



Two of the most debated questions in the history of the Church have been, “What does God’s sovereignty over us and the future look like?” and, “How does that control affect His promises and prophecies?” This series has exposed the error of the two most popular theories in the Church today (the Evangelical views of Theistic Determinism and Open Theism) and will now present the correct view. This view is called, “God the Great Shepherd” since (in the author’s opinion) this biblical metaphor best captures the truths it espouses.

1. God reacts, responds - and at times, changes His intentions or plans based on the actions or responses of people which means we are (at least in part) free¹ (Gen 6:7, 11:1-9, 22:12; Exo 32:7-14; Num 14:1-23, 16:20-26; Jug 2:18, 10:16; 2Chr 7:13-14; Psa 106:21-23; Jer 15:1, 18:20; Jer 18:7-10; Jon 3:1-10; Amo 7:1-6; e.g. The length/quality of our lives – Pro 3:1-2, 9:10-11; 1Pe 4:9-12 w/Psa 34:12-16; Jesus’ death by betrayal – Mat 23:37 w/Luk 22:42 w/Act 2:23, 4:23-28 = God’s “definite plan”/“foreknowledge” after the Jews’ rejection²).

2. God doesn’t always know what we will do in the future which means the future is also (at least in part) unknown.

2.1. God responding/reacting to our actions/decisions strongly implies He doesn’t always know what we are going to do (Jer 18:7-10).

2.2. This however is confirmed by passages such as (Exo 13:17; Isa 63:7-10; Jer 3:6-7, 19-20, 26:1-6, 36:1-3; Eze 12:3; Mat 8:10).

2.3. It should be noted that if God does know everything about the future then the future is fixed according to what He knows. Which means the same is true for our decisions or actions in the present (they too are fixed rather than free) since it is the present that determines the future. This (once more) is not what the Bible teaches but instead Greek mythology (Fatalism).

2.4. If this were true, it would also mean that we are not responsible for our actions. We are instead victims. Such thinking makes a mockery of Scripture which establishes our responsibility (and therefore free will) through God’s commands, the conditions and consequences of those commands and the pleading of God and His prophets to keep those commands. Why plead for something we have no control over fulfilling? This kind of thinking also impinges on God’s most important attribute, His justice (Gen 18:19; Deu 16:20, 32:4).

3. God’s justice dictates that the majority of our actions and the events that make up the future be free and unknown.

3.1. If God is to be just in His judgment of us at the end of time, then it requires that the majority of our wills and the future be free and unknown since, “How can God commend/condemn us if the majority of what we did/did not do was out of our control because the future was pre-determined or fixed?”

3.2. The only time things could/would ever be fixed (rather than free) is if they have a direct bearing on God’s promises or prophecies (e.g. Joh 11:47-53 = Seeing the rejection of the Jews, God now moves Caiaphas to prophesy what will cause the Sanhedrin to seek His death).

3.3. What about God’s omniscience? How can God be said to be omniscient (all knowing and all wise) if the majority of the future is free and unknown? God’s omniscience doesn’t require He know all the future, only those aspects related to His future promises and prophecies.

4. God’s knowledge of the future is only in respect to His promises/prophecies and therefore a reflection of His omnipotence - not His omniscience.

4.1. Isaiah 40-48, that portion of Scripture dealing w/God’s knowledge of the future as proof that He is the true God of heaven and earth is not about His omniscience, but rather His omnipotence – i.e. that He has the power to declare what will be in the future and see that it comes to pass exactly as He declared it (e.g. Isa 46:8-11).

4.2. The above understanding of knowing the future (i.e. you only know what you have the power to guarantee will exist or come to pass) is the correct way to speak about the future since the term (“the future”) does not refer to something already realized or currently being realized as do the constructs we refer to as past and present. IOW: it is not about what is real (or realized) but what may (or will be). Which once more points not to omniscience, but again omnipotence: what God by His power will bring into existence/make real when that period of time becomes the present (e.g. Rom 4:17; Isa 42:8-9; Isa 48:3 = God’s knowledge of the future is the knowledge of His power to do in the future [or cause to come “to pass”] whatever He chooses).

4.3. Such omnipotence includes (once more) the ability to control/direct people when necessary (e.g. Gen 50:20; Pro 21:1 w/Isa 10:5-15; Also 2Ch 36:22-23 w/Ezr 1:1-2 w/Isa 44:24-28; Notice that God’s control/direction over the aforementioned individuals requires little – if any, of their free-will to be violated. They are influenced not coerced).

5. God’s ability to accomplish His promises and prophecies in the future does not require He know all things in respect to the future.

5.1. Theistic determinists (Calvinists) and Open Theists share one belief in common: if God doesn’t know everything about the future, then He cannot be counted on to accomplish His various promises prophecies.

5.2. This belief is not only alleviated, but exposed as unintelligent once we consider:

5.2.1. God knows our present thoughts, intentions and inclinations which means He can accurately predict/anticipate our actions and decisions before they are carried out (Pro 5:21; Gen 6:5; 2Ch 16:9; Mat 12:34b; 1Co 4:5; Isa 48:8; Isa 65:24; e.g. Deu 31:16 w/21).

5.2.2. God’s infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom in relation to all things in the present guarantee that all necessary contingencies are in place since the future cannot exist outside the events of the present (e.g. Exo 13:17; control present = control the future).

5.2.3. God’s infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom in relation to all things in the present guarantee that there is nothing we (or any other free-will creature) could do to thwart or trick God since the disparity between the creature and His Creator is immeasurable (Isa 55:8-9; Imagine a 300 qubit [quantum] computer [A computer theoretically able to possess more information than there are atoms in the universe] playing chess w/a three-year old [The age a child is able to grasp the basics of chess; Computers btw have been beating chess grandmasters since the 90’s]. Is there any real chance that baby could ever do anything that would catch the quantum computer off guard or cause the baby to win? How much more would this be true in relation to God? The greatest computer ever built would still only be finite in what it knows and therefore imperfect in its wisdom. Which means in comparison to God it [the quantum computer] now takes the place of the baby).

CLOSING CONTEMPLATION: Like a great shepherd, God possesses more than enough power, knowledge and wisdom in the present to lead His simple (by comparison) flock (of Creation) to the future He desires – one where His promises and prophecies are perfectly accomplished and realized. And this He does, without needing to violate the freedom of our wills. Our response? (Psa 23:1 “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not worry.”).

¹ We have unimpeded control over what we do and the choices we make. They are not the result of coercion or causation - including God’s decree or pre-determination.

² One must be careful not to view those passages which employ the words “predestined” or “foreknowledge” as always referring to the fulfillment of something planned in the distant past. The same can be said about those references to OT passages in the NT that seem to indicate the fulfillment of former prophecy. In many cases, they did not exist (as prophetic) until they were realized (or used for such purposes) in their present or given context. As such, their main function is more confirmation that a person’s actions are consistent (or congruent) w/God’s established principles, prior workings or history than the realization of ancient predictions (Mat 2:17, 4:14-16, 13:13-15, 27:9; Joh 12:37-38 w/Isa 53:1 w/Mat 23:37; e.g. Psa 41:4 w/9 w/Joh 13:18-19; e.g. Excerpt from my wife’s biography, “So that the Scripture would be fulfilled, my wife submitted to me in all things”. Is this not how Jam 2:21-23 views God’s prophetic words regarding Abraham?).