

WHY IS GOD PERMITTING EVIL?

I will be glad and rejoice in your unfailing love, for you have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul.” — Psalm 31:7 (NLT)

We read in Genesis 1:31 that “*God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.*” But everything is certainly not “*very good*” today. Why did God permit evil to enter into the world and develop to the extent that it has? And why doesn’t He put a stop to all the great suffering and sorrow resulting from evil?

A BASIC FOUNDATION OF FAITH AND TRUST

Evil is a reality.

“*God is love*” is a reality.

How can we find harmony in these two statements? Certainly, God would not have permitted over 6,000 years of evil to afflict His creation without a useful purpose and a grand outcome for all.

The Bible tells us that God is just and good, and hates evil of every kind. “*Thou are not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee...*” (Psalm 5:4) It would be a horrible thought that God, who claims to be loving and just, would create billions to live on earth in sorrow and suffering, and then send the vast majority to a future of eternal torment. No, God is not the author of such cruelty! If Jesus told Nicodemus that his Father so loved the world that, while they were yet sinners, He sent Jesus to save them — then we can believe that this *will* come to pass. John 3:16 and Isaiah 55:11

To understand why God permits suffering, we must first realize the difference between *permitting* and *causing*. God has *permitted* humanity to have a *temporary* experience with evil, so that all will come to see *firsthand* the contrast between righteous living and selfish disobedience. Thankfully, we know that God will not permit this present experience under the dominion of sin to last forever. God has promised that these hard lessons now being taught, will never need to be repeated! Nahum 1:9

SATAN’S LIE, DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH

Evil has been defined as anything which either directly or remotely causes sadness or suffering of any kind. Satan and his servants have been to blame for much of the evil in the world. He has been declared as the “*prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience...*” Ephesians 2:2

Satan’s influence gained a foothold at the time when father Adam failed the test of obedience. God purposely made Adam’s test simple, stating plainly: “*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*” (Genesis 2:16-17) If it had been a difficult thing the Lord required of him, Adam might have been excused, because

obedience would have been beyond his capabilities. No, Adam was simply forbidden to eat of the fruit of only one of the many trees of the garden.

There in the Garden, Satan found an opportunity to carry out his prideful scheme: “*...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) His strategy was to convince mother Eve that God was withholding something beneficial from her. But, clearly, Adam knew that if he disobeyed God’s law, his penalty would be death. And, so, the first lie, “*Ye shall not surely die,*” effectively plunged the entire human race into a downward spiral of moral failures and mental and physical disease — terminating in death. It gained Satan temporary dominion over fallen man and the title “*the god of this world.*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) Being expelled from the Garden, man lost this dominion over himself and over nature.



Yes, exposure to calamities in nature are also the result of disobedience, for God said, *“the ground is cursed because of you”*. (Genesis 3:17 NLT) Humanity must endure an unfriendly earth as part of the penalty for disobedience.

EXPERIENCE THE BEST TEACHER

Other than intuition, observation and information, the only way to learn is by *experience*. Why did Eve believe Satan, when God said plainly, *“Thou shalt surely die”*? Because of Eve’s innocence and inexperience, she would have been easily deceived when the crafty Adversary said that eating the forbidden fruit would make her wise. Eve, being deceived, partook of the forbidden fruit and offered it to her husband. And, so, Adam ate of the fruit, and knowingly disobeyed his Creator. Thus, the death penalty was enforced, and ever since, all of Adam’s descendants have been born dying. *“...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* Romans 5:12

In due time, because of this experience with evil, mankind will have learned to hate evil with its bitter consequences, and instead will desire obedience with its rewards. *“This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:13) After this dark night of sorrow, experience will have truly been the best teacher, and when God offers to everyone a place in His peaceable Kingdom, the vast majority will seek righteousness. Psalm 30:5; Zephaniah 2:3

It is important to note here that God could have prevented sin from entering the world by programming His human family to be blindly obedient, but each would have been no better than a robot. Instead, God desired that mankind would joyfully render love, respect and perfect obedience to their merciful Creator. Thus, in wisdom, God created mankind with the ability to express *free will*. Because of the vivid lessons provided by the cruel consequences of disobedience, man is learning why obedience to God is the only option for peace and happiness. Ultimately, under the more favorable circumstances of God’s Kingdom, humanity will *choose* to love and respect God, their neighbors and their environment.

GOD KNEW THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Because God *is* love, He will not always permit evil to reign over His creation. Knowing Adam would disobey, God lovingly planned for man’s redemption. Jesus was the lamb

slain before the foundation of the world. (1 Peter 1:19, 20) God’s gift of salvation was the greatest demonstration of fatherly suffering in history — watching His only begotten Son suffer the agony of being vilified and crucified. Is there any doubt what great love God has for the human race? *“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) Yes, God’s plans include a merciful escape from our suffering and death brought about by one man’s disobedience: *“As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all unto justification of life.”* Romans 5:18

Just as Adam willingly forfeited his right to live in perfection, so Christ willingly gave up his perfect life, effectively restoring Adam’s right to live. *“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) This corresponding price has paid the *“ransom”* for Adam (Hosea 13:14), and this, thereby, releases *all* from the curse of Adamic death, guaranteeing every descendant of Adam freedom from the penalty of sin and the grave and granting them the opportunity to *learn righteousness*. The right to everlasting life will then become a reality to those who choose righteousness. Isaiah 26:9



THOSE WHO CHOOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS NOW

Only a few in *this present evil* world escape the corruption that is in the world now. (2 Peter 1:4) Jesus called these his *“little flock,”* and Paul called them *“the body of Christ” — the Church*. They have not only received the invitation to the *“high calling of God in Christ Jesus,”* but they have faithfully answered this call. (Philippians 3:14) This small company of Jesus’ followers who choose to learn of God’s truth and who commit to live righteously *now*, during this time of the *permission of evil*, are seeking to *prove worthy* to share in Christ’s sufferings and are rewarded to sit with Christ on his throne. *“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”* Philippians 1:29

The Scriptures are clear that this suffering and willing obedience of the *little flock* of Christ will be rewarded: *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6) Now consider — if there is a *“first resurrection,”* by implication there must be a *subsequent resurrections* of the dead.

