



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 2.6.3 – The Doctrine of God

### The Attributes of God: Omniscience

God's Word teaches us that God is omniscient, which means He knows all things. He knows everything without studying. He knows everything without any omissions or errors in His understanding.

Samuel's mother, Hannah, said: **"The LORD is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed"** (1 Samuel 2:3). How much knowledge does He have? There is no limit to what God knows. **"His understanding is infinite"** (Psalm 147:5). **"The eyes of the LORD are in every place"** (Proverbs 15:3). His Word **"is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"** (Hebrews 4:12-13). He **"knows all things"** (1 John 3:20).

As the Creator, God knows everything about every one of His creatures. Job understood this, even before God appeared to him, for he said: **"He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens"** (Job 28:24). God showed the depth of His knowledge when He Himself appeared to Job by asking Job: **"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundation fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone?"** (Job 38:4-6). We cannot even imagine the knowledge God has concerning the workings of the human mind and the construction of all the living things. He knows the design of every plant and animal, all the designs of the vast universe. The more we learn about the human body and the creatures of the world, the more we realize how complex all things are. They far beyond our ability to comprehend.

One aspect of God's knowledge that confuses the human mind is God's knowledge of what is going to happen in the future. For example, when God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt, He told Moses to go to the Egyptian Pharaoh and demand that he let his slaves go free. But God also told Moses: **"I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go"** (Exodus 3:19). When Moses gave the excuse that he could not go to Pharaoh because he was not a good speaker, God spoke to him sharply: **"Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart"** (Exodus 4:14). James, Jesus' brother, said the same thing at the meeting of the early Christians in Jerusalem: **"Known to God from eternity are all His works"** (Acts 15:18).

What is even more incredible is that God knows what will happen in any situation that might arise. God know what will happen no matter what decision a person might make. For example, when David was hiding out from King Saul, he wanted to know what would happen if he stayed in the city of Keilah, so he asked God: **"Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down?"** God replied: **"He will come down... They will deliver you"** (1 Samuel 23:11-12). Based on this advanced information from God, David left the city of Keilah and escaped from King Saul.

God revealed to His prophet Jeremiah what would happen to the people of Judah if their king Zedekiah surrendered to Babylon and what would happen if Zedekiah did not surrender. Jeremiah was able to inform the king: **"If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live... But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand"** (Jeremiah 38:17-18). Zedekiah chose not to surrender, and what God said would happen did happen.

Jesus said what would have happened if He had performed His miracles in Tyre and Sidon or in Sodom: **“If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes...If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day”** (Matthew 11:21, 23).

God does not gain knowledge from any source, nor does He learn things gradually. He knows everything from eternity. The prophet Isaiah taught this truth with rhetorical questions: **“Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? ... Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?”** (Isaiah 40:13-14). These questions expect the answer: **“no one!”**

God’s knowledge is clear and distinct even to the tiniest details. David acknowledges the Lord’s incredible knowledge when he says in Psalm 139: **“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thoughts afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether”** (Psalm 139:1-4). Jesus said: **“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered”** (Matthew 10:29-30).

What God knows is always correct and exact. The Lord said to Samuel: **“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart”** (1 Samuel 16:7). Wise King Solomon said to God: **“You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men”** (1 Kings 8:39). Unbelievers are foolish when they think that God does not see their evil deeds. **“His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves”** (Job 34:21-22).

God’s knowledge covers the past, the present, and the future. To God these are all the same. God knows our whole lives before we are even born. David declares: **“My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest part of the earth? Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them”** (Psalm 139:15-16).

Since God knows everything that happens in the future, it is easy for Him to predict flawlessly what is certain to happen in the days to come. God revealed to the prophet Isaiah that the people of Judah would be captured by the Babylonians and that they would be freed by a king named Cyrus. God revealed the name of their deliverer many years before that man was even born. Speaking for God, Isaiah said: **“I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come”** (Isaiah 41:25). **“I am the LORD, ... who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’”** (Isaiah 44:24-28). God challenged the idols worshiped by false prophets to make predictions like Him: **“Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods”** (Isaiah 41:22-23). No one knows the past like God. No one knows the future like God.

When we think of God’s amazing knowledge, we must say with David: **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it”** (Psalm 139:6), or with the apostle Paul: **“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”** (Romans 11:33).

God knows the evil things that men do even before they do them, but this does not free them of their responsibility and guilt. God holds man responsible for his actions. The apostle John saw it all in a vision: **“I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ... and anyone not found written in the Book of Life was**

**cast into the lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:12-15). These books contain all the information concerning men's thoughts, words, and deeds. There is escape only for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

### **Questions**

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1. What does the term “omniscience” mean?
2. How can we prove from the Bible that God knows the thoughts of every person?
3. What did God know would happen when Moses appeared before the Pharaoh?
4. Why did David leave the city of Keilah when King Saul was chasing him?
5. Why was King Zedekiah foolish to keep on fighting with the Babylonians?
6. What is the source of God’s vast knowledge?
7. Why is God’s prophecy concerning Cyrus of Persia so amazing?
8. Since God knows everything, what must He know about us?
9. What will be written in the books that are opened on Judgment Day?
10. What is the Book of Life, and whose names are written there?
11. Why can we say that to God the past, the present, and the future are all the same?