

Does God know everything?

Or What is the Omniscience of God?

Omniscience, by definition, is simply knowing everything or “all knowing.” Along with omnipotence (all powerful) and omnipresence (being present everywhere at the same time) completes the traditional attributes of God. To deny the attributes of God is to deny the existence of God. A god without these attributes may be a god but certainly is not God!! This is so obvious that I think not even an theist would deny it, to saying nothing of a believer and it is even less likely that a New Testament Christian would deny it. These attributes are what makes God, God.

When some say that God chooses not to know something (anything at all!!) they are in reality saying that God **IS NOT** omniscient. It does not matter WHY God doesn't know something. If He doesn't know it, then He doesn't know it!! If He doesn't know it THEN He is not omniscient. If He is not omniscient then He is not God. If at any time, for any length of time, God doesn't know something, then, for that time He is not omniscient, and **therefore is not God!**

Are we soooooo sure of our ability to reason that we think our interpretations of certain scriptures are so absolutely true that we will settle for the necessary conclusion that God (even sometimes) is NOT GOD!! By choosing to believe that God doesn't know some things, not only do we deny the omniscience of God but we raise many other troubling questions, such as:

(1) If God Chooses not to know something, this implies that He at one time knew it, or else how could He choose not to know it? And if He knew it and then decided not to know it, then He forgot it!! If one thinks He never knew it, then He was never omniscient. But if He at one time knew it why would He choose not to know it? Why would He choose to give up His God-ness (if indeed this is possible)? God does not do anything without cause or reason. He does not do things arbitrarily. If He gave up his omniscience and then became not God, how could a being who is not God then choose to again know everything and become God? Can a non-God, by his own choosing, become God!!

(2) If God chooses not to know some things, which things and when? Since He doesn't tell us what things He will choose not to know or when He will choose not to know them, He might choose at any time to forget any particular thing. If this is true, how can we have any confidence in prayer? Because the very thing we pray about might be the very thing or the very time that God forgot how to answer.

(3) If God chooses not to know some things and we don't know what they are, then we cannot have any confidence in anything the Bible says because any given idea in the Bible might be the very thing God had decided to forget. It might even be a lie because God may have chosen not to know that “God cannot lie.”

(4) If God chooses not to know some things and we don't know what they are, then we cannot depend of the omnipotence of God because He may have chosen to forget that He is omnipotent.

(5) If God can give up His omniscience, can He also choose to give up His omnipotence, or omnipresence?

(6) How can we ever be sure that God knows anything or can do anything? Because the very thing that we are sure He knows might be the very thing that He has chosen not to know. The very thing we want Him to do might be the very thing He has chosen that He was UNABLE to do.

Some people draw the very incorrect and illogical conclusion that if God knows what will happen in the future then He controls it and nullifies free will. I have heard it said that if God knew whether I would be lost or saved, then I have no free will to change that decision. How very wrong man can be when trying to draw conclusions. God's knowing the future has NOTHING to do with the exercising of free will. It simply means that God knows what my choices will be. I still have the free will to choose to serve Him or not. God just knows before hand what my choices will be. He doesn't control my choices, He just knows

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me better than I do myself and can see into the future and “see” which way I will **choose** (using my free will) to go.

If God’s foreknowledge means He controlled the situation to the exclusion of free will, **then everyone** who was ever a part of any prophecy (in the entire Bible) lost their free will because God knew the outcome before it happened, unless, of course, God chose not to know the outcome of all those prophecies and was just **lucky, 100% of the time!**

I choose to resolve all these difficulties by just believing I John 3:19-20: “This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts and **he knows everything.**” The three Greek words involved are “θεος...γινωσκει παντα” literally mean “God...knows **everything.**”

Yes, but what about the passages that some say prove that God chooses not to know some things. Are there no other reasonable explanations for these verses? Let’s examine one of them as an example. If this one has another reasonable explanation, maybe other questionable verses do too.

Gen. 18:21-22 “The Lord said, “the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” Yes, I can understand if this passage is read in isolation one might get the impression that God did not know how bad it was in Sodom and Gomorrah and He, therefore, had to go down to see. But we must never be a slave to our first impressions, especially when they lead us to conclude that God is not omniscient. Looking at the verses just following (vv. 22-32) we see:

(1) that God, himself, did not go to Sodom and Gomorrah, only the other two “men” (or angels as they are called in 19:1.) But if 18:21-22 are to be understood literally He should have gone because “The Lord said...I will go down...” Most assuredly He could have sent the angels to find out for Him and “report back,” so to speak. But we have no record of an investigation or a reporting back. (2) On the contrary we have in 19:13 these words: “because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that He has sent us (“to investigate and report back just how bad it really is”?? -No, but, instead...) to destroy it. It seems obvious that God’s orders were sure and unambiguous.

How then can we understand the words “I will go down and see *how bad it is.*” Have you ever told one of your children to clean his room. And gone in afterwards and found it still a mess? If seeing your child later you asked “did you clean your room?” “Why, yes mother I did.” came the reply. Have you ever replied something like this: “well let’s just go in and see if you did!” Does this mean you didn’t know the condition of the room or did it mean that you wanted to prove it to the child or to demonstrate that your anger was based on hard facts that the room was not cleaned? Maybe this is all God wanted to say in this passage. Maybe this is just accommodative language. Simply using language that is commonly understood but that is not technically correct, such as the 13 times in the Bible where it refers to sunrise when we all know that the sun in relationship to the earth stands still and the earth turns. The sun doesn’t “raise” at all, the earth spins. Or it may just be a figure of speech showing God’s intense interest in the happenings in Sodom and Gomorrah.

These are reasonable explanations of this passage. These possibilities are at least as reasonable as any other and any of them at least allows God to be God.

Knowing that the position that “**God chooses not to know some things**” is false, let us look for other reasonable explanations for questionable passages as a demonstrations of our love for the truth.

Respectfully submitted by Cliff Baird. Your comments or questions are welcome.