

A Study of God's Foreknowledge Throughout Scripture

by Tim Sauder

Gen. 2:16-17 God did not intend for man to fall but did desire free will obedience.

Gen. 3:22 "Lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat and live forever." God is suggesting here that He should act in time to remove them from the garden because there was a possibility of them further complicating sin by eating from the tree of life and having eternal physical life in a sinful state. YAHWEH clearly implies the possibility showing He does not know this as a future certainty.

Gen. 6:5-7 YAHWEH sees man in time, as men think, act and respond to situations. Vs. 6 - "YAHWEH was sorry," (Heb. NACHAM- means to be penitent, to receive comfort from hurt by a change of mind, (a sigh), "that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved," (ATSSA - to worry, pain, anger, displeasure, grieve, hurt, make or be sorry, vex) "in His heart." Why was God hurt? Didn't He know man was going to go bad? Obviously not. Man's free moral choice to act independently from God had caused Him to be sorry. It was unplanned and unknown to God. God never plans evil unless in judgment. Now a new decision is made in time - vs. 7 - "I will blot out man," if God knew all future possibilities and events before the world began, He would have no new decisions to make, but instead, in response to man's decisions to disobey, God makes over 11,000 new decisions throughout the scripture.

Gen. 15:13-18 God is projecting the future plans for Abram's children. He says that in the fourth generation or lifetimes they will return to Canaan. This is one of the first of a series of conditional prophecies. Because of the sin and disobedience of the children of Israel in the wilderness, it was the fifth generation who entered. God did not know they would disobey. If He did, then He would have told Abram correctly. (Ex. 6:16-20 will quickly give you a calculation of four generations to Moses who, along with his generation, did not enter.) This is the first of a series of prophecies that does not turn out as God says they will because of man's wrong choice and God's uncertainty about future events where man's free will is concerned.

Gen. 18:20 In vs. 21 YAHWEH Himself enters the world to see if events are as bad as had been reported to Him. Now if He knew all things from the foundation of the world and all future events, this would be absurd. Abraham is able at this time to help in the decision and influence God. If God knew all things, then Abraham and others could have no influence through prayer on God's future decisions. You might say that God knew Abraham was going to ask Him and influence His decision. If that be the case, then Abraham's asking was a certainty not a possibility and was not made from a free will

response. If man is truly free in his choices, then what those choices will be are unknowable even to God. If man is not free to decide for or against God's will but is coerced by God, then it is impossible to make man accountable for sin. If God forces you to sin and it is not a free, independent choice, then He is responsible, not you.

Gen. 22:1-12 Here we find the first of several incidences where God tests man. Vs. 1 - "God tested Abraham," - some would like to suggest several reasons for this test. However, the clear statement of scripture is in vs. 12 - "for now I know that you fear God." This clearly states that previous to the test of God on Abraham's obedience, God did not know with absolute certainty what Abraham would do. To suggest anything else is a complete violation of Biblical principles of interpretation to accept clear statements of scripture at face value. This agrees with similar passages in Ex. 33:5; Deut. 8:2; II Chron. 32:31; etc.

Ex. 4:11-16 If God changes His command to Moses, allowing Aaron to be the spokesman, why didn't He start out with Aaron? Didn't God know He would have to change His mind because of Moses' lack of faith? If God knew Moses would fail to respond to His original intention, it would be foolish for Him to be angry with Moses. The only conclusion is that God did not know.

Ex. 10:3 God asks Pharaoh through Moses how long he would refuse to humble himself. What a foolish question if God knows the future. Why not ask something else?

Ex. 15:25 Now God tests all the children of Israel.

Ex. 16:4 Testing again is for God's benefit.

