

## What is God like 3 - All Knowing

**Reading: John 14:8-9** “...he who has seen Me (Jesus) has seen the Father....”

### **Introduction:**

This is the third in the series of lessons on “What is God like”<sup>1</sup>, where we have been looking at the characteristics and attributes of Jesus as a means of understanding the nature of God (the Father). This week we will be looking at God’s knowledge.

Knowledge is described in one source as “*having a familiarity with someone or something, which can include facts, information, descriptions, or skills acquired through experience or education*”<sup>2</sup>. Since the day we were born, we have been gaining knowledge, whether we realise it or not. Some things we learn subconsciously, such as a baby learning that their hunger pangs can be satisfied by drinking milk from a bottle or a mother’s breast. Some things we learn by accident, such as never putting your hand on top of a hot stove. Some things we learn consciously, such as in a student-teacher environment. And we learn many other things simply through life’s experiences.

But what about God? He has always existed; He created everything. So what sort of knowledge does He have? And what is the extent of His knowledge?

Well, we will never come anywhere near to answering those questions in any definitive sense (**Romans 11:33**), other than to say that His knowledge and understanding is infinite (**Psalms 147:5**). But we can get a glimpse of the extent of God’s knowledge by looking at the life of Jesus.

## **LESSON**

### **1) The knowledge of Jesus**

#### **a) Jesus knew people’s thoughts, and what was in their heart**

When people were in the presence of Jesus, they did not have to reveal their thoughts to Him in order for Him to know what they were thinking – He already knew them. There are various examples in the scriptures where we see this, but today we will look at just two instances<sup>3</sup>.

##### **i. Matthew 9:1-7 – Thinking Jesus was a blasphemer**

On this occasion, Jesus was in His own city<sup>4</sup> in Galilee. Some people brought to Him a paralytic man lying on a bed, no doubt with the hope that Jesus would heal him. At first, Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven. Now there were scribes present as well, and when they heard Jesus say that the man’s sins were forgiven, some of them “...*said within themselves...*” ( or “...*reasoned in their hearts...*” – **Mark 2:6**), “...*This man blasphemes...*”. The reason that they thought this was because, ultimately, only God can forgive sins (**Mark 2:7**), and so for someone to tell another person that they are now forgiven was for that someone to make themselves equal with God.

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<sup>1</sup> The first lesson looked at the power of God over both the physical and the spiritual worlds. The second lesson looked at some of the emotions displayed by God.

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge> as at 11.03.2013.

<sup>3</sup> For another example, see **Luke 6:8**.

<sup>4</sup> If **Mark 2:1-12** is a parallel account of this same event, then the city is Capernaum.

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However, Jesus knew their thoughts, and asked them why they were thinking such evil in their hearts. And so to prove that He did have the power and authority to forgive sins, He healed the man (**Matthew 9:6-7**).

ii. **Matthew 12:22-28** – Thinking Jesus drove out demons by Beelzebub

A demon-possessed man, who was also blind and mute, was brought to Jesus to be healed. Jesus healed him (vs.22), and all of the multitudes were amazed. Some considered that Jesus was the Son of David (vs. 23). However, the Pharisees view was that He cast out the demons by the power of “...*Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons..*” (vs.24).

“*But Jesus knew their thoughts.....*” (vs.25); He knew what they were thinking; He knew what was in their hearts, and so He proceeded to teach them how their thoughts on the matter did not make sense.

**Point:** Jesus knew the thoughts of people. He knew what was in their hearts. (**John 2:24-25**)

b) **Jesus knew what people had done in the past without being told**

In **John 4:3**, we read that Jesus and the disciples left Judea to go up to Galilee. But instead of going up the usual way (for Jews) by the east side of the Jordan<sup>5</sup>, He went through Samaria (vs.4). When they came to the city of Sychar<sup>6</sup>, Jesus remained at a well while the disciples went into town to buy some food (vs.6, 8). While Jesus rested, a woman came to the well, and the context of the reading would suggest that neither the woman nor Jesus had actually met each other before – she was unaware of who He was, other than the fact that she could tell He was a Jew.

During the discussion, when the woman said, “*I have no husband.*” (vs.17), Jesus replied, “*You have well said, “I have no husband”, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband....*” (vs.17b-18). In other words, Jesus knew that she had married and re-married several times, and that she was currently living with another man. He knew her complete marital history and her current circumstance. The woman’s response in verse 19 indicated that this was something that He would not normally have known. But Jesus did know these things.

