

## THE OPENNESS OF GOD IN LIGHT OF THE SCRIPTURES

### 1. The Bible Teaches That God Is Continually Involved With All Created Things.

- a. He preserves His creation. Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17 cf Nehemiah 9:6
- b. He gives breath. Job 34:14-15 cf Psalm 104:29
- c. He cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.

He directs the weather Job 37:6-13; Psalm 148:8

He causes the grass to grow. Psalm 104:13-14

He directs the stars. Job 38:32

He directs the coming dawn. Job 38:12; Matthew 5:45

He provides food for the animals. Psalm 104:27-28; Matthew 6:26

He oversees the animals. Matthew 10:29

- d. He controls random or chance events. Proverbs 16:33
- e. He directs the affairs of nations. Job 12:23; Psalm 22:28; Daniel 4:17, 34-35; Acts 17:26 cf 14:16
- f. He controls the details of our lives.

He provides our daily food. cf Matthew 6:11

He knows us and is involve with us before we are born. Psalm 139:16; Job 14:5; Galatians 1:15; Jeremiah 1:5

He oversees our steps. Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:1,9; 20:24

He determines our successes and failures. Psalm 75:6-7; Luke 1:52

He is in charge of conception. Psalm 127:3

He gives us our gifts and talents. 1 Corinthians 4:7; Psalm 18:34

He determines the decisions of rulers. Proverbs 21:1; Ezra 6:22 cf 1:1

He fashions our hearts. Psalm 33:14-15; Philippians 2:13

- g. He governs and directs all things in order to accomplish His purposes. Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11

**God causes all things that happen, but He does so in such a way that He somehow uphold our ability to make willing responsible choices that have real and eternal consequences for which we are held accountable. cf Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28**

## 2. Scriptural Affirmations of God's Exhaustive Foreknowledge.

### a. Isaiah

41:21-29- The ability to foretell the future is a test of true deity. cf v. 23

God has made prophecy the very basis for his claim to deity.

42:8-9- Fulfilling prophecies is presented as one reason God deserves glory.

43:8-13- This passage links God's foreknowledge to His rightful sovereignty.

44:6-8, 24-28- A contrast between the true God and the pretender gods whose omens fail and whose purported knowledge is mere foolishness.

45:1-7- What God predicts involves massive numbers of future free choices and actions by people.

45:18-25- God's worth before which all will bow down is proven and demonstrated by His word.

46:8-11- God's purpose and intention includes multitudes of future choices by this man and all who surround him.

48:3-8- This passage asserts massive foreknowledge and absolute accuracy.

### b. Deuteronomy 31:16-21 cf Isaiah 5:1-7

### c. Psalm 139:4, 16

### d. Daniel 2,4,5,7,8,9,10,11

### e. John

6:64, 70-71 cf Matthew 26:21-25

13:19 Jesus uses this appeal as a reason why people should believe.

13:38 cf 18:19-27

14:29 cf 16:4 Jesus uses this appeal as a reason why people should believe.

21:18-19

## 3. Assessing Problem Passages

**Genesis 22:12** He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

1. If God must test Abraham to find out what is in his heart, then it calls into question God's present knowledge of Abraham's inner spiritual life.

**1 Chronicles 28:9** for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.

**1 Samuel 16:7b** . . . for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

2. God doesn't need this test to know specifically whether Abraham fears God.

**Romans 4:18-22** In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore IT WAS also CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

**Hebrews 11:8-12** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.*

**Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; 18 *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." 19 He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Abraham was God-fearing before the actual attempted sacrifice.

God knew Abraham's heart perfectly.

Abraham believed before the sacrifice that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

3. When God observes Abraham bind his son to the altar and raise his knife, God literally sees and experiences what he has known from eternity.

God witnessed Abraham demonstrate dramatically and afresh that he feared God and it was both pleasing and acceptable in God's sight.

**Genesis 3:8-13** They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Does God not know presently where they are?

Is God spatially limited so that he is unaware of where they are hiding?

Does God not know that they have already eaten the fruit in the past?

We need to interpret passages like these in light of what scripture clearly teaches elsewhere about God's knowledge of the past, present, and future.

We need to interpret passages like these rhetorically and anthropomorphically.

**Genesis 18:9, 20-21** Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." . . . 20 And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 21 "I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

Does God not know where Sarah is? cf vv. 12-15

Does God not know presently whether the sin of Sodom is as great as its outcry?

Does God not know the past sin of Sodom fully, since he must see if they have done according to its outcry?

Is He not omnipotent, since he needs to travel there and only then will be able to see what the status of their sin is?

**Jeremiah 7:31** "They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and *it did not come into My mind*. cf 19:5; 32:35

God had foretold that this might happen 800 years in advance.

Deuteronomy 12:31 "You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. cf 18:10; 32:35; Leviticus 18:21

Apparently we are to understand these phrases as expressing God's extreme disapproval of their vile activity.

It is far from His thoughts and desires for His people.

**Genesis 9:13-17** I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 "It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, 15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth." cf Isaiah 62:6

**Exodus 4:8** "If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. cf 13:17; Jeremiah 26:3; Ezekiel 12:3

1. Many passages teach that God does know what people will do.

Deuteronomy 31:20-21 "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. 21 "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon

them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore."

2. Although God knows what will occur, He may purposely withhold this information from others.

3. From our human standpoint, the conditionality is real.

**Numbers 14:11** The LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? cf Hosea 8:5

These are rhetorical questions.

**Exodus 32:14** So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people. cf 1 Samuel 15:11, 35

1. This is an anthropomorphic statement. because other scriptures clearly present God as transcending these human and finite features.

**Numbers 23:19** "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

God doesn't repent in the same way we do. He does not change from a wrong action to a right one.

Neither does God lie. cf 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18

**1 Samuel 15:29** "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

This is particularly striking in light of verses 11 & 15

2. When the human situation changes, God desires to act in a way fitting to this change in situation.

**Jeremiah 18:7-10** "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*; 8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9 "Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*; 10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.

Exodus 32:14 God took into account Moses' prayer.

1 Samuel 15:11, 35 God took into account Saul's failure.

2 Kings 20:1-6 God responded to Hezekiah's prayer.

3. When God is said to repent, it indicates his real experience of changed emotions and disposition toward people as situations change. cf Genesis 6:5-6; Jonah 3:5-10

Even though God knows what will happen, that doesn't mean that He doesn't respond emotionally to the situation.

This is true about a mother who takes her young daughter to the doctor to undergo a painful procedure. Though she knows what will happen, it doesn't mean that she doesn't have grief or feelings of regret for having to do it.

The above has been compiled and adapted from: *God's Lesser Glory* by Bruce Ware and *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem