



Does God Foreknow Each Person's Eternal Destiny?

“I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, “My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”” (Isaiah 46:10 New International Version) There is no question that the one who has “perfect knowledge” (**Job 36:4 NIV**), Almighty God “knows everything” (1 John 3:20 NIV), so everything CAN be “foreknown” (1 Peter 1:20 LSB) by him. There have been numerous cases that are Biblically documented where he has demonstrated his unique ability to foreknow the future about many things, including individuals. The Bible is clear that **“with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26)**. However, just because he CAN know everything in advance, does that mean he does know everything in advance? While we will deal with this subject in general, this article will focus on the question, “does Almighty God foreknow each person’s eternal destiny?”

RELEVANT FACTS WE KNOW ABOUT GOD

Ecclesiastes 3:11 - **“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (NIV).** *“This phrase suggests that humans have an innate sense of the eternal, a longing for something beyond the temporal world. This concept is unique to humanity, as it reflects . . . the image of God in which humans were created (Genesis 1:27). The awareness of eternity points to a spiritual dimension that transcends earthly existence,*

indicating a divine purpose and destiny. This longing for eternity can be seen in various cultures and religions throughout history, where people seek meaning beyond the material world. It also connects to the New Testament, where believers are encouraged to set their minds on things above (Colossians 3:2)" (Bible Hub Study Bible). We know that, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Would such a loving Almighty God put such a concept of, and desire for, "eternity" without any way to achieve it? – Hardly!

We know that **"God . . . cannot lie" (Titus 1:2)**, and the **"hope"** that he offers **"will not lead to disappointment" (Romans 5:5 NLT)**.

The scriptures refer to **"foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2 NIV)**, and **"God's settled purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23 Weymouth New Testament)** of certain important events. There is no question that God has chosen to foreknow, and even to "purpose", or "foreordain" (1 Peter 1:20 NKJV) certain events in advance. But, does God foreknow everything that will ever happen in advance, including each person's eternal destiny?

GOD CAN RESTRAIN HIS POWERS

Isaiah 42:14 – "For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself" (English Standard Version). "The Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 4:11) has unlimited powers. "The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power" (Job 37:23 New International Version). The Bible is also clear that he also has perfect self-control, "perfect patience" (1 Timothy 1:16 NASB), over those powers. That is, he controls his use of his powers to suit his purpose. Instead of using all of them indiscriminately, he exercises discriminate use of his powers. The thought of Almighty God using self control, or restraint, might, on the surface, seem strange. But, if we think through that a little bit, it is completely reasonable to think of him as doing so. Otherwise, wouldn't he be out of control, even uncontrolled? For example, he has the power to destroy every human, and he has the power to give every human eternal life. But he will do neither. He will selectively give some eternal

life, and some eternal death ([Matthew 7:13,14](#)).

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF GOD NOT USING HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE

Genesis 11:5 - **“Then Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built” (LSB).** *“The anthropomorphic language (“came down”) is used to convey God’s inspection and judgment. This mirrors other instances in Scripture where God “comes down” to assess situations, such as in [Exodus 3:8](#) when God comes down to deliver Israel from Egypt . . . The act of God “seeing” is reminiscent of [Genesis 18:21](#), where God investigates Sodom and Gomorrah, indicating a thorough examination before judgment” (Bible Hub Study Bible).* “Yahweh . . . in heaven; His eyes behold . . . the sons of men” ([Psalm 11:4](#) LSB), can not only see, but also know everything, the figurative language in [Genesis 11:5](#) indicates his selective use of his foreknowledge. He had not chosen to know what was going on in Babel prior to the rebellion described in [Genesis 11:1-9](#).

Genesis 18:20,21 - **“Yahweh said, ‘The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin exceedingly grave. “I will go down now and see whether they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know”’” (LSB).** **“I mean to find out” (vs. 21 NAB).** This is an example of God’s not knowing something, although, of course, he could have chosen to know it in advance.

Genesis 22:12 - **“For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one from ME” (LSB).** After Abraham had attempted to sacrifice his son Isaac to God, Yahweh, at that point, said, *“now I know that you fear God”*. This provides another example of God choosing not knowing something important in advance.

IF GOD FOREKNEW EVERYTHING WHY WOULD HE . . . ?

Genesis 2:16,17 - **“Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may surely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and**

evil, you shall not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you surely die'"

(LSB). If God had already known what Adam and Eve would do, why would he have created this one tree to test them? Why would he have warned them not eat of this tree, if he had chosen to know in advance that they would fail the test?

Isaiah 45:22 - **"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (NIV).** **Acts 17:30** - **"God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent" (NASB).** **Romans 2:4** - **"God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" (ESV).** How could God honestly make such offers that we see in these three scriptures, to all mankind, if he knew beforehand which individuals wouldn't make it? If God foreknew that many people would not repent, why would he tell *EVERYONE* to repent? Why would God try to lead everyone to repentance, if he already foreknew which individuals would not repent?

2 Peter 3:9 - **"The Lord . . . is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (NIV).** If God already knew in advance who was going to be saved and who wasn't going to be saved, why would he need to be patient for more to receive salvation? How could it truly be said he wanted everyone to be saved, if he already knew that certain people wouldn't make it? Biblical statements such as this in **2 Peter 3:9** make no sense if God already knows each person's eternal destiny.

1 Timothy 2:5,6 - **"There is one God, and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people" (NIV).** How could God have Christ die "as a ransom for *ALL* people", if he foreknew which people had no chance for salvation. On the contrary, in good faith, God had Christ to die for all people.

Revelation 22:17 - **"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (NRSV).** In this verse "everyone", and "anyone", who is willing, is offered the free gift of eternal life. If God chose to foreknow, before they were even

born, all the specific individuals who would not partake of the the free gift of eternal life, how could he in good faith, make this offer?

We can see from these scriptures that God, even for very important actions he has taken, did not chose to exercise his foreknowledge of those situations, and his actions. Likewise, God has not exercised his foreknowledge to the extent of foreknowing each person's eternal destiny.