request is made, it is granted. If it is not made, it is not granted. It is not predestined, it's dynamic and dependent upon the request.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but **I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.** (KJV)

Jesus chose them out of the world—Indicating the choice was during His ministry. If the choice had been made from the beginning of creation they could not be said to have been chosen out of the world.

John 17:2 **As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (KJV)**

God does the giving. When seen through the light of John 6:44–45, we see that those who are drawn through the teaching are the ones God will give him.

John 17:6 **I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. (KJV)**

Once again, Jesus indicates God gave Him these men out of the world.

John 17:9 **I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. (KJV)**

Jesus prayed for them, indicating their futures weren't a foregone conclusion.

John 21:23 **Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (KJV)**

Here is an example of people misapplying what Jesus said, and John correcting them.

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.** (KJV)

Jesus indicates God has plans for the times and seasons according to his will and power, not that the times and seasons are immutable.

Acts 2:23 Him, being **delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God**, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (KJV)

As we have said before, God works out his plan among men according to His incomprehensible understanding of men. This plan is foreknowledge in the sense we have described.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to **all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.** (KJV)

The promise is to all that are afar off. The promise is not limited to a select set determined from the

creation of the world. It is determined by the call, which is initiated through teaching of the Gospel.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the **Lord added to the church daily** such as should be saved. (KJV)

Those who have the faith to be saved, the Lord adds to the church.

Acts 3:18 But those things, which **God** before had **showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.** (KJV)

God's prophecy is not a foreseeing of what is going to happen as much as it is a foretelling of what God is going to do. God prophesied that the Christ should suffer, then he worked out His plan. He fulfilled the prophecy

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (KJV)

God works with people to get his tasks done.

Acts 13:48 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. (KJV)

Ordained here means essentially, as many as had a will to achieve eternal life believed.

Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (KJV)

God determines according to His will. He marked out the boundaries: rivers, mountains, seas, and determines the length of the endurance of their nations according to their behavior. There is much controversy about this verse, but it is mostly due to a misunderstanding of the ancient Greek use of the terms. Many Greek texts omit the characters that translate into English “pre”. Nevertheless, we must view this passage in the context of other passages.

Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers **hath chosen thee**, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. (KJV)

In some cases, God actively seeks out and chooses individuals.

Romans 1:6–7 6 Among whom are ye also **the called** of Jesus Christ: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called *to be* saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

God calls us. All who therefore have faith in Jesus are called “the called.”

Romans 8:28-30 30 And we know that **all things work together** for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (KJV)

God makes things work together for the ultimate benefit of those who are called and will be His children. This was discussed on p.80.

Romans 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. (KJV)

God justifies according to His plan.

Romans 9:7-33 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. 10 And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; 11 (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion. 16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? 25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not

my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28 For he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. 30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (KJV)

God works with people as groups, and sometimes individuals to accomplish His purpose.

The Older will Serve the Younger

Romans 9:9-12 [from the above passage] For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (KJV)

God has knowledge of a person's intellect, being, and disposition as well as what God Himself plans to do with the individual

Romans 11:4–5 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal*. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (KJV)

God reserved some. This “election of grace” was determined by those who still had faith in God. God did not force them to have faith, but he very well protected them.

Romans 11:7-8 7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. (KJV)

Nothing in this verse indicates that the elect were chosen before the creation of the world. It indicates those who were pure in heart or who were ready to accept Jesus Christ became elect upon hearing the word. Those whose hearts were unwilling, God hardened.

1Corinthians 1:26-29 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to

confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. (KJV)

God calls select ones. This does not indicate they were called before the world began, nor that God decided on those whom He would call before He created the world.

1Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world* unto our glory: (KJV)

God ordained the hidden wisdom before the world, not us.

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, (KJV)
or

Galatians 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased (NIV)

Notice the distinct difference in meaning expressed by the KJV and the NIV. In KJV, God, who separated Paul from his mother's womb, called Paul when it pleased Him. While the NIV indicates God "called" Paul from birth. Nevertheless, as related by the NIV, Paul says from "from birth," not "from the beginning of the world" or "from the beginning of time."

Ephesians 1:9-11 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of **his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times **he might gather together** in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after **the counsel of his own will**: (KJV)

This is all according to His will. Any predestinating is being done actively; God is pursuing His plan. This is not being done from the "beginning of time."

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works, which God hath before ordained** that we should walk in them. (KJV)

In this passage, it is not *us* that God prepared beforehand, it is the works. God planned for us to be his presence in this age to do good works.

Ephesians 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (KJV)

God is accomplishing his eternal purpose—fellowship with his creation and an end to death and sin. Fellowship with his creation was the original purpose, but was confounded by man's rebellion. God is working out His plan. Jesus Christ completed the salvation portion of it. There is more to come.