Ex. 32:7-15 God tells Moses that He intends to destroy these disobedient people and make from Moses a great nation. Moses believed God and went into intercession for them and changed God's mind (vs. 12 & 14). If God knew that Moses would pray and change His mind, then why tell Moses He would destroy the people knowing Moses would pray and He wouldn't. If God foreknew that Moses would pray and cause Him to change His mind, then He deceived Moses in telling him He would destroy the people. Here we find the first of several examples how foreknowledge of all future events affects the character of God. If God knew Moses would pray and knew he would change His

mind, then He deceived Moses originally. Those who believe in absolute foreknowledge distort the character of God making Him a deceiver.

Ex. 32:30-35 Moses was uncertain as to what he could do with God.

Ex. 33:2 God's original plan was that an angel should drive out the inhabitants of the land; however, this plan changed because of disobedience (note Judges 2:20; also Ex. 23:20-33).

Ex. 33:5 It sounds very much from this last sentence, "that I may know what I will do with you," that God did not know what He would do with them. It was a decision yet unmade.

Ex. 34:11 This is a repeat of Ex. 33:2 and was changed in Judges 2:20 because of disobedience.

Num. 3:12 This plan of God to take the Levites as His own is a direct change of mind from the original plan in Ex. 13:2 which was to take the first-born. No reason is given for this change.

Num. 3:45 Same as above.

Num. 11:1 & 10 The very fact of God's anger in time is a response to the people's complaining. These emotions on the part of God imply new feelings from new experiences which He did not have before.

Num. 14:11-22 Again the Lord decides to smite them and destroy them. Moses again prays and changes God's mind.

Num. 14:26-33 Some feel God is testing Moses here to see his reactions. However, would God test Moses by telling him a lie? God does not lie. Here again we either have absolute foreknowledge and a lying God, or foreknowledge based on probability and a God who tells the truth. In vs. 20 God responded to Moses' prayer.

Num. 16:20-26 YAHWEH wants to kill them again. We can only believe He meant it and did not know again His mind would be changed through a right response of Moses and Aaron falling on their faces to intercede.

Num. 16:42-50 This is the fourth time Moses intercedes.

Num. 21:8-9 It seems strange God would allow them to make an object like this if He later knew it would be an idol (II Kings 18:4). The fact is He didn't.

Deut. 8:2 "Testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." The test is once again clearly for God's knowledge.

Deut. 9:13 God sees events as they happen and makes decisions on that basis, not on the basis of some pre-existing knowledge of the event.

Deut. 9:20 Moses interceded for Aaron.

Deut. 11:21 "So that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied." This is the first of many such phrases. What God is saying is that right moral choices lead to a longer life. Now if God knows all the future, He must therefore know how long you will live. Your life span would have to be fixed or determined. If that is so, how can it be added to. The section added on would therefore contain events unplanned and unknown to God; then God would not have absolute foreknowledge. What confusion if you hold absolute foreknowledge of future events! However, there is a better way. Our present choices help create the future with God and are therefore unknowable. God knows all things knowable but not future possibilities where men's choices are involved.

Deut. 13:3-4 Test for God's benefit.

Deut. 18:18-22 "And you may say in your heart." God does not know things as certainties but only as possibilities.

Deut. 20:17-18 They did not listen to God and made a freewill moral choice to disobey.

Deut. 31:21 "For I know their intent which they are developing today." God's foreknowledge of future actions is based on His observation and evaluation of present events and actions of people. He examines or "tries the hearts and minds" - Ps. 7:9; also Ps. 139:23-24, and knows the thoughts of man as he thinks them but not before he thinks them (Ps. 94:11). Psalm 139:4 is a mis-translation in the NASV and others that use the word 'before'. Such a concept is not in the original Hebrew. The idea is correct in the KJV that while a word is being spoken God hears it. The idea is that distance is no problem with God. God is constantly evaluating our thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12).

Judges 2:1-3 God is angry with their disobedience and therefore vs. 3 means a new decision based on their failure to choose God's will.

Judges 2:18-23 This is a clear change from God's original plan. Again a test is involved.

Judges 3:4 Test - for God to know.

Judges 10:13 The word "therefore" denotes a change from His original plan.

