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# Isaiah

"Everyone who believes in God at all believes that he knows what you and I are going to do tomorrow."  
- C. S. Lewis

## **Definitions of Omniscience**

"God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act."

- Wayne Grudem

"God knows himself and in himself all things that come from him. He knows all things as they actually come to pass, past, present and future, and know them in their relations. He knows the hidden essence of things, to which the knowledge of man cannot penetrate. . . . Moreover he know what is possible as well as what is actual; all things that might occur under certain circumstances are present to his mind."  
- Louis Berkhof

"The vast procession of events, thoughts and feelings stand open to his view." - Charles Hodge

For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.  
1 John 3:20

## Predictive Prophecy in the Bible

The Bible is unlike any other religious book in the number and accuracy of its predictive prophecies. These prophecies generally fall into two categories: non-messianic and messianic. Among the many non-messianic (i.e. not about Jesus) prophecies, we find the following amazingly accurate predictions:

1. Succession of world kingdoms (Dan. 2:37-42)
2. Identification of Cyrus (Isa. 22:28-45:1)
3. The destruction of Tyre (Ezek. 26:3-14)
4. The fall of Edom (Jer. 49:16-17)

Even more astounding are the many specific predictions about the Messiah, most of these prophecies made hundreds of years before Jesus' birth. Among these are the following:

1. Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14)
2. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6)
3. Descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3)
4. Descendant from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)
5. Descendant of Jesse (Isa. 11:1)
6. Descendant of King David (2 Sam. 7:14)
7. Heralded by a messenger (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1)
8. Supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2; 61:1-2)
9. Coming to the temple and exercising authority over it (Mal. 3:1; cf. Matt. 21:12-13)
10. Ministry begins and is centered in Galilee (Isa. 9:1)
11. Entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech. 9:9)
12. Piercing of his hands, feet and side (Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10)
13. The soldiers casting lots for his garments (Ps. 22:18)

Perhaps the most amazing example of messianic prophecy is Isaiah 53. In that chapter, Isaiah extensively and accurately predicts the Messiah's future suffering, death and resurrection for his people. It predicts Christ's sinless life, vicarious suffering, his rejection by men, his silence before his accusers, his death with transgressors (the two thieves!), his prayers for his persecutors, his resurrection, even the fact that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb (v 9)!

"It is important to note unique things about biblical prophecies. Unlike many psychic predictions, many of these were very specific, giving, for example, the very name of the tribe, city and time of Christ's coming. Unlike forecasts found in tabloids at the supermarket checkout counter, none of these predictions failed. Since these prophecies were written hundreds of years before Christ was born, the prophets could not have been reading the trends of the times or making intelligent guesses."

Taken from the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, pp. 609-617 and Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 141ff.

## Excursus: Open Theism

You should be aware of a theological heresy emerging from within evangelical circles, known as "open theism" or "openness theology." Open theism denies that God knows the future actions of people.

Open theism argues that human freedom must be *absolute*. But if God knows our future actions, then those actions are in some way determined and not absolutely free. Therefore, according to open theism, God knows everything that can be known,

which does not include future human decisions. So for God, as well as us, the future is "open."

However, open theism flies in the face of basic biblical teaching, as well as the history of orthodox Christian belief. According to Isaiah at stake is the very identity of God himself (cf. 41:23). Foreknowledge is essential to the divine identity.

How do open theists deal with Isaiah 44:6-8 and many other texts in Isaiah chapters 41-48 that seem to affirm that God does know the future? According to open theists, in Isaiah God isn't saying that he knows all future events. He is merely proclaiming ahead of time his intentions to do specific actions in the future. According to Boyd, "The Lord is not appealing to information about the future he happens to possess; instead he is appealing to his own intentions about the future (*God of the Possible*, p. 30). God simply foreknows certain things he intends to do in the future.

Several considerations militate against the openness interpretation of these texts in Isaiah:

1. The whole point of these Isaiah texts is that God's foreknowledge is precisely what makes him divine. To diminish this or qualify its truthfulness seems to undercut Isaiah's entire thrust.
2. God's ability to know the future in Isaiah is consistently represented in general terms. God knows the "former things" as well as "things to come."
3. The pairing of "former things" with "things to come" is a *merism*, a figure of speech that expresses totality by pairing opposite extremes (e.g. "heaven and earth" = all creation). So to say that God knows former things and things to come is a way of saying he knows everything.