

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH OPEN THEISM?

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OPEN THEISM & FREE WILL

The basis for open theism is free will. If God has granted mankind a free will, then the future is partly open.

Biblical argument for free will:

God is the author of our nature, that is, God is the creator of our constitution, He personally forms each individual in the womb (Gen. 4:1; Isa. 27:11, 43:7, 49:5; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13-14, 16; Ecc. 7:29; Job 31:15, 35:10), so He forms each of us in the womb in His image (Gen. 1:26-27, 9:6, Jas 3:9). God didn't stop with creating Adam; He forms each individual in the womb. Therefore we are all created with a free will and a conscience like God has.

Because of free will, the future is partly open with moral possibilities or alternative courses (Gen. 4:6-7, 22:12; Ex. 3:18, 4:9, 13:17, 16:4, 33:2, 34:24; Deut. 8:2, 13:1-3; 1 Sam. 2:30, 2 Chron. 12:6-7, 16:9; 32:31; Jdg. 2:20-22, 3:4; Isa. 5:1-5; Eze. 3:19, 12:3, 12:13, 33:19; Jer. 3:6-7, 3:19-20, 18:8-10; Ps. 81:13, 81:13-14; Job 11:14, Matt. 23:26, Rom. 6:12, 1 Cor. 10:13).

BASIC BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR A PARTLY OPEN (*undetermined*) FUTURE

- * God speaks of the future in terms of what may or may not be: Ex. 3:18, 4:9, 13:17; Eze. 12:3
- * God changes His plans in response to changing circumstances: Ex. 32:10-14, Jer. 18:1-10
- * God's willingness to change His plans is considered one of His glorious attributes: Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:12-13
- * God tests people to see what types of decisions they will make: Gen. 22:12; Ex. 16:4; Deut. 8:2, 13:1-3; 2 Chron. 32:31
- * God has had disappointments and has regretted how things turned out: Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:10, 15:35

- * God has expected things to happen that didn't come to pass: Isa. 5:1-5; Jer. 3:6-7, 3:19-20
- * God gets frustrated and grieved when he attempts to bring individuals into alignment with his will and they resist: Eze. 22:29-31; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; cf. Heb. 3:8, 3:15, 4:7; Acts 7:51
- * The prayers of men have changed the plans of God (*God changes the future*): Ex. 32:10-14; Num. 11:1-2, 14:12-20, 16:16:20-35; Deut. 9:13-14, 9:18-20, 9:25; 2 Sam. 24:17-25; 1 Kin. 21:27-29; 2 Kin. 20:6; 2 Chron. 12:5-8; Jer. 26:19; Isa. 38:5
- * God is said to have repented (changed His mind) multiple times in the Bible: Gen. 6:6-7; Ex. 32:12-14; Num. 23:19; Deut. 32:36; Judges 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11, 15:29, 15:35; 2 Sam. 24:16; Ps. 90:13, 106:45, 110:4, 135:14; Jer. 4:28, 15:6, 18:8, 18:10, 20:16, 26:3, 26:13, 26:19, 42:10, Eze. 24:14, Hos. 11:8, 13:14; Joel 1:13-14; Amos 7:3, 7:6; Jonah 3:9-10, 4:2; Zach. 8:14
- * Prophecies are sometimes God foretelling what He Himself will later bring to pass. So they often have to do more with God's omnipotence to bring about His plans than merely foreseeing the future: Gen. 3:15; 1 Kin. 8:15, 8:20, 8:24, 13:32 (with 2 Kin. 23:1-3, 15-18); 2 Kings 19:25; 2 Chron. 1:9 (1 Chron. 6:4; 10, 15); 2 Chron 36:21-22; Ezra 1:1; Isa. 5:19, 25:1-2, 37:26, 42:9 (with vs. 16); Jer. 29:10, 32:24, 32:28, 33:14-15, Lam. 3:37; Eze. 12:25, 17:24, 33:29, 33:33; Dan. 4:33, 4:37; Acts 3:18, 27:32-35; Rev. 17:17. This type of prophecy includes the prophecies of the Messiah. So His birth, the location of His birth, the miracle of His birth, were not accidents or merely foreseen events, but were the deliberate plan of God (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 9:6; 53:6; Acts 2:23, 4:28)
- * The future is partly open (undetermined, uncertain): Ex. 3:18, 4:9, 13:17; Eze. 12:3; Gen. 22:12; Ex. 16:4; Deut. 8:2, 13:1-3; Jdg. 2:20-22, Jdg. 3:4, Ex. 33:2, Ex. 34:24; 1 Sam. 2:30, 2 Chron. 12:6-7, 2 Chron. 16:9; 2 Chron. 32:31; Ps. 81:13-14; Isa. 5:1-5; Jer. 3:6-7, 3:19-20
- * The future is partly settled (determined, certain): Gen. 3:15; 1 Kin. 8:15, 8:20, 8:24, 13:32 (with 2 Kin. 23:1-3, 15-18); 2 Kings 19:25; 2 Chron. 1:9 (1 Chron. 6:4; 10, 15); 2 Chron 36:21-22; Ezra 1:1; Isa. 5:19, 25:1-2, 37:26, 42:9 (with vs. 16); Jer. 29:10, 32:24, 32:28, 33:14-15, Lam. 3:37; Eze. 12:25, 17:24, 33:29, 33:33; Dan. 4:33, 4:37; Acts 3:18, 27:32-35; Rev. 17:17; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 9:6; 53:6; Acts 2:23, 4:28.
- * The future is capable of changing: Ex. 32:10-14, Jer. 18:1-10; Ex. 32:10-14; Num. 11:1-2, 14:12-20, 16:20-35; Deut. 9:13-14, 9:18-20, 9:25; 2 Sam. 24:17-25; 1 Kin. 21:27-29; 2 Kin. 20:6; 2 Chron. 12:5-8; Jer. 26:19; Isa. 38:5

IS TIME AN ELEMENT OF GOD'S NATURE?