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (KJV)

We are elect through Jesus Christ, not beforehand as individuals, but in the same way Israel was elect, or God's chosen people.

1Thessalonians 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (KJV)

We are assured that we are part of God's plan. Our election was made possible through the work of Jesus Christ. Our response to Him counts us among the elect.

1Thessalonians 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. (KJV)

God calls all men as is seen in 2Peter 3:9:

2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not **willing that any should perish**, but that **all should come to repentance**. (KJV)

Those who respond through faith in Jesus Christ are saved.

2Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved

of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (KJV)

He chose the brethren of the Lord, as we have said before, to salvation “through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.” Remember that the Greek word “beginning” [*arche*] can mean “early on” instead of “the beginning of creation.

2Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (KJV)

God saves us in spite of our works through faith. Nevertheless, we still must have faith or we cannot be saved. God saved us and called us with a holy calling, according to his plan. This plan was in place “before the world began.” It’s not predestined. We were to be holy from creation. That was God’s purpose before the world began. That purpose never changed, only the path to accomplish the purpose did.

Titus 1:1-2 1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to **the faith of God's elect**, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In **hope of eternal life, which God**, that cannot lie, **promised before the world began**; (KJV)

Before the fall, we all would have had eternal life without pain and turmoil. It is this promise that God is carrying forth after our redemption.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (KJV)

Here God indicates the possibility of the “just” drawing back, and then God would have displeasure in him.

James 1:18 **Of his own will** begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (KJV)

Through the truth delivered in Jesus Christ, these early Christians were firstfruits.

1Pet 1:2 **Elect according to the foreknowledge of God** the Father, through sanctification of the

Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (KJV)

Again, according to God's plan we are now his people and Christ's church.

1Peter 1:20 **Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you, (KJV)

Jesus was ordained before the foundation of the world. (He was the agent who performed the act of creation.) He was revealed (and given) to us in these "last times."

2Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: (KJV)

"Election" is not a static condition. It takes diligence on our part to maintain that state.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and

denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Ungodly men have existed and have been “predicted” from the earliest times. These have been marked out for specific condemnation.

Appendix B—Verses containing “the end” and “Time”

Many people refer to “the end of time,” and “before time began.” These statements lend to confusion and are not necessarily scriptural concepts. Let's examine some passages on the subject.

Eccl:3:11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the **beginning to the end**. (KJV)

Is:46:10 Declaring the **end from the beginning**, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (KJV)

Dn:8:17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for **at the time of the end** shall be the vision. (KJV)

Dn:8:19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at **the time appointed the end shall be.** (KJV)

Dn:11:6 And in the **end of years** they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. (KJV)

Dn:11:27 And both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet **the end shall be at the time appointed.** (KJV)

Dn:12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the **time of the end:** many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (KJV)

These verses all refer to the beginning and end of the time of man and the world as we know it. Otherwise

there could not be a new earth, New Jerusalem, or even any existence beyond the end of time.

In the King James Version, Revelation 10:6, seems to indicate that time will end:

Rev 10:6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be **time no longer:**
(KJV)

But other translations, and a better understanding of the Greek words, indicate this is not what is being said.

Rev 10:6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, (NKJ)

And finally, Psalm 102:27 tells us

But thou art the Same, and thy years shall have no end. (KJV)

God's years are not going to end; only the time of man.

One of the problems we have in understanding the concept of time is that once errant ideas get imbedded into our theology, they bias our understanding. The bias embedded in our thinking causes us to see the conclusion of that bias where it is not justified. In the efforts of the NIV to be more easily understood in the context of our 20th century American lives, it often phrases Biblical passages in terms we already understand, whether or not it is the most accurate translation. For example, the NIV translates the following passages as “before the beginning of time.”

2 Tim 1:9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time**, (NIV)

Titus 1:2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised **before the beginning of time**, (NIV)

According to Strong's³⁴ the passage should be rendered “before a space of time eternal.” Interestingly, in this case the KJV is closer to the Greek when it says, “before the world began.”

³⁴ *ibid*, Strong's, 5550 chronos (khron'-os)

2 Tim 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began**, (KJV)

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised **before the world began**; (KJV)

The RSV Interlinear Greek New Testament³⁵ translates it “before times eternal.” The same is true for both verses.

³⁵ The Revised Standard Version Interlinear Greek-English New Testament by Alfred Marshall, D. Litt., © Literal English Translation, Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd. 1958, Zondervan Publishing

Appendix C—Notes on Man's Scholarly Explanations

Often, man's work on such subjects tends to perpetuate the prevailing ideas rather than to bring us closer to truth. We can see this sort of perpetuation in many subjects, most notably Calvinism to which we have alluded previously (p.32). For example, consider Nelson's Bible Dictionary on the subjects of Foreknowledge and Predestination.