**Point:** Jesus knew how people had lived, and were living, their lives.

c) **Jesus knew what people would do in the future**

Not only did Jesus know what people had done in the past, He also knew what people would do in the future, even if those same people didn’t know themselves what they would eventually do. This knowledge of Jesus is shown in the following two examples.

i. **John 13:10-11, 21-26** – Jesus knew Judas would betray Him

Jesus knew that His primary mission here on earth was to seek out the lost (**Luke 19:10**), and to be the sacrifice for our sins (**John 1:29**). He knew exactly what would happen, and when it would happen (**Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; John 13:1**). He also knew who would

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<sup>5</sup> The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans – **John 4:9b**.

<sup>6</sup> Sychar is near Shechem, in central Samaria.

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betray Him. When Jesus told His disciples after the Passover meal that one of them would betray Him, they were quite perplexed – this came “out of the blue”, and none of them (except for Judas) had any idea who the betrayer would be (**John 13:22**). In fact, when Judas left the room, they still didn’t realise that he was the betrayer (**John 13:28-29**). This indicates that the things that Judas had already done in organising the betrayal had not been done openly, but secretly (**Luke 22:3-6**). But Jesus knew about these things.

ii. **Mark 14:27-31** – Jesus knew Peter would deny Him

Peter was one of the leading disciples<sup>7</sup> (**Matthew 16:19; 17:1f.f.**). He was the type of person who was quick to jump in and take the lead (**Matthew 14:28f.f.; John 18:10; 21:3**) – a real “gung-ho” type of guy. And so when Jesus said to them on the night He was betrayed that “...*All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night...*” (**Mark 14:27**), Peter was emphatic in his determination that he would not deny his Lord (**Mark 14:31**)<sup>8</sup>. As far as Peter was concerned, he would even die for Jesus if necessary.

But when the time came, events turned out exactly the way that Jesus had said they would. In spite of his best intentions not to do so, Peter did end up denying his Lord three times before the cock crowed (**Mark 14:66-72**).

**Point:** Jesus knew exactly what people would do, even if people did not know it themselves.

d) **Jesus knew what events would take place in the future**

When He was here on earth, Jesus spoke of many things that would take place in the future – some things that were several years in the future, such as the destruction of the Temple (**Mathew 24:1-2**), and other things that were to happen soon, such as His death and resurrection (**Matthew 16:21**). Even simple events He foretold with amazing accuracy. Consider these two examples.

i. **Luke 19:28-35** – Jesus knew where the donkey would be

A week before His crucifixion, Jesus and His disciples headed to Jerusalem. As they approached Bethphage and Bethany<sup>9</sup>, Jesus sent two of His disciples into the village opposite saying, “..... *As you enter, you will find a colt tied, on which no-one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here.....*” (vs.**30**). When the two disciples came into the village, they found things just as Jesus had said (vs.**32**), in other words;

- there was a colt tied up, and,
- it was a colt that no-one had ever ridden.

Jesus even foretold what they should say in case someone asked them why they were taking the colt.

How did Jesus know about the colt? He just knew.

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<sup>7</sup> Along with James and John – **Matthew 17:1; Mark 14:33; Galatians 2:9**. (From the Galatian reference, Cephas = (Simon) Peter – see **John 1:40-42; Matthew 4:18**)

<sup>8</sup> In fact, all of the disciples said similar things, not just Peter – **Mark 14:31b**.

<sup>9</sup> Bethphage and Bethany are villages about 3km (2 miles) south east of Jerusalem (**John 11:18**) at the Mount of Olives on the road to Jericho.

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### ii. **Luke 22:7-13** – Jesus knew about the man with the pitcher

As the time for the Passover approached, Jesus sent Peter and John ahead into the city to make preparations. They asked Him, “*Where do you want us to prepare?*” (vs.9). Jesus replied that “... *When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters...*” (vs.10). When they entered the city, “... *they found it just as He had said to them...*” (vs.13), and so they prepared the Passover.

How did Jesus know that the man associated with the house that they were to use for the Passover would be carrying a pitcher of water when he met the two disciples? He just knew.

