

READ TEXT

Job 11:7-9 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.

This morning we're looking at the Knowability of God. The Knowability of God (interesting word). That doctrine which asks the question 'Can we know God?', and if so, 'What can we know about God?'

It was during the Reformation era that Puritans gave this doctrine of God's Knowability particular attention. And it's from this study of God's knowability that Puritan reformers began teaching about (PRESS NEXT) the 'Incomprehensibility of God.' 'Incomprehensibility of God' In today's language when we speak about God being "incomprehensible", we usually hear this as meaning that God is somehow unknowable. But in the 15 and 1600's, contemporary and theological use of the word 'incomprehensible' had something different in mind.

- By incomprehensible, what the reformers meant is that no man can comprehend God exhaustively. No one can have a complete or perfect knowledge of God. God can never be fully known.
- And how could he be? Can that which is infinite be contained in something which is finite?
 - Can you take the heavens and cram them into an 8oz cup? That's absurd, of course not. 2 Chronicles 2:6 "But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him, except to burn incense before Him?" Solomon recognized that no temple could ever truly house God, not even the heavens can contain his infinite attributes.
 - Can you take something infinite that has no borders, no edge and no limits, and fit into a shoe box? No one would believe that, not unless you're a little crazy. But modern day science would have us believe that everything that exists in the universe at one point fit inside the space the size of a peach. Oh and this peach sized energy ball was over a quadrillion degrees hot. Seriously, those are their words, you can read about it on space.com. You can see how even modern day science fundamentally undermines and rejects the existence of God by denying intelligent design and reducing God's infinitude down to a peach sized energy ball.
 - Can we squeeze an infinite God into a finite, definite space? No, and in that sense, we say that God is 'incomprehensible'.

So the reformers further developed this notion and began teaching the Biblical idea of God being (PRESS NEXT) 'Incomprehensible but knowable'.

So we come back to our scripture verse in Job chapter 11, and the man asking this series of questions is Zophar the Naamathite. Zophar, I'll remind you, is one of Job's three miserable comforters that come to Job after hearing of his afflictions. (NEXT SLIDE)

We're introduced to these three miserable comforters in Job chapter 2 starting at verse 11: "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. AMPC [And when they looked from afar off and saw him [disfigured] beyond recognition, they lifted up their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe, and they cast dust over their heads

toward the heavens]. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.”

You remember here that Job was given over to the devil, by God’s permission, to be tested. It was God after all who first said to Satan in Job 1:8 “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

Job, at this point in the narrative, is literally sitting in a heap of ashes, agonizing as he’s covered in oozing blisters and boils from head to toe. In a single day all 10 of his children have died, everyone of his livestock is dead, and his servants have all been killed. Essentially, every earthly possession Job had was stripped and taken away. Everything but his life, which by chapter 3 he wishes wasn’t even born.

Throughout the next 9 chapters Job, Eliphaz and Bildad exchange dialogue. We see Job time and time again defending his innocence before God. But Job’s 3 friends subscribe to an old Hebrew concept, and here we can glean into what their Theology Proper looked like. This Hebrew concept says that suffering is the inevitable lot of the evil man; therefore, Job’s claims of innocence are considered by them to be deceptive and even sinful.

Now when we get to Job Chapter 11 we meet Zophar, one of the three miserable comforters, who at this point in the narrative is FED UP with Job claiming to be innocent. (PRESS NEXT)

Of the three comforters, Zophar seems the least friendly. Zophar is a religious man to doubt, but Zophar is also a legalist. Zophar is quick to condemn Job, he exhibits a very high charge against Job, as being proud and false in justifying himself.

- These three men who in Chapter two were initially introduced to us as Job’s FRIENDS and COMFORTERS are now showing themselves to be another tool of Satan in the testing of Job’s faith and fidelity.

Eliphaz and Bildad, the two other comforters, were certainly more modest in their accusations against Job. But starting at chapter 11 Zophar immediately begins with a ruthless indictment against Job.

