

FOREKNOWLEDGE

1. προγινώσκω means “to know beforehand” or “to know previously.”

- a. Two biblical examples of common usage are:
 - (1) **Ac 26:5** 5 [The Jewish leaders] have foreknown (προγινώσκω, pres.)¹ for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I [Paul] have lived as a Pharisee.
 - (2) **2 Pe 3:17** 17 You..., beloved, knowing this beforehand (προγινώσκω), take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.
- b. English derivatives are “prognosticate” and “prognosis.”
- c. In the Bible, not just God but also people foreknow things.
 - (1) Who will win New Zealand’s election? Who will win the United States election?
 - (2) “I can already tell you what’s going to happen....”
- d. Don’t overcomplicate the meaning of foreknowledge, as do many theologians.

2. In eternity past, God foreknew all things that would actually happen.

- a. Because God is eternal, his relationship to time differs from ours.
- b. God foreknows every decision his free will creatures will make.
 - (1) “For he is the one who knows everything beforehand (προγνώστης),² and knows what is in our heart.”³
- c. When God freely decided to create the universe, he knew all things that would happen. For example, he knew:
 - (1) Adam and Eve would eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - (2) Israel would break his covenant with her.
 - (a) **Dt 31:16** 16 ...Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them.
 - (3) Who would believe in Jesus and who would not.
 - (a) **Jn 6:64-65** 64 ... There are some of you [disciples] who do not believe. (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him [foreknowledge].) 65 And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me [faith in Jesus] unless it is granted him by the Father [God’s special call].
 - (4) He would have to send his Son to be crucified.
 - (a) **Ac 2:23** 23 This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις)⁴ of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

¹ “[T]o know beforehand or in advance, *have foreknowledge (of)*... Closely connected is the idea of choice that suggests foreknowledge... *choose beforehand* τινά *someone*... *Know from time past*” (BDAG, 866).

² “[O]ne who knows someth. beforehand, of God” (BDAG, 867).

³ 2 Clement 9:9.

⁴ “[P]redetermination, of God’s omniscient wisdom and intention” (BDAG, 867).

- (b) **1 Pe 1:20** 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you....

3. God's foreknowledge is not causative.

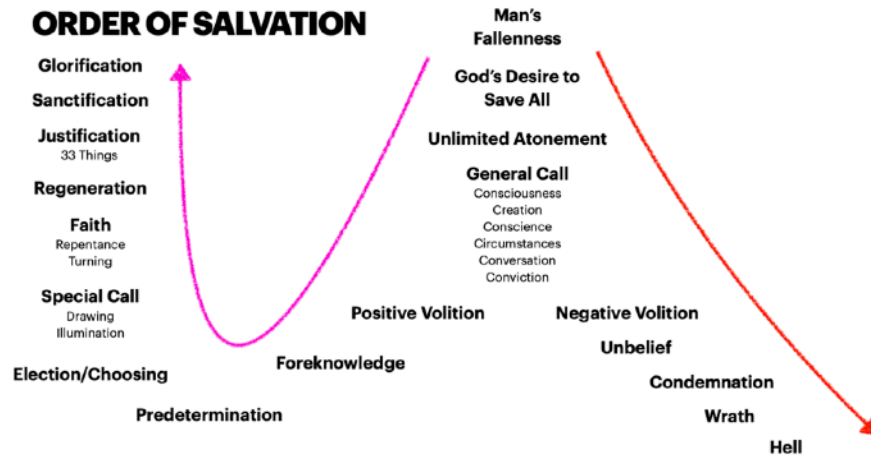
- a. As it relates to free will creatures, God's foreknowledge is passive and reactive, not active or causative.
- b. God's foreknowledge does not diminish human responsibility.
 - (1) We may foreknow Jacinda Adern will be re-elected in 2020, but that foreknowledge doesn't cause her to be re-elected.
- c. The Father foreknew Jesus' death, but the people who conspired to put Jesus to death (the Jewish leaders, Judas, Pilate) were morally responsible.
 - (1) **Lk 23:34** 34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.
 - (2) **Ac 2:23** 23 This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις)⁵ of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
 - (3) **Mt 26:24** 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.
- d. If God's foreknowledge was causative, God would be responsible for sin.
 - (1) God is not morally responsible for the sin of his free will creatures that he foreknows they will commit in the world he freely creates.

4. God's election is based on his foreknowledge.

- a. **Ro 8:28-30** 28 We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called (κλητός) according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew (προγινώσκω) he also predetermined (προορίζω) to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined (προορίζω) he also [specially] called (καλέω), and those whom he called he also justified (δικαιόω), and those whom he justified he also glorified (δοξάζω).
- b. **Ro 11:1-5** 1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people [Israel]? By no means! For I [Paul] myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew (προγινώσκω). Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life. 4 But what is God's reply to him? I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant [of Israel], chosen (ἐκλογή) by grace.
- c. **1 Pe 1:1-2** 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Messiah, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) of God the Father....
- d. **Jn 6:64-65** 64 ... There are some of you [disciples] who do not believe. (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who

⁵ “[P]redetermination, of God's omniscient wisdom and intention” (BDAG, 867).

would betray him [foreknowledge].) 65 And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me [faith in Jesus] unless it is granted him by the Father [God's special call].