I Sam. 2:30 Therefore a change of plan because of man's response.

I Sam. 12:13 God chooses Saul to be King. It is not His perfect will but He allows it.

I Sam. 13:14 Saul fails to please God. If God knew he would fail, why did He choose Him? He didn't know. God did not seek for a replacement until Saul failed to meet His expectations.

I Sam. 15:11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me . ." Why should God regret making Saul King if He knew all along that Saul would not obey? This word "regret" or "repenteth" (KJV) means to sigh, be sorry, pity, etc. Why should God feel so bad if He knew all along Saul would fail? The only logical conclusion is that He didn't know.

I Sam. 15:23-24 God's rejection of Saul was based on a free moral choice which Saul made - "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord (YAHWEH)".

I Sam. 23:10-12 When asking God's advice, David does not get the answer in certainties but in probabilities which could happen if no decisions are made to change the events. God expects us to ask Him for the possibilities and then make decisions accordingly.

II Sam. 7:11-13 God's intention was to establish the throne of Solomon forever (notice "descendant" is used as the decision was not made yet). However, Solomon's sin destroyed God's good intentions.

II Sam. 12:14, 21-22 God tells David that his child would die. However, David fasted and wept because he thought God might change His mind. If David had thought that the future was fixed, he would not have prayed.

II Sam. 24:12-16 David makes a freewill choice between three things. If God foreknew which he would choose, then it could not have been a possibility but a certainty. If it was a certainty, then David did not make a true freewill choice--he only thought he did. We cannot have absolute foreknowledge and free-will. They do not fit. By the way, God doesn't gamble either. The only solution is that God creates the future as it happens, His sovereignty working with but not overpowering man's freewill choices.

I Kings 9:3-9 God intended Solomon's temple to last forever. The promise was conditioned by the word "if", speaking of Solomon's obedience in integrity and uprightness. If God knew all things, He would have known Solomon would fall away and the temple would be destroyed; however, there is no hint of such a thing.

I Kings 11:11-13 Disobedience caused Solomon to lose the Kingdom.

I Kings 11:38 God gives ten tribes to Jeroboam to rule, with a conditional everlasting promise.

I Kings 14:8-9 Jeroboam fails to follow God and vs. 10 therefore every male is cut off. If God foreknew that Jeroboam would fail, why did He choose Him? The only sound judgment is that in God's original choosing, He did not intend him to sin or know that he would. Jeroboam's sin was a voluntary act of his own wrong moral choice.

I Kings 21:17-29 God spoke very directly to Ahab in vs. 19 & 21 stating that he would die. In vs. 29, Ahab's humility causes God to put off the punishment to the next generation. Now if God knew Ahab was going to humble himself, then His original words were too strong to be deceptive; they would have to be an outright lie if you believe in absolute foreknowledge. God's character is at stake in the area of foreknowledge.

II Kings 13:8 Joash's freewill act to strike the ground three times changed the results of the future. It was God's desire that he strike the ground more times, yet he was not forced to obey God's will. It is impossible for even God to know the future that is determined by men's freewill choices yet unmade.

II Kings 20:1-7 This passage is paralleled in Isaiah 38:1-5 and should be seen together. Facts: a) Hezekiah is sick to the point of death (vs. 1). b) Isaiah has a word from God that Hezekiah will die. c) Hezekiah prays and tears. d) God changes His decision and decides not only to heal him but to add 15 years to his life. Conclusions: 1) Now if God foreknew Hezekiah would pray, then God had Isaiah tell a lie by saying he would die, knowing all the time he wouldn't. 2) Hezekiah's prayers and humility make the difference. Since the future has not yet happened, we can have a part through prayer and the moral decisions which we make, to cooperate and co-create the future with God as did Hezekiah. 3) If 15 years were added to his life, then those years were also unknown to God and unplanned for, along with the events of those 15 years.