- * Scriptures that say God has a past, present, and a future: Rev. 1:4, 1:8, 4:8
- * Scriptures that say God's eternity is endless time, that is, time without beginning or end: Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 43:10; Isa. 57:15; Job 36:26; Dan. 4:34; Hab. 1:12 Ps. 23:2; Ps. 90:2; Ps. 102:24; Ps. 102:27; Lk. 1:33; Heb 1:12; Rev 1:4; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 5:14;
- * Scriptures that say man's eternity is endless time: Isa. 45:17; Eph. 3:21; Rev. 14:11;
- * Scriptures that say eternity is endless time for Heavenly creatures: Rev. 4:8
- * Eternity is time without end (endless time instead of timelessness): Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 43:10; Isa. 57:15; Job 36:26; Dan. 4:34; Hab. 1:12 Ps. 23:2; Ps. 90:2; Ps. 102:24; Ps. 102:27; Lk. 1:33; Heb 1:12; Rev 1:4; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 4:8; Rev. 5:14; Isa. 45:17; Eph. 3:21; Rev. 14:11

THE FOUR GOVERNMENTS OF GOD

Understanding the four governments of God also helps us to understand Open Theism. Open Theism doesn't teach that everything is open. God has determined a lot of things. What God doesn't predetermine for us is our future moral choices, we ourselves determine that. In God's moral government, He grants us free will.

God has four distinct governments. God governs over moral action (moral government), God governs over history (providential government), God governs over animals (animate non-moral government) and God governs over the matter of the universe (material non-moral government).

The **material government** (Solar system, whether, material world) is governed by God **the law of cause and effect** (Gen. 6:7, 19:24, Exo. 14:21-29; Num. 11:31; 1 Kg. 18:38; 2 Chron. 7:13; Ps. 50:1, 93:4, 135:6-7; Isa. 45:7, 45:12; Dan. 4:35; Jonah 1:4, 14-15; Matt. 5:45, 8:24-27, 24:29; Mk. 4:39-41; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:1-4, 8, 12, 18, 21).

The **animal government** is governed by **the law of instinct and causation** (Gen. 9:2; Num. 22:22-23; Deut. 11:31; 1 Kg. 17:4-6; Dan. 6:22; Jonah 1:17, 2:10; Matt. 10:29, 17:27, 26:74; Mk. 5:11:13).

The **providential government** (Nations, rulers, and kings) is governed by **the law of influence and causation** (Gen. 19:24-25; Exo. 11:9-10, 18:10, 20:2; Num. 33:53; Deut. 2:5, 2:25, 3:20, 9:23, 11:24; Josh. 1:2-6, 1:15, 8:1, 11:20, 23:15, 24:14; 1 Kg. 22:19-23; 1 Chron. 29:10-12; Esther 4:14; Ps. 22:28, 66:7; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 60:22; Jer. 21:10, 27:6,

32:27-30; 35:15, 50:9; Eze. 11:15, 17:24, 29:19; Dan. 2:21, 2:38, 4:17, 4:32, 5:21, 5:18, 7:25, Zeph. 3:8; Jn. 19:10-11; Rom. 13:1, 13:4-5; Rev. 17:17).

God's **moral government** is governed by motives presented to the mind, appealing to free will. Moral government not governed by the law of cause and effect but is rather governed by **the law of liberty or the law of influence and response** (Gen. 3:11, 4:6-7, 6:5; Deut. 30:19, Josh. 24:15, 1 Kg. 18:21; Isa. 1:16-20, 45:22, 55:6-7, 66:3-4; Hos. 10:12; Jer. 18:5-11, 21:8, 26:13; Eze. 18:30-32, 20:7-8; Matt. 23:37; Jn. 1:11, 5:40, 7:17; Acts 2:40, Acts 17:30, 7:51, Rom. 2:5-11, 6:16-17, 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Tim. 2:21; Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 6:17-8; Rev. 3:20, 22:17).

The moral government of God has the Law of Love (Deut. 6:5; Deut. 10:12; Matt. 22:35-40; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:8; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14; Jas. 2:8), the court of Judgment Day (Matt. 12:36; 2 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:7; Jude 1:6), the Judge of Jesus Christ (Gen. 18:25; Jn. 5:22; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1), the everlasting punishment of eternal death or endless hell fire (Matt. 25:46; Rom. 6:23; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 1:7), the prison of the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10; Rev. 20:14-15; Rev. 21:8), and rewards (Matt. 5:12; Matt. 6:4; Matt. 10:41; Matt. 16:27; Lk. 6:23; Lk. 6:35; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Cor. 3:14; Col. 3:24; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 22:12). God righteously judges and governs all of the earth (Ps. 67:4).

For further study, see "God of the Possible" by Dr. Gregory Boyd