

SUMMARY: FOREKNOWLEDGE means the knowledge God has of events before they happen. It carries with it the implication that God has knowledge of some or all future events before they happen. It causes problems with the concept of free moral agency. An alternate to foreknowledge as we would define it is God's ability to make prophecies because He can control events and make the prophecy come true.

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CONSENSUS OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST: God has the complete ability for foreknowledge in the sense in which we use the word today but only actually knows what is going to happen when he elects to know. As He can know what you are going to do, but does not actually know because He has chosen not to know, your eternal salvation is not predestined.

ALTERNATE SUGGESTED CONCLUSION: God does not have foreknowledge in the sense in which we normally use the word. He can prophecy and "foreknow" what is going to happen because He can control the events and make sure that it happens.

VERSES INDICATING AT LEAST SOME FOREKNOWLEDGE

1. Isaiah 42:9: "Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."
2. Isaiah 46:10: "Declaring the end from the beginning"
3. Daniel 2:1-45: The king's dream about the gold, silver, bronze, iron, & clay statue foretelling substantial information about future kingdoms on the earth and when Christ's kingdom would be established.
4. Psalms 139:15-16: "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."
5. Matthew 24:15-35: Although the prophecies of Matthew 24 were to be fulfilled within a few years, they still indicate foreknowledge of the events.
6. Matthew 25:34: "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."
7. Acts 2:23: "this Man, delivered up by the **predetermined** plan and **foreknowledge** of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."
8. Romans 8:29-30 "For those whom He **foreknew**, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many

brethren; and these whom He **predestined**, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

9. Ephesians 1:4-5 “Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him. In love. He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will,”
10. Ephesians 1:11 “Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will,”
11. 1 Peter 1:1-2 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”
12. 1 Peter 1:20: "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world,"
13. Revelation 20:1-15: The future prophecies of Revelation as typified by the prophecies in chapter 20 certainly tend to indicate foreknowledge.
14. More than 100 prophecies about Christ are given in the Old Testament.

It is easy to conclude God has foreknowledge from reviewing verses such as these.

VERSES INDICATING A LIMIT TO THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

We have found no verses which state directly that the foreknowledge of God is limited. It is only inferred from the teachings of some verses such as:

1. Genesis 6:6-7: Why would God be sorry that He had made man, if He had full knowledge from the start of how man was going to turn out?
2. Genesis 18:20-21: "And the Lord said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorra is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 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 it.".
3. Genesis 22:12: "for now I know that you fear God" (said of Abraham at the offering of Isaac).
4. Exodus 32:8-10: When the children of Israel made the golden calf, God became angry. If He knew that they were going to do it, why would He have gotten mad? Vs. 14 says He changed his mind, indicating that He had not been aware of what He Himself was going to think.

5. Numbers 14:12: "I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation..." (God is angry with the Israelites because they were alarmed due to the spies' reports)

Numbers 14:13-19: Moses appeals to God to change His mind.

Numbers 14:20: "So the Lord said I have pardoned them according to your word;" (God changed His mind and did not smite the Israelites. If God did not change His mind from verse 12 to 20 but knew all the time that He was not going to smite the Israelites, then He lied in verse 12. God does not lie.)
6. Jeremiah 19:5: "a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind"
7. Jeremiah 32:35: "which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination"
8. Jonah 3:1-10: God said that Nineveh would be overthrown in 40. When He saw their repentance He relented and did not do it. If He knew that He was not going to overthrow Nineveh, He lied to them or was at least hypocritical. We know that God does not lie and is not hypocritical, so the only conclusion can be that God did not have future knowledge of what was going to happen in Nineveh. It has been suggested that the statement that Nineveh would be destroyed was a conditional statement. The Bible does not state it as a conditional statement, and a further indication that this was not the case is that when God relented in 3:10, Jonah became angry (4:1). If he had been issuing a conditional proclamation, he would have understood that it might have been followed.
9. I Samuel 15:35: "And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel."
10. 2 Kings 20:1-6: King Hezekiah was notified by God thru the prophet Isaiah to get his house in order for he was about to die. Hezekiah prayed to God and wept bitterly. God heard the prayers of Hezekiah and sent Isaiah back to say that he would add 15 years to Hezekiah's life. If God had foreknowledge that he was going to extend Isaiah's life by 15 years, he would have made an untrue statement to first say he was about to die.

