

OPEN THEISM

Open theism, or the openness view of the future, is the view that God knows everything that can be known, but future choices of free creatures cannot be known; God knows all the possibilities and has plans prepared for each, but nothing is certain or determined; even with God's infinite wisdom, a free creature can surprise Him; this is the risk God took for the sake of love.

For now, I'll point you to others for fuller explanations and rebuttals.¹ I offer here a brief outline because I believe that open theists are denying the Godness of God, according to God. The following Scriptures convince me that God knows everything about Himself (which requires infinite knowledge) and everything that is real future, including our choices, and even everything that *would* be (if circumstances were different).

God's Sovereign Foreknowledge of Human Affairs

Isa. 41:21-29 – test of Godhood (for idols): declare the future

– one who chooses a god who can't declare the future = an abomination

42:8-9, “before they spring forth, I tell you”

43:8-13 – no god w/ sovereign foreknowledge but YHWH

44:6-8 – test of Godhood: declare what will happen [not “might”]

44:24-28 – Who says (150 years beforehand) Cyrus will fulfill His purpose to rebuild Jerusalem?

45:1-7 – foretells Cyrus, so that people know YHWH alone does all things

45:18-25 – no other god besides the One who foretold

46:8-11 – no other, declaring end from the beginning, saying, “I will accomplish all my pleasure”

48:3-8 – before they came to pass, announced, “did them,” lest they say their idols did them

Ps. 139:4 – before a word is on my tongue, You know it

139:16 – all of my days pre-written in Your book

Mt. 26:21-25, Lk. 22:22, Jn 13:19 – Jesus foretold Judas' free decisions to betray, “as it is written,” “determined,” “that you may know that I AM” (see ProjectOne28.com/IAM).

¹ E.g., Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000); “Uncertain Hands of God and Men: Providence in Process Thought and Open Theism,” 23 March 2007 (theresurgencereport.com/resurgence/2007/04/06/uncertain-hands-of-god-and-men-providence-in-process-thought-and-open-theism). John Piper, “Is the Glory of God at Stake in God's Foreknowledge of Human Choices?” 3 Jul 1998 (desiringGod.org/messages/is-the-glory-of-god-at-stake-in-gods-foreknowledge-of-human-choices). *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), free PDF at desiringGod.org/books/beyond-the-bounds.

Alleged Support for the Openness View

1. When God doesn't already know, but learns something as it happens

E.g., Gen. 22:12, "now I know that you fear God"

- If open, then no test would be sufficient. What about next week?
- What about God's *promises* to Abraham (12:1-3, 17:19, 21:12)?
Wishful thinking? Bluffing?
- Abraham believed God would resurrect Isaac (22:5, Heb. 11:17-18)
because God will always accomplish His promised future.

Cf. Gen. 18:17-21 – if literal, as openness proponents treat 22:12, then YHWH didn't know the *past or present* circumstance in Sodom without going there physically. But even open theists affirm God's omnipresence and His omniscience of the past and present. We must be dealing with anthropomorphic language, *as though* God was human, while we know from other Scripture that He transcends that humanness.

2. When God changes His mind

E.g., 1 Sam. 15:11, 35 – regretted/repented of making Saul king

But, v. 29: "the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret [change His mind], because He is not a man that He should have regret [change His mind]."

I.e., vv. 11, 35 = anthropomorphisms!

God already prophesied the kingly line would be through Judah (Gen. 49:8-12), not Saul's tribe (Benjamin).

Conclusion

God is never taken off guard. We can trust Him with the future because He knew every possibility, every way in which He could intervene, and with wisdom and goodness, He decided a future in which He would work everything for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28-32).