In Chapter 11 verses 2 and 3 he labels Job as an idle babble and scoffer “Shall a multitude of words go unanswered, And a talkative man be acquitted? Shall your boasts silence people? And will you scoff, and no one rebuke?

In verse 4 he accuses Job of claiming to be sinless and perfect, something Job never made claim to. ‘For you have said, ‘My teaching is pure, And I am innocent in your eyes.’

And in verses 5-12 Zophar appeals to God, and wishes God would appear at once and speak against Job and prove that everything Zophar has said is right. Verse 5 “But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee”

- Zophar, presumptively, appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task (v. 5) and that Job would, for lack of better words, WAKE UP. (PRESS NEXT)
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Now keep in mind, much of what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar say is absolutely true. Most of the wisdom they have to offer Job is actually Theologically sound. They say all the right things.

The problem is that just like zealous Pharisees, Job's friends misapply biblical wisdom. It's all out of context. (PRESS NEXT) Zophar's accusations did not apply to Job because Job was not being chastised as a result of sin, Job was suffering because the secret counsel of God was being worked out for his Sanctification and ultimately for God's glory. They're saying all the right things, but they're talking to the wrong person! They're right but they're wrong... do you see what I'm saying? Have you ever been in an argument with someone who loves to quote the Bible, they have a Bible verse for every argument, but they totally misapply every verse and take it out of context. You all know how frustrating that is. Now Imagine how frustrating that must be for Job. These friends, these comforters brought to Job no ointment or balm for his oozing sores, instead, with their words, they pour vinegar into them. (PRESS NEXT)

Now, in all of these slanderous accusations and presumptive questionings, Zophar draws a most beautiful and striking contrast, between the glory and greatness of GOD, and the vanity and littleness of man. Zophar points to several of the distinguishing attributes of JEHOVAH, such as his sovereignty, eternity, and at verse 7, God's incomprehensibility. God's incomprehensibility.

That is our focus this morning.

Zophar asks Job TWO questions here in verse 7

1. Can thou by searching find out God?
2. Can thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

(PRESS NEXT) The NASB translation similarly asks "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?" (PRESS NEXT)

Zophar's is asking a very specific question here. The Hebrew language here pertains to searching God with exact diligence or to count something by number to it's exact precision.

This question isn't asking whether we can know God in the simple sense that we just realize his existence. The Bible tells us that everyone knows God exists.

(PRESS NEXT) Rom 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse,"

- All men, both saved and unsaved, the Bible tells us, KNOW that God exists. Though the wicked may hate God, though they may deny him and be as the fool who sayeth in his heart 'there is no God', nonetheless, the Bible tells us that they KNOW.

But this is not the aim of Zophar in asking the question.

Zophar's question is asking if we can know the DEPTHS of God's reasonings and doings. Can you by searching, discover the secret and hidden purposes of God, as the one who orders the affairs of all mankind by the hand of providence.

"Can thou find out the Almighty unto perfection", the Hebrew word here for 'Perfection', תְּכַלִּית (taklîit) means to find something out to its utmost, to its absolute end. Is that possible?

- (PRESS NEXT) (Rom. 11:33–34). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"
- Wayne Grudem, In his Systematic Theology says that "These verses allow us to take our understanding of the incomprehensibility of God one step further. It is not only true that

we can never fully understand God; it is also true that we can never fully understand any single thing about God. His greatness (Ps. 145:3), his understanding (Ps. 147:5), his knowledge (Ps. 139:6), his riches, wisdom, judgments, and ways (Rom. 11:33) are all beyond our ability to understand fully. Other verses also support this idea: as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts (Isa. 55:9)."

- Can one find out the last things of God? The infinite parts of God? Can one count to the furthest extensions of God? The answer is a resounding no. (PRESS NEXT)
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The Bible is very clear about God being "Incomprehensible". God is incomprehensible inasmuch as He an infinite being, one which transcends our finite plane of cognitive abilities.

God is Incomprehensible but God is not unknowable. Man cannot comprehend God, but he can Apprehend God.

So we ask now, what about God CAN we know? How has God made Himself known to us?