FOREKNOWLEDGE

“The unique knowledge of God which enables Him to know all events, including the free acts of man, before they happen”

“God's foreknowledge is much more than foresight. God does not know future events and the actions of men because He foresees them; He knows them because He wills them to happen <Job 14:5; Ps. 139:15-16>. Thus God's foreknowledge is an act of His will <Is. 41:4; Rev. 1:8,17; 21:6>.

“In <Romans 8:29> and <11:2>, the apostle Paul's use of the word foreknew means "to

choose" or "to set special affection on." The electing love of God, not foresight of human action, is the basis of His predestination and salvation <Rom. 8:29-30,33>. This same idea is used to express the nation of Israel's special relationship to God <Acts 2:23; Rom. 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2,20>.³⁶

PREDESTINATION

“The biblical teaching that declares the sovereignty of God over man in such a way that the freedom of the human will is also preserved”

“Two major concepts are involved in the biblical meaning of predestination.

First, God, who is all powerful in the universe, has foreknown and predestined the course of human history and the lives of individuals. If He were not in complete control of human events, He would not be sovereign and, thus, would not be God.

“Second, God's predestination of human events does not eliminate human choice. A

³⁶

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers

thorough understanding of how God can maintain His sovereignty and still allow human freedom seems to be reserved for His infinite mind alone. Great minds have struggled with this problem for centuries.

“Two views of predestination are prominent among church groups today. One view, known as Calvinism, holds that God offers irresistible grace to those whom he elects to save. The other view, known as Arminianism, insists that God's grace is the source of redemption but that it can be resisted by man through his free choice. In Calvinism, God chooses the believer; in Arminianism, the believer chooses God.

“Although the term predestination is not used in the Bible, the apostle Paul alludes to it in <Ephesians 1:11>: "We have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."

“All Christians agree that creation is moving within the purpose of God. This purpose is to

bring the world into complete conformity to His will <Rom. 8:28>. From the very beginning of time, God predestined to save humankind by sending His Son to accomplish salvation. Thus, "God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" <1 Tim. 2:4>.

“The doctrine of predestination does not mean that God is unjust, deciding that some people will be saved and that others will be lost. Mankind, because of Adam's FALL in the Garden of Eden, sinned by free choice. Thus, no person deserves salvation. But God's grace is universal. His salvation is for "everyone who believes" <Rom. 1:16>.

“Paul also declared that he was a debtor under obligation to take the message of the gospel to other people <Rom. 1:14> so they might hear and obey. Paul clearly meant that no one is saved apart from the will of God and no one is lost apart from the will of God. But the will of God functions within an order which God Himself has established.

“Predestination is a profound and mysterious biblical teaching. It focuses our thinking on man's

freedom and responsibility as well as God's sovereignty.³⁷

It seems to me Nelson's Bible Dictionary presents internal contradictions in both its explanation of Foreknowledge and of Predestination. The author tries to explain a difficult subject but does not want to stray too far from the accepted ideas. As a result, distinct and opposing ideas are muddled together.

Under Foreknowledge, It states that God knows the "free acts of man, before they happen." Then it describes Paul's use of the word Foreknew as "to choose" in the same way that God "predestined" Israel's relationship to God by an act of His will. This is contradictory. Either God knew the acts before they happen, or God causes them to happen in the case of Israel.

Now, under Predestination, the position is taken that, *"A thorough understanding of how God can maintain His sovereignty and still allow human freedom seems to be reserved for His infinite mind*

³⁷ Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers

alone.” I consider this statement to be an abrogation of the ability to read God’s Word, reason, and reach a conclusion on this topic. It is an absurd statement. The writer admits that ‘predestination’ is not in the Bible, and then concludes the thought by asserting it to be a ‘profound biblical teaching.’ This is begging the question. In addition, the statement, “*From the very beginning of time, God predestined to save humankind by sending His Son to accomplish salvation*” is unfounded by scripture and makes God a liar many times over. It implies that when God created the Garden of Eden, that He had already planned to send His son to save the world from Sin. And yet Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden because they sinned. This indicates that if they had not sinned, they would have had a perfect existence in communion with God in the Garden for their entire existence. Such a perfect existence would not require the sacrifice of God’s son for the Sin of the world. Was God merely playing a mind game with Adam and Eve? This is the necessary conclusion if we insist that God knew Adam would disobey before he was created. It also leaves us with no reason for God to be angry, since if He knew the future, He knew the sin was going to happen, how it would happen, and

when it would happen. I assert that God did not establish (put in place) the plan to send His Son until after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.

The only conclusion I can reach from Nelson's Bible Dictionary, after wading through the intellectual mire, is that it offers no conclusion.

As remarkable as many scholarly men might be on other issues, when they attempt to resolve the issue of predestination and free will, their explanations degenerate into self-contradictory statements in order to hold on to the illogical theological position that has been promoted by the established orthodoxy for so many years.

Appendix D—Sources

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