THE EVERLASTING LESSONS

This resurrection of the dead world of mankind is the purpose for which Christ and his Church reign a *thousand years* — to bring ransomed humanity up from their graves, and upon *the highway of holiness* to righteous perfection here upon the earth. (Isaiah 35:8) The prophecy of Hosea 13:14 will, in due time, be fulfilled, “*I will ransom them from the power of the grave.*” This is our assurance that God’s chastenings are rehabilitative so that His “*beloved*” wayward children might be restored back to His loving favor. Yes, God chastens to heal! (Hebrews 12:6) Oh, what a marvelous God we have! “*In all their affliction He was afflicted*” — “*His compassions fail not!*” Isaiah 63:9; Lamentations 3:22

The permission of evil will have been a useless torment unless mankind is given an opportunity to use this experience to make positive choices at some future time. The Scriptures promise that those who come forth from their graves in this *future resurrection* will begin to return to the days of their youth! (Job 33:24-26) All the troubles and tribulations of the past, instead of being useless torments, will then be valuable guides.

Having provided for release from the bitter consequences of evil, God saw that the result would be to lead humanity to fully appreciate “*the exceeding sinfulness of sin*” and, by contrast, the matchless beauty of virtue. Thus, mankind is learning the more to love and honor his Creator, and to shun forever that which brought so much misery. Thank God that death, the penalty for sin, is not the irrevocable end of human existence; *it is the final experience of an everlasting lesson.*

HOPE FOR A FEAR-FILLED WORLD

All people in every nation desire a benevolent and stable government with just laws. But, where on earth today can we find true *liberty and justice for all*? Ironically, the desire for these qualities has actually resulted in countries going to war for the sake of peace. As we have shown, the Scriptures speak that one day, under God’s Kingdom, there will indeed be peace and liberty for all. But, we cry, “*How long, O Lord?*” His answer: “*I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come...*” (Haggai 2:7) What is meant by this phrase “*shake all nations*”? When a new building is being constructed on a sight where an old, condemned building exists, the contractor must tear down the old structure first.

God, through His faithful Son Jesus, is shaking the old order to usher in His righteous Kingdom for which we pray: “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:10) God is clearing the way for this glorious prospect. “*Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” 2 Peter 3:13

It is not only a universal *human* longing, but God, too, desires life, peace, joy and a harmony with Him for all of His creation. (1 Timothy 2:4) God’s Kingdom to come on earth, with Christ as King, will bring to mankind a time of restoration and renewal. Satan will be restrained and not be

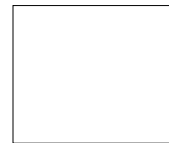


permitted to deceive anyone during this thousand-year Kingdom, and righteousness will be the rule rather than the exception. (Isaiah 32:17; Revelation 20:1-4) This will be the *first real chance* for mankind to truly know their loving Creator under ideal circumstances. Everyone will then have a fresh start in life — a new life. If obedient, they will live forever, and, having learned by experience that “*the wages of sin is death,*” the vast majority will want no more of sin and will love righteousness. Romans 6:23

By the end of God’s Kingdom, under the instruction of Christ and his Church, all enemies shall be destroyed. As the Apostle Paul states: “*the last enemy that shall be destroyed will be death.*” (1 Corinthians 15:26) The first enemy was pride, the second was disobedience and the final enemy, death, was the result. All three have been the weapons of God’s arch-enemy, Satan. In this same order, pride will be the first enemy to be destroyed when mankind has had enough of sin and humbly turns to God for help. The second enemy to be destroyed will be disobedience when all will learn righteousness in God’s Kingdom. (Isaiah 26:9) The last enemy, death, will be destroyed when Christ will have corrected all unrighteousness. Then, the grave and all who choose evil will be eternally destroyed in the *second death*. Revelation 20:14; 21:8; Acts 3:23

Humanity, returning from their graves will walk upon *the highway of holiness*. “*...the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon... but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*” Isaiah 35:8-10

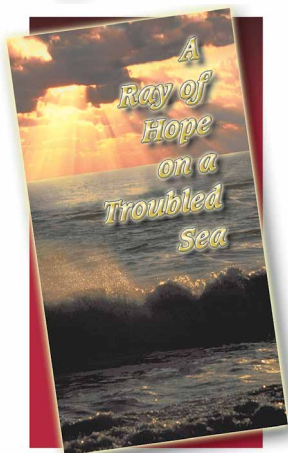
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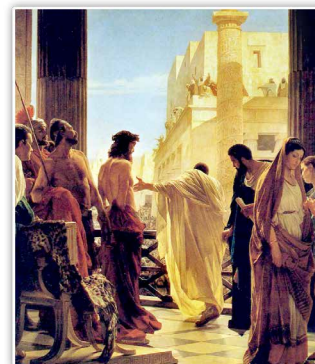
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