And we answer this by saying that God has unveiled certain truths about himself through Revelation. Revelation means simply to make clear or unfold that which is hidden. God is an invisible spirit without body or physical form, so in what ways is God revealed to mankind? If God is invisible, how do we see him?

Please turn with me to Psalm 19:1-3 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

The first way that God is revealed to us is through nature. Through nature. In theological categories, this mode of revelation is know as "**natural revelation**". (PRESS NEXT)

- Let me define Natural Revelation: Natural Revelation is the knowledge about God and spiritual matters, discovered through natural means, such as observation of nature, philosophy, and reasoning. I actually got that from Wikipedia, I guess they have a have few Theologians on their team.
- Now when speaking of revelation, we must make distinctions between the different kinds of revelation. And the most important distinction we make regarding revelation is between natural revelation and special revelation.
- Special revelation is where God speaks directly to His people weather by a prophet or an Apostle. Natural revelation is less direct and is addressed not to a specific person or community but rather to humanity in general. For that reason, natural revelation can also be called general revelation.

And I'd like to quote from the Westminster Confessions of Faith regarding this matter, where in the first section of the first chapter, the Westminster divines tell us, regarding revelation, that (PRESS NEXT)"Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation." WCF 1.1

- What the confession here is saying is that General revelation, unlike special revelation, does in fact reveal and prove God's existence, but natural or general revelation, cannot communicate a saving message to its viewers. (PRESS NEXT)
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General revelation comes to us primarily through nature and is called general for two reasons.

- (PRESS NEXT) First, the audience is general; God gives knowledge of Himself universally, so that every human has this revelation, which is built into nature. Every human being who walks this earth walks in God's theatre and is a spectator of God's glorious work in nature.
- (PRESS NEXT) The second reason it's called general revelation is because the content of general revelation gives us a knowledge of God in general. In a general sense, it reveals that God is eternal; it reveals His power, deity, and holiness. General revelation, however, does not and cannot disclose God's way of salvation.

Could you conclude that Jesus is the Messiah simply by looking at the stars? No. Can you conclude from nature that God is a Triune being, Father, Spirit, and son. No, it's not clear enough. It's often said that general revelation reveals just enough knowledge of God to damn us, to render us without excuse, but not enough to save us.

Ok, so God holds every man accountable, both believer and unbeliever, because they can see his workmanship in nature. Well what about blind people? What about a blind person who can never see God's natural revelation, will that person really be held accountable for something they're unable to perceive? The answer is that all blind people who never hear the gospel are excused of their sin and granted salvation.

No, I'm kidding. See, general revelation consists of both a knowledge of God that comes through nature, But the Bible also teaches us that there exists in every human's mind, by natural instinct, some sense of deity.

I think no one articulates this truth better than John Calvin in Chapter 3 of his Institutes of Religion: "So that no man might shelter himself under the pretext of ignorance, God hath given to all some apprehension of his existence, the memory of which he frequently and insensibly renews; so that, as men universally know that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, they must be condemned by their own testimony, for not having worshipped him and consecrated their lives to his service"

- Calvin shows that in every human being's soul, God has sown a seed of religion. A natural endowment or instinct that every cognitive person possesses.
- This seed of religion is clearly evident by the universal idolatry that has existed for all of human history.
- We see man, as proud and arrogant and reluctant as he is to lower himself, would still rather bow to a stone or worship a tree than think there to be no God. This divinely imbued impression of God is so powerful in the hearts of every human that man would rather worship a tree than be without a God.
- In Romans 2, Paul talks about the Law of God which is written on every heart. And it is this seed of religion which every man possesses.
- This intrinsic awareness is designed not only to instruct us about what is right and wrong but is also designed to point us to God
- Again, general revelation, both through nature and through the law which is written on every heart, means that every person is made accountable to God, and that's exactly what Paul argues in his Epistle.

Now when we talk about special revelation, as opposed to natural or general revelation, special revelation is that knowledge of God that NOT every person has or can obtain. Special revelation is a knowledge of God that has revealed principally through sacred scripture. (PRESS NEXT)

Special Revelation discloses a knowledge about God that could not be known by a study of physics or biology or philosophy, or any other natural means. Special revelation tells us of things like God's plan of redemption, the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection... all things that we could never deduce or come to know from nature.

