

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Bible Study/Prayer meeting

Date Wednesday 30th November 2022

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles, Ps/Hymn Read Job 11:7-10 Text Job 11:7

Series The Doctrine of God series (3) Title The Incomprehensibility Of God

The subject before us is the incomprehensibility of God.

Now before we go any further, we must define what is meant by the phrase the incomprehensibility of God.

First, we will consider the word comprehend, that is because the word incomprehensible is derived from the word comprehend.

The word comprehend is made of two parts, Com meaning completely, and the word prehend meaning to catch hold of, to grip, cease.

The word comprehend means something you encircle with your knowledge. *It is to grasp something completely, to know it fully, to say I have figured it out, I can get my head around it.*

However, when we say God is incomprehensible, we mean that we are unable to fully, completely, and perfectly understand God in His nature, attributes, perfections, and works as His ways are too high for us.

They are a well without bottom, a road without end, a forest without limits.

It is impossible for man to have a knowledge of God that is exhaustive and perfect in every way.

It has often been said about an elephant, you can grab the elephant's tale, but you cannot grab the whole elephant.

Therefore, it is impossible to fully comprehend God.

God is infinite and His creatures are finite, that means limited.

God is infinite, that means not limited. His perfections, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, power, is infinite, no boundaries.

God is without limitations in every quality He possesses. Only God knows Himself perfectly, comprehensively.

He knew all things He created before He created them.

However, we are finite, we are limited. Our knowledge, understanding, wisdom is weak and restricted. There is only so much we can take in and process.

Martin Lloyd Jones said *God give man a mind to think and its man's duty to use that mind to think to the very limits of human thought, but it is also true that there are times when that mind can only go so far and when that limit is reached all that is left is to accept and adore.*

Therefore, since we are finite, limited we cannot fully perfectly grasp the infinite God in His eternal, infinite, unchanging plans, providence and purposes.

We can never search God out to perfection; a finite creature can never fully comprehend that which is infinite.

When we turn our thoughts to God's Nature, and Perfections, our minds are overwhelmed.

We agree with David when he thought about God, in **Psalm 139:6** ***Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.***

Isaiah 55:8-9 ***For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

While God is incomprehensible, but that does not mean He is unknowable.

There is an error that teaches because God is incomprehensible, He cannot be known at all.

Then the question must be asked, if God truly is incomprehensible, then how can we know anything about Him at all.

Scripture teaches God can be known.

He has revealed Himself through His Son by His word. It is possible to have a knowledge of Him which can meet man's need as a sinner.

Such a knowledge of God can only be gained as God is pleased to give a suitable revelation of Himself to His creature.

Such a revelation must be received through faith by those to whom it is given, since faith is a gift of God.

Without such a revelation and knowledge of God there could be no spiritual awareness or worship of God and no reverence for or fear of God.

Always keep before you, God is incomprehensible, but He is knowable.

(In other words, man with all his limitations will not perfectly fully understand everything thing there is to know about God's character, His ways and works, but He what we do know is what He has revealed.)

We will leave the knowability of God to greater detail next time.

But we must centre our thoughts upon the incomprehensibility of God

I FIRST, THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IS SEEN IN HIS DECREES.

What are God's decrees **The SC Q7 answers, The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.**

God has decreed all things in one everlasting decree whatsoever comes to pass in the entire universe. Nothing is unknown to Him.

The truth of God's Decree is plainly revealed in Scripture, and since God can be known, then various features of God's Decree can be determined,

however, since God is incomprehensible, we cannot fully perfectly understand, every detail in His eternal, infinite, and unchanging decree.

God's nature and works, surpasses the scope of our minds.

(Spurgeon, said "the divine decrees are inscrutable or incomprehensible.)

We know God is working according to His purposes, however, we do not fully understand the way God works in accomplishing His purposes.

Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."

In His sovereign wisdom God has chosen not to reveal everything to His creation.

Deuteronomy 29:29 “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”

This verse is stating the complete and final explanation of all things belong to God, **and what we have in God’s word is all that God has graciously chosen to reveal of Himself.**

(This reminder that we can never grasp the full depths of God’s divinity is essential because as **Tozer** noted “**We want a God we can in some measure control.**”)

Remember, God fills heaven and earth, God is not answerable to anyone. He asks counsel of none. He exceeds all and is exceeded by none. He controls all but is controlled by none.

He is self-existent, eternal, all powerful, all wise, the creator, and redeemer of His elect people. He owes no explanation for anything He does or will do within His creation.

Man is accountable to God, but God is not accountable to man. Man was created by God to glorify God and enjoy Him.

Therefore, we must focus upon what God wants you to know, what He has written down ***that we may do all the words of this law.***

However, the mind of fallen mind concludes something is missing, unanswered, a gap that needs to be filled, and so he sets out to find answers to the secret things of God.

But he soon finds himself going astray, into deep water, and doctrinal error.

We must not look to preach something new, rather more of the same.

For instance, the gospels only give a summary of the life and public ministry of Jesus Christ.

