

Theological Development Through the Scriptures

Jeremiah 9:24

What is God trying to reveal about Himself in these Scriptures?
Is the denial of absolute foreknowledge tenable?

Genesis 2:19

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them;

From this passage, what was God's reason to bringing the animals to man? It appears by the language used, God didn't know what Adam would in fact name each animal; this appears to be the point being made. This is at least the thought that his attempted to be conveyed with such wording. If such was not the case, God's word choice here is quite strange. If absolute foreknowledge is correct, then this could not be the actual reason why God performed this act, and the wording of Scripture becomes vague.

Genesis 18:20-21

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.

This verse is truly a stumper if absolute foreknowledge is true. God himself states quite openly that he will do something (go down) in order for him to know something. Now did he know it before he went or not? How can God use the future tense when addressing his knowledge? To say that God already knew but the wording is just saying that he will also know in the future does violence to language not to mention that it is stating the obvious. God uses language as we do. To do anything else would be utter folly. How could God faithfully communicate with man if he pulled a Clinton speak. If God's word usage is different than ours is, we have a communication dilemma of the first order. (The analysis of this story provides wonderful insights into God's nature and will be the subject of another paper altogether.)

Genesis 22:12

"Do not lay a hand on the boy", he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Here again God states that he has just learned something. Some scholars try to get around this by stating that the angel who delivered this message was interjecting his own opinion. Well if this is the case, then Abraham didn't withhold his only son from the angel. This is clearly preposterous, but it shows the length that theologians will go to in order not to change their theology. God tested Abraham to know what he would do.

Exodus 4:8

Then the Lord said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second. But if they don't believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground."

They MAY believe! Why is God giving Moses all of these contingencies? If God knew exactly how the Egyptians were going to react, then these instructions make little sense. Was he trying to give Moses the false belief that He didn't know exactly how things were going to turn out? Remember that this is God instructing Moses. This sounds like plan A, B and C.

Exodus 13: 17-18

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.

This passage seems to let us in on God's deliberation of how he is going route the nation of Israel. It clearly says that the reason God didn't take the most direct route was that the people "might" turn back. Here we see that God knows and understands the people's hearts and their "probable" reaction to a war at this point, but clearly the outcome is not certain. Remember, this is God speaking as it is in quotation marks. God made the people take the long route through the desert because he was not sure of what the outcome would have been had he not.

Exodus 16:4

In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

Why does God test us? Theologians say that it is for our sakes and not God's. This is indeed strange. Do you learn anything in a test, or does that which is already in you become manifest. Clearly the schoolteacher doesn't expect a student to learn from a test. A test is to determine what a student already knows. Now some may say that we cannot relate a schoolteacher's knowledge to that of God, and I would indeed agree. However, this Scripture appears to correlate the two. God tested them in order to find something out. Are we going to say that God already knew, but he wanted to stimulate his sense of vision?

Numbers 14:11-12

The Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people that me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?" I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.

Here we see God asking questions of Moses that we can confidently conclude that Moses didn't have the answers to. Clearly God knew that Moses didn't have the answers. Why then was God making these comments? Could it be to show his breaking heart? Why would God ask these questions when he already knew the answer? The final point is even more curious. God states emphatically that he will do something that he knew that he would never do. God didn't strike

them down with a plague, and he didn't make Moses's descendants greater and stronger than Abraham's. So, if God knew that these were all false statements, were does these lead us? Did God mislead, lie to, and manipulate Moses? If you cling to absolute foreknowledge, you are in fact leveling this charge whether you want to or not.

Numbers 14:30

Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Here again we see God renegeing on a promise. Now if God knew when he made the promise that he would not keep it, then he lied to the people. He gave them a false hope that he knew he would later dash to pieces. God even swore with an uplifted hand to do something that he knew he wouldn't ever do. Where does this leave us? If this is true, can we ever trust in a promise of God? Does believing God require more stupidity than faith?

Deuteronomy 8:2

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in you heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

Here again we bring up the whole testing issue. This appears to be quite plainly stated. Does our theology call God a liar? Why did God humble and test the people? A forty year long test appears to be a bit over the top if God already knew everything. If God already knew what was in their heart, then I think God owes the people an apology.

Deuteronomy 13:3

The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Ditto.

Judges 2:22

I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their forefathers did.

Judges 3:4

They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses.

Does anyone think that this passage is talking about literal sight? While this test does involve observation, it is not for observation purposed only. For completeness however, the Judges 3 passage has a dual purpose as stated by God. The first was to train the Israelites for battle (v2), and the second was to "see" what they would do as far as obeying God's command (v4).