In the book of Hebrews, the author opens the Epistle by explaining the various ways which God has revealed himself to us in a more special way.

- Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1-3a: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power

We see from the text that, with respect to revelation, particularly special revelation, that we receive specific and special information directly from God himself. God, has revealed himself in different times and in various ways. (PRESS NEXT)

Let's take a brief look at the various means of special revelation which God has chosen to reveal himself by throughout the Bible. These are examples of Special Revelation

1. God would speak directly with people.

- Adam and Eve in the Garden Gen 3:9–19,
- God spoke by voice with Cain after he murdered his Brother in chapter 4,
- He would often speak with and instruct Noah,
- He would speak with Abraham and Sarah and a little later even appears twice to Hagar, Abraham's concubine.
- And my personal favorite example of God speaking directly with men is with that of Moses, where in Exodus 33:11 we're told that God would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Isn't that incredible.

(PRESS NEXT)

2. We have other examples where God would speak to both men and women by way of Dreams and Visions.

- There is the Vision which Abraham had in Genesis 15 where God reminds Abraham that he would have a son and be the father of many nations
- There's the frightening dream which God sent to Abimelech, king of Gerar, warning him not to touch Sarah.
- Joseph was one of the most famous dreamers (and dream interpreters) in the Bible, his brothers wanted to kill him because of the dreams God sent him.
- We have the dream God sent to Zacharias, telling him of the son he would soon have, that son being John the Baptist.

The Bible contains dozens of examples of God revealing special knowledge to people through dreams and visions.

3. Another way God has spoken to people in times past is through Angelic Visitations.

- We have the example of Gen 19 where 2 angels appear to Lot to warn him flee before God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah
- We also have Daniel's account, where in Daniel 10, after twenty-one days of waiting, Daniel is visited by an Angel who reveals that he was held up in combat with another fallen angel, referred to as the Prince of Persia.
- Angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness, after the devil had finished tempting our Lord in Matthew 4:11.

4. We also have examples of God revealing himself through what we call a 'Theophany'. We get this word from the Greek which means literally an 'Appearance of God'. Or in other words, a

Theophany is an outward visible manifestation of an invisible God. So what are some examples of a Theophany we have in the Bible? Raise of hands anyone?

- Perhaps the best known example of a Theophany is the story of Moses and the burning bush. Where Moses comes across a burning bush in the midianite desert, and the Lord speaks to him from this bush and says "I AM WHO I AM". So the bush was an outward visible manifestation of the invisible God.
- We have other examples where a man, who reveals himself to be God, wrestles with Jacob in Genesis 32
- There's the Pillar of cloud and fire which went before Israel during their wilderness wanderings...

5. Now all of these different expressions of special revelation- God's voice, angels, visions and dreams, and theophanies- these are all ways which God has revealed himself to people. But the primary way that God would speak to people was through the use of what we call "**Agents of Revelation**". And in the Old Testament, these agents of revelation were, of course, the Prophets. (PRESS NEXT)

- These prophets were ordinary people, just as you and I. God, throughout Old Testament History, would raise up men through whom he would speak. And although these words were human words, spoken in an ordinary language by people just like you and I, these men spoke with the words of God and with the same authority and truthfulness as though it were God himself speaking.
 - In Deuteronomy 18, we see God clearly defining the office of Prophet to his people, starting at verse 18: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. (Deut. 18:18-20)
 - Furthermore, God is often said to speak "through" the prophet (1 Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25; Jer. 37:2; Zech. 7:7, 12). That is why when they would address a people, you see them preface their message with the words "Thus Saith the Lord". These were not their words, but God's words. Words that the prophets spoke can equally be referred to as words that God himself spoke. Thus, to disbelieve or disobey anything a prophet says is to disbelieve or disobey God himself (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 10:8; 13:13-14; 15:3, 19, 23; 1 Kings 20:35, 36).
 - And so, the announcements and warnings and writings of the canonical prophets were set down in what we call the inscripturated word, which is what we have with us in our Bible's today. (PRESS NEXT)

6. The New Testament counterpart to the prophets, were the Apostles, particularly the 12 Apostles which Christ selected. Apostles, like the prophets, were ordinary men, but were appointed by our Lord to serve as His agents of revelation. The word Apostle comes from the two Greek words, **Apo-** from, and **Stello-** sent forth, someone who is sent forth or commissioned with the authority of the one who is sending them.