II Kings 23:26-28 Here God is clearly forced to reject Judah and the temple after His precious plans were to make them everlasting.

I Chr. 17:9-10 God's plans for Israel which were unkept because of disobedience.

I Chr. 21:1 Satan is a factor which is unaccounted for when discussing freewill and foreknowledge. Satan must have freewill to evaluate and do his evil schemes by making wrong decisions based on wrong motives. God would not do evil, therefore, evil comes from the selfishness of Satan and the selfishness of people with freewill.

I Chr. 21:7-12 This is a parallel passage of II Sam. 24:11-13 (see notes there).

II Chr. 7:15-18 God's intentions are clearly stated which are to have Solomon's temple last forever. Because of disobedience, this did not happen (I Kings 11:11-13). God shows no previous knowledge that Solomon was going to turn away.

II Chr. 7:17-19 Notice His promises are always conditional.

II Chr. 12:5-8 Because of humility, God's original plan is again changed.

II Chr. 16:9 If God knows all things before the foundation of the world, why is He continually watching "throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His"? God does not know with absolute certainty who will follow and be obedient to Him. He watches us as to how we respond to His testing to see if we will completely sacrificially trust Him.

II Chr. 32:31 "God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart."

Job 2:3 Here we find the reality of spiritual warfare. Job lives in time. God puts trust in His people. Satan acts in time challenging Job's motives for right actions (1:9). Satan obviously does not have foreknowledge or He would not have wasted his time in the test because he did not win. Satan did not once assume that God had absolute foreknowledge or he would have asked God how it would all end. If either God or Satan would have known the results of the contest with absolute certainty before it started, it would not be a real challenge at all. Would you make a bet with someone who knew with absolute certainty the outcome? Satan is dumb but not stupid.

Psalm 7:9-11 "God tries the hearts and minds."

Psalm 14:2 "YAHWEH has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God." Why should God look and search if He already knows everything?

Psalm 17:3 "Thou hast tested me and dost find nothing."

Psalm 53:2 Parallel of 14:2.

Psalm 78:21 Why get upset if He knew all along what would happen?

Psalm 90:13 "And be sorry" (change of mind - Heb. NACHAM)

Psalm 106:23-23 Moses was an intercessor.

Psalm 139:23-24 Testing our decision-making center, the heart, is how God knows about us. (Deut. 8:2; Gen. 22:12)

Proverbs 9:10-11 Our days are not fixed and foreknown before the foundation of the world or how can they be added unto by a moral decision that we make to fear the Lord.

Isaiah 5:3-7 God was not expecting Judah to respond to Him the way they did. If God knows all things, then it should have been no surprise, yet it was.

Isaiah 38:1-8 Hezekiah knew the character of God and also that the future was open to change. He was bold enough and established enough in this that he even dared to pray against what God said would happen. If we know this, it will help us to exercise our will in determination and prayer against what others call, 'the inevitable'. The only things that are inevitable are God's purposes and plans.

Isaiah 48:6 God is creating His purposes now in time. " . . . I proclaim to you new things from this time, even hidden things which you have not known. They are created now and not long ago . . ." Successive moments are necessary for a thought process. Successive moments are what make up time. God is not outside of time. He too experiences succession of thought and therefore time in His own realm in endless duration.

Isaiah 59:16 "And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede." Why should God be astonished if He knew about it all beforehand? It should be no surprise to Him.

Isaiah 65:2-3 "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people." Why spread out His hands if He made them rebellious? He didn't, it was a free moral choice that they made.

Jer. 1:12 "Then YAHWEH said to me, "You have seen well for I am watching over My word to perform it"." (This word "watching" means to be alert, sleepless, to be on the lookout.) Why be watching if it is pre-fixed? This passage shows us how God operates. As things happen in time, He carefully guides events and people in order to fulfill His word.

Jer. 3:7 "And I thought,"

Jer. 7:31 "and it did not come into My mind."