Apart from one reference in **Luke 2:42** where Christ is the age of 12 we know little in between those years until the age of 30 in **Luke 3:23**.

God has told us in **John 20:30-31** “***And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:***

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

John 21:25 “***And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.***

Be assured in the light of scripture, what we have before us is what God wants us to know, whereas, at the same time the secret things belong to Him.

We cannot know more than what has been revealed.

Allow me to illustrate this! if you look at a tree, you see the trunk, the branches, leaves, in a sense all that is above the ground has been revealed to you.

But everything else, the deeps roots underground is out of view, hidden.

Enjoy what has been revealed, instead of digging up what has not what is hidden.

For instance, we cannot fully grasp why God would ever choose and covenant to save guilty fallen sinners by the shedding of Jesus Christ blood.

Or why He the eternal God of Heaven and Earth, would set His love upon a multitude of individual fallen sinners and make them the recipients of His divine grace.

Or why He would give sinners grace which they do not deserve, but sparing them in mercy from what they fully deserve, eternal hell, due to their own sin and rebellion against God.

His purpose to save sinners was guaranteed as **Eph 1:4** says *before the foundation of the world...* we were chosen in Christ. **2 Thess 2:13** *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...”*

Moses when speaking to the children of Israel about God choosing them unto Himself, said in **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** *The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: **8** But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

The Lord did not choose sinners because of anything in them, but it pleased God to set His eternal, infinite love upon sinners who are unlovable and deserve only to perish for their sin against God.

In His infinite, unlimited wisdom. He knew all about us before He saved us.

We will never full grasp God’s plan through His Son to redeem sinners, adopt them, bless them, and bring them to heaven.

The Incomprehensibility of God is seen in His Decrees.

II SECOND, THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IS SEEN IN HIS DEPTH.

Job 11:7 *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

Ps 92:5 *“O LORD, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep.*

Ps 145:3 *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.”*

Isaiah 40:27 *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.”*

Romans 11:33 *“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!*

The word **unsearchable** means ***unfathomable***, that which is deep, unmeasurable, it cannot be traced out, it is past finding out, it is impossible to fully comprehend, by human minds.

There is a depth to God's incomprehensibility in all His perfections, or attributes He is infinite, eternal, unchanging. He is all knowing, all powerful, everywhere present, there is a depth to His love, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

We can never plumb the depths of our God. Only He knows the beginning from the end.

Spurgeon said God's *“Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Providence is inexhaustible,...”*

Stephen Charnock said "...the depths of the divine essence, perfections, and decrees are unknown to any but God Himself. He only knows what He is, and what He knows, what He can do, and what He hath decreed to do."

There is a depth to God's eternal plan of restoration of sinful man unto Himself through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that we will never fully take it in.

How He ordered the events to save Saul of Tarsus a wicked persecutor of the church and by Free and Sovereign Grace made him, a preacher of the gospel.

We say to Christ our heavenly Boaz, the same as Ruth humbly said to her earthly Boaz, **Ruth 2:10 "she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"**

There is a depth to the incarnation of Christ, the Godhead, that we will never fully grasp.

We can never reach the depths of knowing God perfectly because the finite cannot contain the infinite.

And yet the incomprehensibility of God humbles and encourages us to know we will always be learning.

The best thing we can do is to follow Moses counsel in **Duet 33:3 "ascribe the greatness to our God."**

You see, the more we learn about God in His ways and works, the more we realise we know very little about God.

The more we meditate upon His greatness, our weakness is highlighted, **but that's not to discourage us, but to drive us to**

keep pressing on the upward way new heights gaining every day. Seek to learn something more about our God day by day.

The Incomprehensibility of God is seen in His Decrees and His Depth.

III THIRD THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IS SEEN IN HIS DEALINGS

Now while God's comprehensibility is revealed throughout scripture, yet it is seen in the book of Job in a magnified way.

Read the life of God's servant Job, read the statements about God's incomprehensibility in the book of Job though we have quoted some already. **Job 5:9** "***Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.***"

9:10 "***Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.***

27:14 "***... The thunder of his power who can understand? Job 37:5*** "***great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.***"

We cannot fully understand the dealings of God in the lives His redeemed people, but we believe every joy and trial is sent from above.

Job stands out as one who suffered in his Christian life.

In a very short period of time he went from praying for his children to burying his children.

He went from having cattle and servants to none at all. He suffered bodily affliction. Attacks by the wicked one which were all permitted by God.

But at the end of Job's life God, **ch 42:10** "***... the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.***"

God allows troubles and sorrows into our lives according His own purpose. But Every affliction is timed and purposed.

Every comfort is sent with loving thoughtfulness that makes it precious.

Job said in chapter 23:10 ***“But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”***

We cannot fully comprehend His dealings in our lives, every path and turn.

However, God has revealed Himself in Christ therefore, we are assured in John 10 He Knows and calls His redeemed people by name and leads them home as they follow Him.

Rest assured as David said ***surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Lord forever.***