5. Say no to Calvinistic determinism.

- a. Calvinists view foreknowledge as “foreordination” rather than “prescience.”
 - (1) “The first of the aorist verbs in [Romans 8:29-30] is the word *proginōskō*, to “foreknow,” “choose beforehand.” With humans as subject the word means to “know beforehand” (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet 3:17). With God as subject the verb could mean either prescience or foreloving/foreordaining (Rom 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet 1:20). The foundational verbs *yāda* and *ginōskō* often mean to “perceive,” “understand,” and “know.” But they also mean “to set regard upon, to know with particular interest, delight, affection, and action. ... The verb *ginōskō* thus can convey God’s intimate acquaintance with his people, specifically the fact that they are “foreloved” or “chosen.” This latter sense is evident in the following Pauline sayings: “the man who loves God is known by God” (1 Cor 8:3); “but now that you know God—or rather are known by God” (Gal 4:9); and “the Lord knows those that are his” (2 Tim 2:19). The verb *proginōskō* in Rom 8:29 and 11:2 contextually could be taken in either of the two senses, i.e., prescience or foreordination. But given the strongly relational Hebrew background to the word, the unambiguous sense of *proginōskō* in 1 Pet 1:20 (see below) and *prognōsis* in Acts 2:23 and 1 Pet 1:2 (see below), and the whole tenor of Paul’s theology, the probable meaning of *proginōskō* with God as subject is to “know intimately” or “forelove.”⁶
 - (2) The problem with this reasoning is obvious. Calvinists are changing the meaning of *προγινώσκω*.

6. Say no to Open Theism.

- a. Open Theism asserts:

⁶ Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 127-128.

- (1) God's knowledge and control are limited. Future acts of free will creatures are not known by God, nor does he determine them.
 - (2) Absolute foreknowledge is incompatible with the concept God interacts with his creatures on a moment-by-moment basis.
 - (3) God anticipates our actions, based on his superior intellect, but ultimately he does not know exactly what is going to happen in the future.
- b. The problems with this view are obvious.

7. Say yes to Molinism.

- a. Molinism was developed by the Spanish Jesuit priest Luis de Molina (d. 1600). Today, Molinism's chief advocate is William L. Craig.
- b. Molinism asserts:
 - (1) With middle knowledge (*scientia media*), God knows what each of his free will creatures would do in any given circumstance.
 - (a) Agent A, if placed in circumstance C, would freely choose option X over option Y. Thus, if God wanted to accomplish X, all God would do is, using his middle knowledge, actualise the world in which A was placed in C, and A would freely choose X. God therefore retains an element of providence without nullifying A's choice, and God's purpose (the actualisation of X) is fulfilled.
 - (b) "If Jeff Coleman were given the opportunity to teach Online Bible School on Tuesday evenings via Zoom, he would freely do so."
 - (2) God not only foreknows what will happen in the actual world, he foreknows what would have happened in every possible world.
 - (3) The key term when discussing middle knowledge is "would."
 - (4) Using his middle knowledge, God surveyed all possible worlds and then actualised a particular one, the one we are living in.
 - (5) The actual world God has created is the one world that best glorifies him.
- c. The concept of God's middle knowledge is biblical.
 - (1) **1 Sa 23:8-14** 8 ...Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9 David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here. 10 Then David said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. 11 Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? Yahweh, the God of Israel, please tell your servant. And Yahweh said, He will come down [foreknowledge]. 12 Then David said, Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul? And Yahweh said, They will surrender you [middle knowledge]. 13 Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.
 - (2) **Eze 3:5-7** 5 ...You [Ezekiel] are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel— 6 not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you [middle knowledge]. 7 But the house of Israel will

not be willing to listen to you [foreknowledge], for they are not willing to listen to me....

- (3) **Jer 38:17-18** 17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, Thus says Yahweh, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If you will surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live [middle knowledge]. 18 But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand [foreknowledge].
 - (4) **Mt 11:23** 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades [foreknowledge]. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day [middle knowledge].
 - (5) **Mt 12:7** 7 ...If you had known what this means, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless [middle knowledge].
 - (6) **Lk 16:30-31** 30 And [the rich man] said, No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. 31 He said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead [middle knowledge].
 - (7) **Lk 22:67-68** 67 If you are the Messiah, tell us. But [Jesus] said to them, If I tell you, you will not believe, 68 and if I ask you, you will not answer [middle knowledge].
 - (8) **Jn 15:22-24** 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ...24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.
 - (9) **1 Co 2:8** 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory [middle knowledge].
- d. The pros of Molinism are:
- (1) Middle knowledge allows God to logically plan the future. In eternity past, all possible worlds were laid out before him.
 - (a) "...[W]ithout middle knowledge, God would find himself...with knowledge of the future but without any logical prior planning of the future."⁷
 - (2) Molinism sufficiently explains the co-existence of God's sovereignty and man's free will.
 - (3) Molinism avoids the extremes of Calvinistic determinism and Open Theism.

⁷ William L. Craig.

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Videos