Jer. 18:6-10 There is an unknown uncertainty shown here by God whether or not Israel will repent.

Jer. 19:5 "nor did it enter My mind." A clear statement by God Himself that He had no previous knowledge yet men will disregard God's words for the thoughts of men. An old rule of interpretation is, "if the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense."

Jer. 25:4 Why would He send prophets again and again if He knew they would not listen? Absolute foreknowledge makes God into a fool of fools.

Jer. 26:2, 3 "Perhaps they will listen" - even God is uncertain as to the possible outcome of events.

Jer. 29:11 God does not plan evil but always good for us.

Jer. 32:35 Another clear statement from God Himself.

Ezekiel 12:1-3 "Perhaps they will understand" - again God shows uncertainty of future events.

Ezek. 20:8 "Then I resolved" - absolute foreknowledge would require absolute decisions prior to the time of an event, yet here we find that God makes His decisions in time responding to the moral choices of men be they right or wrong.

Ezek. 22:30-31 a) "And I searched for a man." Why would God search for a man if He foreknew that there would be none? Again those who believe in the absolute foreknowledge of God by doing so destroy His character making Him into a fool of fools by their system into which they have locked Him. b) God makes His decision here after they make theirs.

Ezek. 24:14 a) God says that He acts in time. b) He will not change His mind. c) His actions are according to our freewill responses.

Hosea 8:5 "How long will they be incapable of innocence?" (asks God)

Joel 2:12-15 "Who knows whether He will not turn and relent. ." (relent means change his mind)

Amos 5:14-15 Their actions precipitate god's blessing.

Amos 7:1-6 In vs. 3 & 6, the prayer of Amos changed YAHWEH's mind. "The Lord changed His mind about this." (The Hebrew word NACHAM is used, meaning relented. The same word as in Gen. 6:6 - "The Lord was sorry (NACHAM) that He had made man on the earth".)

Jonah 3:4-10 Vs. 4 - "Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown"." If God foreknew they would repent, He then sent Jonah to preach a lie, to achieve a good end of course. The question of absolute foreknowledge is, does God lie? Vs. 5-8 - The people made a moral choice by their freewill to repent-hoping to change the plan of God (vs. 9). (Relent is Heb. NACHAM - to be sorry or change one's mind - Gen 6:6)

Jonah 3:10 "When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented (NACHAM) concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." God saw in time and acted in response to the decisions they made. Since the freewill choice of the people of Nineveh was a creative act of their own doing, God had no way of knowing what they would do with absolute certainty. God gives us incentives by way of consequences, punishments and rewards in order to influence our moral choices, but He does not force us except in rare occasions to bring about His pre-purposed plan. In these occasions His control does not affect our eternal destiny.

Jonah 4:1-2 Jonah knew God's character and had wrong motives in his heart for not wanting to preach God's word to Nineveh.

Zechariah 8:13-17 God works in time to bring about His purposes.

New Testament

Matt. 21:1-3 Even though Jesus had foreknowledge, it was always open to possibilities of human freewill creative response. In vs. 3 - "And if anyone says something to you . ." - the "if" shows that it was open to possibilities.

Matt. 24:20-21 "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath." (see also Mark 13:18) Jesus is explaining the certainty of a future event but also that the details are not fixed but open to various possibilities which prayer will help create.

Matt. 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." The second coming of Jesus is not so much a fixed time or day in the future (on a time line) but a planned completion of events which the Father desires to take place. (Example: Matt. 24:14 "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come." Also: Rev. 6:11 "And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until (until Heos Arndt & Gingrich P. 334 denotes the end of a period of time) the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.") It is not so much a set time as set of events which the Father desires to be completed.

Matt. 40:42 Prayer changes things.

Matt. 26:52-54 There was an open and real possibility to change the events of Christ's death but Jesus made a conscious effort to fulfill scripture and the Father's desires.

Mark 7:24-30 Jesus was not going to answer the Syro-phoenician woman until she gave a sharp answer.

