

Who is God and what is he like? (Part 2)

July 1, 2009

God is OMNISCIENT (all-knowing).

God knows all things present:

Job 28:20-24

From where, then, does wisdom come?...God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

Hebrews 4:13

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

God knows all things future (*foreknowledge*):

Psalm 139:4

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O lord, you know it altogether.

Isaiah 46:9-10

...For I am God, and there is no other...declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose..."

Genesis 15:13-16

Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions...And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

God even knows all *possible* future events that will not happen:

1 Samuel 23:10-13

Then said David, "O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard?..."

And the Lord said, "He will come down"...And the Lord said, "They will surrender you." Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah...When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

God is OMNIPRESENT (everywhere at the same time).

Psalm 139:7-8

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

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☑ God is OMNIPOTENT (all-powerful).

Isaiah 43:13

...There is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?

Jeremiah 32:17

Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.

THIS LEAVES US WITH A BIG PROBLEM.

If God is Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent, why is there so much evil in the world? After all:

- 🕒 God *knows ahead of time* that evil is going to take place (omniscience).
- 🕒 God *is there* when this evil is about to take place (omnipresence).
- 🕒 God *has the power* to stop this evil before it takes place (omnipotence).

Job 34:14-15

If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust. (see Acts 5:1-11 for an example of this)

In fact, God has already used his super-powers before to prevent acts of evil.

Genesis 20:2-6

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

Now Abimelech...said, "Lord...Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'?...In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her."

AMONG THEISTS, THERE ARE FOUR MAIN APPROACHES TO THIS PROBLEM:

- 🕒 **God cannot be omniscient, omnipresent, AND omnipotent all at the same time.**
- 🕒 **God *could* prevent every act of evil, but he chooses not to because he is not perfectly good and loving.**
- 🕒 **Evil is never a part of God's plan for the world, and he certainly has the power to prevent it in every case, but it still happens because God gave us free will.**
- 🕒 **While human beings are still fully responsible for the evil that they do, the *ultimate* reason for the presence of evil in our world is not the *will of man* but the *plan of God*.**

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Which position is the correct one?

In my opinion, this last position is the one that is most consistent with the overall teaching of the Bible. For reasons fully known to himself and partially revealed to us, God has included the presence of evil in his plan to fully reveal himself and his glory to the world.

Romans 9:17-23

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills and he hardens whomever he wills.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?...What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy...?

Why is it so important to embrace this truth?

1. It is clearly taught in the Bible.
2. The entire gospel rests upon this truth.

Acts 4:27-28

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

God is more concerned about displaying his glory than he is about preventing evil, and he gets more glory out of triumphing over evil than he does out of always preventing it!

In saying all of this, we must remember that God is never to be blamed for evil. He is perfect in all his ways and there is no darkness in him (1 John 1:5). He neither commits evil nor tempts anyone else to do so (James 1:13). Finally, he rightly holds us responsible for all of the evil that we do (Romans 2:6-11).