

ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS

“WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.” PSALMS 30:5

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Why Does God Permit Evil?



are not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee...” Psa. 5:4

To understand why God permits evil, we must first realize the difference between *permitting* and *causing*. God has *permitted* man to have a *temporary* experience with evil, so that all will come to know firsthand the contrast between living righteously or selfishly in disobedience. And, by faith we trust that God would not permit this experience with evil to last forever.

SATAN, HIS LIE, DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH

The *cause* of evil is sin—not only personal sin, but inherited sin. “*Dying, thou shalt die*” was our inheritance from father Adam. (Gen. 2:17) Fellowship with God having been cut off, man’s distressed mind affected his physical health, and soon disease permeated the perfect organism. Man lost his dominion over himself and his dominion over nature. Yes, the calamities in nature are the result of disobedience, as well. God said, “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake.*” (Gen. 3:17) Man must endure an unfriendly earth as part of the penalty for disobedience.

God purposely made the test upon Adam simple, plainly stating; “*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.*” (Gen. 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.

Here, Satan found an opportunity to carry out his prideful scheme. He had concluded that if he could convince mother Eve that God was withholding something beautiful from her, he could slowly win the confidence of the first couple. Eventually, Satan thought the whole

We read in Genesis 1:31: “God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” But everything is certainly not “very good” today. What happened to change the situation? Why did God permit evil to get a start in the world and develop to the extent that it has? And why doesn’t He put a stop to all this madness?

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? To believe in God, one must have *faith* that He *is* loving and wise, and providing all things for man’s ultimate good. God, whose character is supreme love, would not have *permitted* 6,000 years of evil to reign over His creation without an ultimately useful purpose and grand outcome. It would truly be a horrible thought that a God who claims to be love would create billions to live on earth in sorrow, only to send them to a future of eternal torment. We know that God is just and good, and hates evil of every kind. “*Thou*

dominion of earth would be his. Little did he know that his lie, “*Ye shall not surely die,*” would plunge the entire human race into a spiral of mental, moral and physical disease, and finally, death. Satan did gain the fruitage of his pride! Paul titles him “*the god of this world.*” (2 Cor. 4:4) Yet, Satan’s rebellion has cost him not only the lives of all who have ever lived, but his own life. Embodied in the curse to Adam and Eve, is the curse to Satan that one day, the seed of the woman will cast a fatal blow to the serpent’s head, and he will *surely* die. Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:10&14

EXPERIENCE THE BEST TEACHER

Beside intuition, observation, and information, the only other way to learn is by *experience*. Why did Eve believe Satan, when God said plainly, “*Thou shalt surely die*”? Because of Eve’s innocent inexperience, she was childlike and naive, and was easily deceived when the crafty Adversary said to eat the forbidden fruit for it would make her wise.

Thus, without the benefit which we now have of experience, Eve believed the first lie, and Adam, in turn, knowingly disobeyed his Creator. The death penalty was enforced, Adam began to die, and all his descendants have been born dying ever since. “*...as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” Rom. 5:12

Soon, by benefit of experience, mankind will have learned to hate evil and to desire obedience and its resultant rewards. “*This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.*” (Eccl. 1:13) Experience has truly been the best teacher.

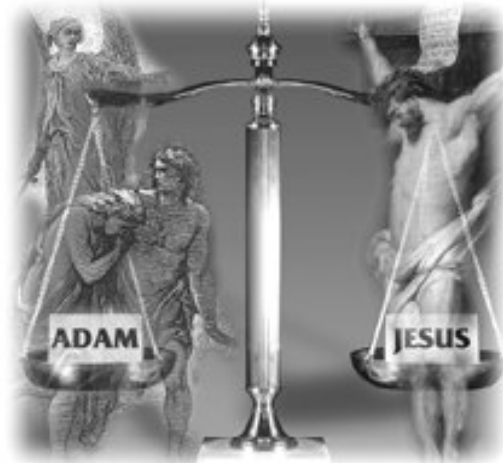
MAN’S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

God could have prevented sin from entering the world by programming man to be blindly obedient. But man would be no better than a robot, without true happiness. No, he was created in God’s image with the ability to love and obey by choice. Because of the vivid lessons provided by the cruel consequences of disobedience, man is learning why obedience to God is the most beneficial option. Man will *choose* to love and respect his fellow man and environment. More importantly, he will render to God the love, respect and obedience He desires and deserves.