**Point:** There were other things that Jesus fore-told, and we haven’t the time in this lesson to cover them. But one thing stands out. Whether the event was large or small, what Jesus said would happen, did happen, and it happened in just the way that He said it would.

## 2) The knowledge of God

As I said in the introduction, God’s knowledge and understanding is infinite (**Psalm 147:5**) – there is no limit to it. There is nothing hidden from His sight (**Hebrews 4:13**). He knows the number of stars that are in the sky (**Psalm 147:4**). He knows the number of hairs on your head (**Luke 12:7a**). And not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowing it (**Matthew 10:29**).

Throughout the Old Testament, there are numerous examples of God knowing what *had* happened on earth, what was *currently* happening, and what was going to happen years and centuries into the future.

- He knew about the sins of mankind in the days of Noah, but He also knew that there was one man and his family who walked with God (**Genesis 6:5-12**)
- He knew of the iniquity (*i.e.* sins) of the Amorites (**Genesis 15:16b**).
- He knew before-hand that Abraham’s descendants would spend 400 years in bondage in Egypt (**Genesis 15:13**).
- He knew that Lot was righteous, and that the rest of the people in Sodom were sinful (**2 Peter 2:6-9**).
- He knew that the Hebrews were making the golden calf while Moses was receiving the Law in the mountain (**Exodus 32:7-8**).
- He knew that Joshua and Caleb had faith and trust in Him when they gave a favourable report to the Hebrews after spying out Canaan (**Numbers 14:6-9; Deuteronomy 1:35-38**).
- He knew that Achan had sinned by secretly taking what he ought not to have taken during the battle at Jericho (**Joshua 7:1-26**).
- He knew the sin that David had committed with Bathsheba (**2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:15**).
- He knew exactly where Jonah had gone when he went in the opposite direction to which God had told him to go (**Jonah 1:1-17**).
- He knew that the people of Nineveh had repented after hearing the Word of God from Jonah (**Jonah 3:5-10**).

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- He knew where the Messiah would be born, centuries before it happened – in a town that was the most unlikely of places (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6**).

and we could go on and on.

But what does all this mean for us at a personal level?

### **Application:**

God knows us intimately (**Psalm 139:1-16**). He knew us while we were still in our mother's womb (**Ps 139:13-16**). He knows our thoughts (**Ps 139:2<sup>10</sup>**). He knows our hearts (**Luke 16:15**). He knows everything we do (**Ps 139:3**). He knows what we are about to speak (**Ps 139:4**). And it doesn't matter where we travel to, He is there (**Ps 139:7-12**) – He still knows about us.

In **1 Corinthians 4:5**, when Paul was making reference to the Lord's return, he makes this statement;

*".....who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and reveal the counsels of the hearts...<sup>11</sup>."*

Think about that verse for a moment. The sinful things that we do in secret<sup>12</sup>, things that we think no-one else knows about, God knows about it. He knows the things that we ponder within our heart, and will reveal them at the Judgement. We may be able to hide things from each other, but we cannot hide things from God. No matter what we think, no matter what we say, no matter what we do, He already knows it.

This should have a profound impact on the way we live lives. It should cause us to be honest when we examine our own lives (**2 Corinthians 13:5a**), not comparing ourselves against each other (**2 Corinthians 10:12, 18**), but against the Word of God (**John 12:48**). We may be able to deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God (**Galatians 6:7a**). He knows.

But while God knows about the sins we commit, He also knows other things about us;

- He knows about the good things that we do. Not that these good works "earn" us our salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), but He has promised that even the smallest good work that we do will receive its reward (**Matthew 10:42**).
- He knows about the things we need for daily life (**Matthew 6:30-32**).
- He knows about the circumstances in which we find ourselves in this life (**2 Peter 2:6-9**).

And He has promised to "...never leave you nor forsake you..." (**Hebrews 13:5b**), for the Lord knows who are His (**John 10:14**)

For those who choose to disobey God, knowing about the knowledge that God has can be a source of terror. But for those who are humble of heart; for those who submit to His Will and seek to please Him, knowing that "God knows" is a source of comfort.

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<sup>10</sup> Also **1 Chronicles 28:9**.

<sup>11</sup> Quote from the New King James Version Bible.

<sup>12</sup> Not all things done secretly are bad – **Matthew 6:3-4, 6, 18; 13:35; Romans 16:25**.