VERSES STATING THAT GOD HAS NO FOREKNOWLEDGE

We have found no verses which teach that God has no foreknowledge.

VERSES STATING THAT GOD HAS UNLIMITED FOREKNOWLEDGE

We have found no verses which indicate the unlimited foreknowledge of God.

CONCEPTS TAKEN TO INDICATE UNLIMITED FOREKNOWLEDGE

Although no verses state the unlimited foreknowledge of God, the following concepts are taken by some as an indication of unlimited foreknowledge:

1. **OMNISCIENCE OF GOD** (all knowing): If God has learned one thing, then He was and is not omniscient. Omniscience is not a scriptural term. (Omniscience could be limited to present knowledge rather than future knowledge and still be an omniscience characteristic.)
2. **IMMUTABILITY OF GOD**: A term which is used to indicate the concept that God is unchangeable. It is frequently taken to mean that if God learns something, then He would change in learning. Therefore, God must know everything or He would be changeable. Immutability of God is only used in Heb. 6:17-18 with respect to having an unchangeable purpose and inability to lie. The Bible does not say that He cannot change in some ways.

God declares himself to be unchangeable in Malachi 3:6: "For I, the Lord, do not change, therefore....". Does the characteristic of being "unchangeable" extend to not receiving or learning more knowledge? Is God's learning something a change in God, or does the unchangeableness of God describe the nature of God?

To disprove that the understanding that the immutability and/ or unchangeableness of God means that God has all future knowledge, all you would have to do is to find a scripture where God said He would do something, and then He changed His mind and didn't do it. If it ever happened, then God did not have future knowledge of that event, or He was lying. We know that God does not lie, so it would have to mean that we misunderstand immutability and/or unchangeableness. Immutability and/or unchangeableness would not then necessarily imply that God had all future knowledge. Examples of this occur in Numbers 14:12-20 and Jonah 3:1-10 as discussed in a previous section. Exodus 32:14, Amos 7:3 & 6 state "The Lord changed His mind.". Clearly unchangeability is not all encompassing.

3. **INFINITY OF GOD**: Psalm 147:5 "His understanding is infinite." The assumption would be that anything infinite is all inclusive. This is not true. Consider a line infinitely long. The line is infinitely long, but has no width or height. Infinite understanding does not preclude foreknowledge, but it does not prove it either. It is a different characteristic.
4. **PERFECTION OF GOD**: Job 36:4 "One who is perfect in knowledge is with you." Perfection does not prove unlimited foreknowledge. Job 3:16 "The wonders of the One perfect in knowledge." Again, perfection does not necessarily imply unlimited foreknowledge.

HOW A BELIEVER IN UNLIMITED FOREKNOWLEDGE WILL EXPLAIN THE VERSES INDICATING LIMITED FOREKNOWLEDGE

Each of the verses in the section titled VERSES INDICATING A LIMIT TO GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE must be explained in accordance with the understanding of unlimited foreknowledge, if you choose to believe in unlimited foreknowledge. Some of the ways to explain that these verses do not mean what they say are:

1. The language is accommodative of the limited understanding of man, similar to saying that God has eyes and ears. It puts it in terms which we can understand.
2. It is not clear what God was trying to say to the person in the scripture.
3. God's "repenting" in Genesis 6:6 simply means a change in attitude. (Why would His attitude change if He knew what was going to happen? Was He unduly optimistic when they were doing good and became more pessimistic when they started doing bad, as if He didn't know they were going to start doing bad?)

(1) Pictorial Bible Dictionary, The Southwest Company, 1966, p. 692.