- It was our Lord who in Luke 10:16 tells the Apostles that "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - Here Christ illustrates the succession of authority of special revelation, from the Father directly to the Apostles.

- As a side note, the office of Prophet and Apostle does not exist today. Ephesians 2:20 confirms that the Church was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone;”
 - The New Testament gives us at least 3 necessary criteria to be an Apostle: (1) an apostle had to be a physical eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 10:39-41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-8); (2) an apostle had to be personally appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 10:41; Gal. 1:1); and (3) an apostle had to be able to authenticate his apostolic appointment with miraculous signs (Matt. 10:1-2; Acts 1:5-8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; 8:14; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4).
 - The Apostles were commissioned directly by Christ to lay the foundation of the Church through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, their message being confirmed by signs and miracles. 2 Cor 12:12: “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
 - Much like the Prophets whose works were written down and inscripturated, the Apostles too, were moved by the same Holy Spirit in their writing of the New Testament scriptures. (PRESS NEXT)
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Collectively, the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, provide for us today the 66 books of the Bible, which is now our sole rule of faith and practice.

For the Christian today, the Bible is God’s final word of special revelation. God has finished speaking to us through Christ and his Apostles, and we have been left with God’s eternal word, which we recognize as being the inspired, authoritative, and sufficient for life and godliness.

We don’t have wait for God to speak a word of knowledge to us. We don’t go to looking for a Prophet to give us instructions. We discover God’s will by the careful and ongoing application of the principles, commands, and illustrations we find in Scripture to every situation we find ourselves in. The Bible is sufficient. (PRESS NEXT)

Let me remind you, we’re still talking about the Knowability of God.

To merely know about God is not enough. Recent surveys have shown that almost 70% of Americans claim to be Christian, but sadly most of them lay claim to their faith on the basis of a set of professions they once made, a prayer they once prayed, or simply because they believe in a Jesus.

But we know that even the demons believe (Jas 2:19) and they shutter. The demons believe in Jesus, his resurrection, His divinity, and the salvation which he brings. So if demons believe many of the same things as Christians, what distinguishes us?

It’s not enough to simply know some facts and truths about God. It’s not enough to believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is historically accurate and true. It’s not enough to go to Church once a week and attend a Bible study when your schedule is finally open.

I’ve been asked before ‘What makes your faith different than that of devils’? What would you say?

- You might say well I believe in Jesus. So do they
- Well I believe that Jesus died for me personally. Ok. But how do you know that you believe that. How do you know your faith is a saving faith and not merely intellectual like so many false professors?

No there are many way to answer this question, but I'll share with you three that I've heard taught.

1. The first distinguishing mark of a saving faith is that you believe every single word of the Bible
2. The second distinguishing mark, which compliments the first, is that when you read scripture, you see it as being true for you. When you read the Bible, the Holy Spirit testifies with your spirit that these things are true of you.
3. And the third mark of a saving faith, is good works. FINISH

There's a distinction between knowing OF SOMEONE and actually KNOWING SOMEONE. God would have that His word be written on the tablets of our hearts, not merely floating around in the peripherals of our mind.

God's Word must be more than a set of instructions or a book that settles our anxieties about death. His Word must be alive and at work in our hearts. We should want to say with David "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

God's is incomprehensible, His ways are past finding out, His judgements unsearchable. We will never know God fully, but we can know God savingly. It was on the night which Jesus was betrayed, He prayed to His Father saying "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3).

God is incomprehensible, but God is still knowable. And it is through His word alone, that we can come to know Him and worship Him for who he truly is.