

Open Theism

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | November 1, 2008



Is it not true that [you have a link in Come And Reason's Web Resources to] Greg Boyd is a leading open theist? He advocates a view that God's omniscience is seeing all possibilities, not the choices that have not yet been made by human free will.

I agree with Greg Boyd in this area.

Well, in lesson number 4, you suggest that God did foresee absolutely the fall of man, while the author suggests it was just a possibility. Then you go on to state how horrible a God would be if he did not foresee it. As an open theist I am wanting your thoughts on the matter?

Pastor M

Thank you for contacting me. You are right that Come And Reason has a link to Greg Boyd's website and I believe you are right that he is an open theist. I have never met Greg Boyd nor read about his views on this subject, but have heard others tell me this is true.

However, I have also heard that Greg Boyd has a sincerely open mind and is honestly pursuing truth, wanting to follow it where it leads, therefore I anticipate in time he will change his view on this issue. If you are wondering why there is a link to his site it is because I agree with him on God's methods of rulership, namely the law of love rather than the rule of force. I have read some beautiful things he has written on this subject and believe he is right on.

Regarding open theism: I have to follow the evidence and truth where it leads. There are two types of evidence in the Bible, declarative statements and the historical record. Let's look at the historical record first, which I find more persuasive.

At the time of the flood God directed Noah to build how many arks? Why only one? If God didn't know beforehand how people would respond, if God could only calculate the various possibilities and until the door to the ark was closed God was still wondering how many would respond, then what does it mean that God didn't have more arks ready? If God didn't know beforehand how many would say yes and choose to get onboard, wouldn't that mean He never intended to let all on, but just a few people, thus making Noah's 120 years of preaching a sham? I reject this view and believe that God did know their choices before they made them and Noah preached to show God did not exclude anyone, thus only one ark was needed, because God foreknew how they would choose.

The prophecies of Daniel demonstrating the fall of kingdoms one after the other and predicting the rise of the next kingdom all the way through the fall of Rome to the second coming demonstrate that God foreknew choices and events, not just the possibilities that might occur. I realize open theists are not comfortable with this so they try and move the date of Daniel to the time of the Roman Empire and yet what does the prophecy next predict? That there would be no other world empire to rise. This prediction goes completely against the trend of history as four empires in a row had come and human thought would have predicted another to follow. Only One who knows the future before it happens could have predicted with such certainty that no other world power would control those lands again. This requires knowledge of individual decisions of how kings and generals will act.

Now the declarative statements:

(Isa 46:9,10) "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done., saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Ecc 3:11 He hath made every [thing] beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Finally, I do not believe God is restricted by the physical laws of the universe such as gravity, thermodynamics, etc. To me this also means God is not restricted by the fabric of space/time. In other words, God lives outside of time. We are linear creatures who live in time, but God is not.

God sits above, over, and outside of time and can see clearly all history; past, present, and future. To Him there is no mystery and no uncertainty. Our infinite God can enter and exit time as He pleases. There are places in history where God has entered into time to experience and share it with His creatures. He entered time daily to visit with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day before their fall. He visited Abraham and Moses and spoke with them as friends. Ultimately, He came and lived for 33 years as one of us within the confines of time.

Understanding this gives us insight into how God can say things like He was grieved that He had made mankind (Gen 6:6). God stepped into time and expressed in terms we humans could understand the pain in His heart over wayward man. But this does not mean God is restricted by time. He can enter or leave time easier than we can enter or leave a pool of water.

The open theism view restricts God. It places Him under the confines of linear existence and reduces Him from infinite to something less than infinite, a being confined by the limitations of space/time which He created. This I cannot accept. My God is infinite in love, in goodness, in power, in knowledge, and in ability.