Mark 14:36 "All things are possible for thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what you will." The possibility was still open to future changes.

Mark 15:34 "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Was it a surprise to Jesus? Didn't He know it would happen?

Luke 7:30-31 "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves. ." Why would God purpose something for them if He foreknew they would only reject it? The character of God is at stake here as well.

Luke 10:31 "And by chance a certain priest . . ." The Greek word for chance is SUGKURIA which only means chance, coincidence, accident or accidentally. This is the

only reference. Are there events that happen without God directing, Satan inflicting or men choosing? Possibly!

Luke 15:7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Why would they rejoice in heaven if they knew beforehand what would happen? Absolute foreknowledge implies no surprises.

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may (may or might is in the subjunctive mood meaning that it was always an open possibility) not fail."

John 19:28 Jesus made a conscious effort to fulfill scripture.

Acts 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart" - God's knowledge of men is based on His constant testing of our motives and attitudes.

Romans 10:21 "But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people"." Now why would God stretch out His hand to them if He made them that way, and if He foreknew they would not listen? Again God would be a fool. Some may say that this is just figurative, but then God is just a figurative fool.

Rev. 3:5 God writes our names in His book with expectation--an anticipation of our continued right response to Him. If He had absolute foreknowledge and foreknew who was going to hell, He would never have to use an eraser.

A STUDY OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

A) Matt. 10:2-4 Judas was chosen by Jesus after - Luke 6:12-" Mark 3:14-19 . . . He spent the whole night in prayer to Luke 6:12-19 God." He was chosen along with the others after this time of prayer.

1) John 6:64 "But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did believe, and who it was that would betray Him."

Origin: One of the Early Church Fathers answers this best by saying, "For He who was amongst us, and knew what was in man, seeing his evil disposition, and foreseeing what he would attempt from his spirit of covetousness, and from his want of stable ideas of duty towards his Master, along with many other declarations, gave utterance to this also: "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me." (P. 441, vol. 4, Origin Against Celsus) Coveting the 30 pieces of silver could have been one of Judas' motives.

John 6:70-71 "Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" "Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the

twelve, was intending to betray Him." The word "is" (Greek ESTIN) could also mean resides or exists. We can understand that Judas had a demon.

2) P. 68 - In Answers to Questions, F.F. Bruce states, ". . . He discerned in Judas' character the qualities of an adversary which later (John 13:2, 27) gave Satan an opportunity for using Judas as his instrument." This thought is given in John 12:4-6. Jesus knew the motives and hearts of His disciples and knew what Judas would do.

John 13:18 "I know the ones I have chosen." There is every indication that Jesus chose Judas for the intended purpose of betrayal.

3) John 13:27 "Satan then entered into him." Because of unrepented sin in Judas' life, Satan had a foothold.

4) John 15:16 Jesus did not intend for Judas to fall away completely (see also Matt. 19:28). He had good plans even for Judas but he chose not to obey just as the "Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:31) so Judas rejected God's purpose of bearing fruit.

B) Mark 6:7-13 Judas was among the twelve sent out on a deliverance Luke 9:1-2 and healing ministry and given the same power and authority.

Mark 14:3-11 When the disciples reacted to the woman who poured costly perfume over Jesus' head, He rebuked them. It was immediately after this that Judas went to betray Him. It is easy to see that Judas reacted wrongly to correction. He was bitter and resentful and wanted to get even.

Mark 14:43 Judas chose to fellowship with Jesus' enemies. This is a sign of resentment when people agree with a person's enemies to get even.

C) Luke 8:1-2 Judas was constantly with Him.

Luke 10:20 Judas was among those to whom He spoke this, "but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." Having been given and using apostolic authority and having his name recorded suggests that he was saved at this point.

Luke 18:31 Judas was included in intimate conversations.

D) Luke 22:3-6 "Satan entered into Judas." "And he consented." Judas used his will to make a moral decision to betray Jesus.

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