

Why So Much Suffering?



MANY PEOPLE around the world believe there's no God. They have many reasons, but one reason is that if they accepted God's existence, they would need to worship and obey Him. But they don't want to submit to a sovereign God, the Creator of the universe.

But if God is all-powerful, why does He allow suffering? The Bible says sin causes suffering. Have you ever wondered how it began, and more importantly, why God doesn't step in and put an end to it?

Thoughts to Remember:

- The story of evil starts with angels, popular today because of people's interest in the supernatural. Before God created our world, He created angels. The highest and most beautiful of all His angels was Lucifer (light bearer). God said of Lucifer, "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty...You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you" (Ezekiel 28:12-14).
- Isaiah 14 tells us what happened to mar the perfection of heaven. "For you have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High'" (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Lucifer didn't just break some obscure rule; He attempted to overthrow God Himself and take God's place.
- Here is the beginning of sin: vanity in the heart of Lucifer, leading to war in heaven. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought" (Revelation 12:7). Sin always brings conflict and suffering. But how did Lucifer—now Satan—have an army? The Bible tells us he deceived a third of God's angels into believing his lies about God and joining him in his revolt.
- But didn't God create Lucifer? Why didn't He create Lucifer to always obey Him? For the same reason God created us with free will—because if you take away free choice, you take away the ability to love. God wanted the freely chosen love of Lucifer, and He also wants your love, freely chosen, freely given.
- God and his loyal angels won the war and expelled Satan and his angels (now demons) from heaven. "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world..." (Revelation 12:9). It's worth asking ourselves: If Satan deceived one third of the holy angels, can we humans expect to resist his temptations alone? Remember that in every moment of temptation that you choose God, He will defeat Satan on your behalf.

- This was where Satan's life sadly coincides with Adam and Eve. He was cast out of heaven to the earth. From there, he tempted Adam and Eve. Both sinned. Why didn't God program Adam and Eve's minds against the deceiver? Satan was charging that God's government was unfair, too restrictive, that His laws were too hard to keep. A loving God gave Adam and Eve freedom to choose. He warned them of Satan and told them where Satan was in the garden—He truly did all He could to save and protect them. They fell into temptation because Eve entered Satan's ground—she went near the tree.

- Some think that Eve's sin was eating the fruit. No, it went much deeper than that. Eve's choice to listen to Satan was a rejection of God's supreme authority. Eve placed her own wisdom and desires above God's will, rejecting God's authority. But Satan is a deceiver; he promised joy, but brought to Adam and Eve only guilt, shame, and fear. He still does the same to people today.

- "...Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). From having dominion over the earth, Adam and Eve now found themselves and the whole earth under Satan's dominion. Because they chose Satan over God, joy and happiness immediately turned into sorrow, pain, disappointment, and death. The results of sin are terrible; there can be no good results whatsoever from following "a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44), which is Satan.

- Even Jesus' disciples wondered: If God is so good, why is the world so bad? Jesus responded with the story of the tares (weeds) and wheat. A householder sowed a field of wheat. But when the harvest came, it was hopelessly mixed with tares and couldn't be harvested. The parable continues: "So the servants of the householder came unto him and said, 'Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?' He said unto them, 'An enemy hath done this...'" (Matthew 13:27, 28).

- Satan is our enemy, and he sows evil in every life he can. The evil in this world is a result of Satan's work and human cooperation with sin. This is why it's so essential that we choose God every day. The great news is that Jesus broke Satan's power over us and Satan's dominion over our world when He came to this earth, lived here with us, and died for us on the cross. Satan can't control us; he lost not just a battle, but the whole war, at the cross! It's already over, and we're already free! But we must endure until the end, when God will come and save us.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

- We humans and God's angels are watching to see whose claims are true—God's or Satan's. If God decided today not to allow anyone to commit evil anymore, then all humans, whether they'd chosen God or Satan before, would now become robots, without will, without choice, without love, and without happiness. As the evil would disappear, so would the real good, for freedom and choice would be gone forever. But as we personally choose God each day, He promises (1) to be with us always, and (2) to one day take us to a better world where there is freedom without sin—a perfect world! Don't you want to go there?

Just between you . . . and God:

- There is a battle raging in the universe, a battle for your mind. But Christ's rescue plan is to destroy Satan and sin, and redeem His planet and His people. Are you tired of trying and failing? Are you tired of the suffering in this world? Just bow your head right now, privately, and give yourself to God. You can ask Him to break the chains that shackle you; you can tell Him you choose to be on His side in this battle. Let your heart sing, knowing you live each day choosing the right side in this great controversy.