I Samuel 23:10-13

*David said, "O Lord, God of Israel, your servant has heard **DEFINITELY** that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O Lord, God of Israel, tell your servant." And the Lord said, "He will." Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will." So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, **he did not go there.***

Now what do we have here? David asks God two very direct questions and got two direct answers. David asked would the town be destroyed. God said 'Yes'. David also asked would the people of the town give him over to Saul. God again said 'Yes'. However, none of his happened. Didn't God know what David was going to do? Was God misleading David? Upon hearing this, Saul didn't even go to the town that God said that he would destroy. Why didn't David simply throw up his hands and cry, "Woe is me", when God told him his future? Why did God tell David how things would be if he in fact knew that they would never be? How can God say that Saul will go to the town and not be in error when Saul never goes? Is God lying to David or just "pulling his leg"? The obvious answer is that if David stayed there, these things would have happened. David obviously didn't believe that God's knowledge of the future was unalterable or he would have just sat there and succumbed to his fate. No, David knew what God said would happen if he didn't change something. He also knew that if he did change something, what God said would not happen and would be invalid. The future is open!

I Kings 20:42

"This is what the Lord says: 'You have set free a man that I had determined should die, therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'"

God determined something knowing that there was no possible way of it happening? Also, "therefore" is a contingent word, but if God knew absolutely that he would spare the king, then there is no contingency about this or any other act. God simple determined that he should die, and made up this scenario to justify his actions. This is clearly a false statement, but what else could this mean?

II Chronicles 32:31

But when the envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.

Again, wrongo! God didn't leave him to know anything! What kind of radial theology is this! God already knows everything from eternity, from before the foundations of the world! We need to rewrite the Bible and take out all of this bad theology and these misleading passages.

Jeremiah 3:7

I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it.

This passage appears to have God admitting to a mistake in his knowledge. Was God mistaken? What about absolute foreknowledge of all future events, how could this be? How can God think one thing about the future, be incorrect, and still have absolute foreknowledge of all future events?

Jeremiah 3:19

I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.

What! We have found another passage that needs to be expunged from the Bible! Clearly the thought of God being mistaken about the future acts of man cannot be true! Heresy, I say!

Jeremiah 7:31

They have build the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire – something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.

Jeremiah 19:5

They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal – something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind.

Jeremiah 32:35

They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

All of these verses state the same thing. Now I will be serious for a moment. God states that this thought ever entered his mind. What can this mean except God did not think that man could stoop to such a level as to do this horrendous thing. Will you accept what God says about himself in his Word, or will you refuse to believe it, instead clinging on to what man's tradition has told you is an attribute of God? Remember that the only concept of God that is correct is one that can be determined through the Scriptures. Omniscience is not found in the Bible. God knowing the future is never directly stated. Some verses may appear on the surface to imply this attribute, but an implied attribute must square with all Scripture. If it does not, the implication of God's character or essence is incorrect. If your logical conclusions derived from selected Scriptures do not harmonize with other Scriptures, then you need to reconsider your theology. Do not wave your hands and try to explain away passages with obvious meanings.

Jeremiah 26:2-3

Tell them everything I command you do not omit a word. Perhaps they will listen and each one will turn from his evil way.

“Perhaps”, what kind of word is this for God to be using? This passage again alludes to a contingent event, but our theology states that God knows absolutely what the outcome of the event will be. To a god with absolute foreknowledge no event is contingent all events are absolute. If this is indeed the case, why does God address man with contingent language? Is

God trying to portray an idea that is false? Would the prophet think that with such language that it was vitally important to not omit a word? In the end, the people did not listen, so why did God have Jeremiah do this, to justify his own actions, to make the guilty guiltier?

Let me make one additional point here. God knows absolute reality. If to God there are no contingent events (a mandatory conclusion if absolute foreknowledge is true), the absolute eternal truth is that there are no contingent events. If you believe that your future is contingent, then you must be deceived. It matters not how God knows the future and who determines it. If God knows the outcome, then that outcome must occur. Therefore the concept of contingency is lunacy. Everything is fate. If you think that the future is open, then you cannot believe in absolute foreknowledge. For centuries, theologians have been arguing if we are free to determine our future or does God decree it. This is unimportant for the discussion at hand. If the future is fixed, then regardless of how it was fixed, it is fixed. Your future has been determined absolutely, and you have no other choice except to walk those steps. Your future has been known, and therefore cannot be altered if God knows it unchangeably.

Ezekiel 20:6 & 15

On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands.

Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I should not bring them into the land I had given them – a land flowing with milk and honey, most beautiful of all lands.