GOD KNOWS THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Because God *is* love, He will not always permit evil to reign over man. 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.” Rom. 5:8



Yes, God’s plans include a merciful escape from our suffering and death: “*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.*” (Rom. 5:18) Just as Adam willingly forfeited his right to live in perfection, Christ willingly gave up his perfection to pay the penalty for Adam’s sin. This corresponding price guarantees every descendant of Adam a resurrection and a fresh opportunity to live his life in righteousness. “*As in Adam ALL die, even so in Christ shall ALL be made alive.*” 1Cor. 15:22

THY KINGDOM COME THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH

The prophecy of Hosea 13:14 will soon be completely fulfilled, “*I will ransom them from the power of the grave.*” Isaiah confirms this saying, “*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.*” Isa. 35:10

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 during this thousand year Kingdom, and righteousness will be the rule rather than the exception. (Isa. 32:17; Rev. 20:2) This will be the first real chance for man to 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 the truth that “*the wages of sin is death,*” they will want no more of sin but will gladly follow righteousness. Rom. 6:23

THOSE WHO CHOOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS NOW

Only a few in this present evil world escape the corruption that is in the world now. (2 Pet. 1:4) Jesus called these his “*little flock,*” and Paul called them “*the Church.*” They have not only received the invitation to the “*high calling of God in Christ Jesus,*” but they have

answered this call. (Phil. 3:14) This small company of Jesus' followers who choose to live righteously now are counted 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." Phil. 1:29

The scriptures are clear that the suffering of the little flock of Christ will be rewarded: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;" "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life;" and "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 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:10 & 20:6

THE EVERLASTING LESSONS

If there is, then, a "first resurrection," by implication there must be a second resurrection of the dead. This is the purpose for which Christ and his Church reign a thousand years—to bring the resurrected world of mankind up the highway of holiness to perfection "...when thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Isa. 26:9; 35:8

Oh, what a marvelous God we have! "In our affliction He is afflicted" (suffers). God's "compassions fail not!" (Lam. 3:23) This is our assurance that His chastenings are rehabilitative so that His "beloved" wayward children might be restored to the bosom of His favor. Yes, God chastens to heal! The permission of evil will have been a useless torment unless man is given an opportunity to use his experience to make positive choices. To return to the days of one's youth is to begin again! All the troubles and tribulations of the past, instead of being worse than useless torments, will be valuable guides. Death is not the irrevocable end of human existence; it is the final experience of an everlasting lesson.

All people in every nation desire a benevolent and stable government with wise and just laws. But, where on earth can we find true justice and liberty for all? Ironically, the desire for these qualities has actually resulted in countries going to war for the sake of peace. We know the Scriptures speak that one day, under God's Kingdom, there will indeed be peace, harmony, and liberty for all. But, we cry, "How long, O Lord?"

"I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come..." (Haggai 2:7) What is meant by the 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 first. God, through His faithful Son Jesus, is shaking the old order to usher in this righteous Kingdom for which we pray: "Thy

kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven." (Matt. 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 Pet. 3:13

It is not only a universal human longing, but God, too, desires life, health, peace, and joy for all. (1Tim. 2:4) Think of the memory that never fails, of the judgment that never errs, of the wisdom that plans for eternity without the possibility of failure, and of the power and skill which can harness even every opposing element and make them all work together for the accomplishment of His grand designs. Think of one whose eye never sleeps, whose ear is ever open, and who is ever aware of all the necessities, and active in all the interests of His broad domains.

Now, close your eyes to the scenes of misery and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mind the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart. There, sickness shall be no more; not even the fear of death. Think of all the pictures of health and beauty that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. Mental and moral perfection will stamp every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and all tears will be wiped away, when thus the resurrection work is complete.

Many believe the book of Revelation is filled with fearful foreboding, but, the preceding is the theme of its concluding chapters. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4-5

Just as an architect should not be judged by his unfinished work, so God should not be judged by His unfinished work with mankind. Like any contractor, God has an optimum time table for accomplishing His master plan. When the population of humans has filled the capacity of earth, and man has had his fill of the evil consequences of sin, God will provide His Kingdom on earth. Those who died without hearing "the only Name under heaven whereby one might be saved" will come forth to learn and to live. "The inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness... They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding." (Isaiah 26:9; 29:24) "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 65:25) Praise God that His desire is man's desire! Soon all mankind will live in perfect harmony, when God's will is fully done on earth even as it is done in heaven!

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