

# Man Who Spent 23 Minutes in Hell: How Do We Understand God?

A common misconception among Christians is the belief that man cannot understand God's ways. We often hear people use the phrase, "God's ways are not our ways" referencing the verse in Isaiah 55:8–9 (NKJV), which says, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'"

People will misinterpret a verse like this and then draw a conclusion. This particular Scripture has been used to explain the reason we can't know why things happen in life. This is an example of why it is so very important to read Scripture in the correct context. The Bible is our greatest tool to understand God and grow in our faith; however, we need to do a little research when we apply Scripture.

To whom was God speaking when He made that statement in the book of Isaiah? If we read the preceding verse, we find that He was speaking to "the wicked, who forsake His way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts" (v. 7). He is not speaking to His children. It's the wicked who can't know His ways, but we His children are expected to know His ways.

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Your next question might be, "What about the sovereignty of God?" Of course God is sovereign, but only outside His written Word. Another way to put it is that He will not do anything against what He has already written because His Word will

never change (Ps. 89:34, 119:89). His written Word declares His will, and He expects us to know what it says.

Remember when Jesus was about to heal the woman bowed over with a crippling disease in Luke 13:16? He said, "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound ... for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond?" He expected them to know that she had a right to be loosed being a daughter of Abraham, since He said, "ought not" posed as a rhetorical question.

Another example is when the apostles couldn't cast the demon out of the boy in Matthew 17:17b, Jesus said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?" He expected by then that they should have had the faith required and know it was His will to deliver the boy.

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When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey, He said in Luke 19:44b (KJV), "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." He expected them to know this date because it is spelled out in Daniel 9:25. The verse needs some study to discover the exact date, but God expected them to have been diligent to study and learn the time Jesus would enter Jerusalem and declare Himself the Messiah. They didn't study, and He chastised them for it. As a matter of fact, He revealed that the city would be destroyed by their enemies.

Still more Bible verses clearly state we are to know His ways:

- "But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me" (Jer. 9:24).
- "Having made known to us the mystery of His will" (Eph. 1:9a). He said He has made known to us His will.
- "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:19). In other words, If we don't

understand his will, we are unwise.

– “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9).

– “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things” (1 John 2:20). John is not saying that we know everything there is to know, but that we have the capacity through the Holy Spirit to discern right from wrong and truth from error.

If we don’t read and study the Bible, we won’t know what His will is. Instead, we will voice our own opinion and possibly mislead people with inaccurate information. Always be sure that you seek understanding and apply the Word correctly.

Of course, we cannot know all things, but for the most part, God’s Word declares to us His ways and His will.

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