These passages reiterate one listed earlier, but they are listed here for more clarity. Here God stated he searched out an area for the people knowing before the search which area it would be, and that the people would never see it. Strange actions indeed. He then swore to them with an uplifted hand that he would do something, and then later raised his hand again and swore the opposite. Now did God mean it when he swore the first time or just the second? How could he be sincere the first time if he knew inevitably that he could never do it? Do we start to have a credibility problem with God? How do we know when he tells us something that he will indeed do it and not renege?

Ezekiel 22:30

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

Did God just have some time to burn off so he performed a useless search? Was God's heart in the search since before he commenced searching, he knew what the outcome would be? Was he constrained to search to prove a point? The question is: Why does God do futile things?

Ezekiel 33:13

If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered, he will die for the evil he has done.

Again, we have more credibility problems with God. He states emphatically that someone will live when he knows when he gives the statement that it could be false. Then if someone takes God at his word (that he will live) and lets his guard down, he then risks death. What kind of message is this? If God tells you something, don't believe it?

Psalms 69:28, Exodus 33:32

May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.

But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.”

In the first verse we see that David has a notion that God will write someone's name in the book of life, and at some later date, that person might be removed. Now if God knows absolutely who is going to be saved before he created the world, then what is the point of a holy eraser? Where did David get such an idea? Well one place might have been Moses. Somehow, Moses had bad theology. But wait, it appears that God propagated that bad theology. God didn't just let Moses' theology stand, but he compounded it even further. The fruit of this theology is found in Revelation 3:5 when John the Apostle reiterated this idea thousands of years later.

Revelation 3:5

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

The obvious converse of this passage is that non-overcomers will be blotted out. Interesting!

What is not meant by the denial of absolute foreknowledge

By denying God knows the future free will choices of man, it is not assumed that God doesn't know certain future events. Clearly God has prophesied future events that have come to pass. These events however could be spoken of as certainties previous to the event, because God has the power to do whatever he so wills. Nothing can stop his plan. Therefore, if God decided to have Jesus born in Bethlehem, no force in the universe could thwart his plan. He therefore knows the future act absolutely because he has determined to cause the event to occur when the time has been fulfilled. This is how a Calvinist views every event. However, I believe Scripture shows that this is the exception and not the rule.

The denial of absolute foreknowledge also does not mean that God does not know everything. Clearly Scripture teaches that God has full and complete knowledge of everything that exists (I John 3:20). The question therefore is, does the future exist? If you decide that the future does in fact exist in some manner as related to God, then it is incumbent on the reader to prove such a position. This position cannot be simply assumed. If in fact the future does not exist, then it is not incumbent upon God to know it.

Man has invented all sorts of wild conceptions of how God can know the future and still the future is free. Calvinists have given up and simply declare that God knows all because he has

foreordained all future events. While this is understandable, there are many Scriptures that seem to prove this concept incorrect. Arminianists on the other hand talk about an Eternal Now where God is in the past, present and future all at the same time. This concept teaches that God does not experience the world, as we know it, but that he is above and outside time. While this may be an interesting concept, it has no basis in the Scriptures. Therefore if God didn't tell us that this is his true existence, how did we come to this conclusion? The concept of an Eternal Now (God outside of time) is a man made fantasy that has no Scriptural backing. While this may sound a little direct, a concept of God that is not found in the Scriptures can only be man's wisdom, and we know what God thinks about that.

Conclusion

What do all of these passages add up to? Can the doctrine of absolute foreknowledge of all future events be harmonized with logical and straightforward interpretations of these passages? These are just a sample of the verses that should lead one in the direction of the denial of absolute foreknowledge of the free will decisions of moral agents. Now this is not to say that God couldn't have created a world in which he did know the future, but that he did not. One could ask themselves, if in this world God knows all future free actions, how would a world where he didn't know differ from it? How would the Bible be worded differently?

Now the seeker of truth will not immediately jump to a passage that seems contrary to this position until he/she has developed answers to the above listed passages. People who can satisfy their doctrine with a passage in apparent opposition to this position without addressing the volume of Scriptures in this paper are not being honest. This may sound harsh, but it is not. I am more than happy to address any questions from anyone seeking truth not searching for mastery over my viewpoint. I can state without exception that this viewpoint is fully consistent with all Scripture. If after understanding and studying my viewpoint the reader thinks I am incorrect, the reader will do me a valuable service by helping me see my error. However, if you cannot logically answer the above listed Scriptures, you need go no further in questioning my theology until you can justify yours. As Charles Finney once said, "You cannot attempt to change someone's mind unless you fully understand it." At one time I believed in a "God outside of time", absolute foreknowledge and other concepts related to this subject. I no longer do. Therefore, I understand all too well the current orthodox viewpoint. You must attempt to understand mine if you truly want to increase your understanding of God. Whether in the end you agree or disagree with me, the search for truth will do you good. May God bless our search for truth, and may we have the courage to believe it.