

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part III

Guilt – The Creation and Fall of Man

- In the last study we talked about how a corruption of the principles of God's love broke out in Heaven and how the consequences of self-centered thinking affected the beauty of the place. We discussed how it was necessary that freedom be granted for selfish endeavors to be carried out. We considered the loss that would be realized by those who fell victim to such abuse of freedom. And we asked how far God would allow it to go.

How far would God allow sin to go?

Revelation 12:7-9 KJV And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, (8) And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. (9) And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (a)

(a) God would not allow the disruption created by Satan to continue in Heaven. All the disaffected angels are now continuing their work on Earth.

Luke 10:18-20 MKJV And He [Jesus] said to them, I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning. ... (20) Yet do not rejoice in this, that the evil spirits are subject to you, rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.

John 8:44 KJV Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning [of our world], and abode not [did not continue or stay] in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (b)

(b) Our world was created after sin had entered Heaven.

The place of Man in the controversy between love and the abuse of freedom

- There were certain characteristics of both the limitations and abilities of man that made our world (if man should choose) a place where the contrast between the loving character of God's government and the self-centered nature of Satan's proposals would be seen in a most obvious way.

- Man was a newcomer to God's creation and had no knowledge of Heaven or the things that had been going on there. He only knew what was told him by God and the angels.
- He was physically limited to what he could experience through the five senses. He was not capable of traveling or experiencing anything beyond Earth. He was isolated from the rest of God's universe.
- Man was a delicate creature capable of causing physical harm and death to his fellow man. The Bible gives no indication that this is a possibility among the angels. There is no record of an angel having died. Though there was war in Heaven, it was a battle of ideas and emotions.
- Man was made for marriage and capable of producing children, a home, and a kingdom over which he would govern.
 - Genesis 1:26-28 KJV And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (28) And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: (c)

(c) Here again we have the Godhead speaking. It took both a man and a woman united as one to be in the image of the Godhead. They were to have children as a result of their love, and begin their own kingdom as their family grew. They were to have dominion over the whole earth to serve the needs of their kingdom. This was a higher privilege than was granted to even angels. Within each family tribe would be demonstrated the principles of good or bad government.

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- Man was created for the inhabitation of God and to serve a purpose that could not have been accomplished by angels.
 - 1 Corinthians 4:9 MKJV For I think that God has set forth us last, the apostles, as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle (a) to the world and to angels and to men.
 - Ephesians 3:8-10 KJV Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, **that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;** (9) And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (b)
 - Hebrews 1:5-14 MKJV For to which of the angels did He say at any time, "You are My Son, this day I have begotten You?" And again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" (6) And again, when He brings in the First-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." ... (13) But to which of the angels, did He say at any time, "Sit on My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool?" (14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation? (c)

(a) theh'-at-ron; a place for public show "theatre"
Strongs Greek dictionary
- This world has become a lesson book for the universe.

(b) Not only is Earth a theatre for the works of evil, but God has also called forth His church to reveal the unsearchable riches of Christ and the mystery of His wisdom and purposes for life as we know it. It is through His church that He wants to demonstrate to the universe the power of love in a sin-darkened world.

(c) It was necessary for Christ to become a man that in this mess of ours, it would be seen how far His love would go to assure that eternity would be secure from any misuse of freedom and also to justify the forgiveness of sinners.

The Garden of Eden

Genesis 2:8-24 KJV And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; (d) and there he put the man whom he had formed. (9) And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow **every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;** the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, (e) and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (f)

(d) *ay'-den* The same as H5730 (masculine) delight, pleasure. *Strongs Hebrew dictionary*

(e) The garden was filled with wonders and delights to stimulate all the senses that God had given man. All the glories of creation drew their minds to the Giver who provided so bountifully. Each evening God came to visit and to share their excitement. Adam and Eve were so caught up in the gifts, the Giver, and sharing with each other that there had been no thought of self, though self was fully alive. It may have been quite some time before they thought of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

(f) Satan was allowed access to the new couple only at this tree. God had warned them about the tree and the deceiver. If they were to believe the claims of the deceiver, he would have dominion over them, and Earth would become the place where he could demonstrate how he would govern if he were god.

- God had in no way designed that man should fall for the deceiver's enticements.
- The situation was laid before Adam and Eve to choose whom they would trust.

- At some point in the midst of all the glories of Eden, Satan got Eve's attention.

The fall

Genesis 3:1-6 MKJV Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Is it so that God has said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (g) (2) And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. (3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. (h) (4) And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, (i) (5) for God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil. (j) (6) And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make wise, she took of its fruit, and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (k)

(g) Satan begins by insinuating that God is not fair.

(h) Eve was not phased by the insinuation. God had filled them with delights. Only of ONE tree were they warned not to partake.

(i) Now Satan straight out declares God to be a liar.

(j) Now he expresses the lie that he has come to believe: That God does not have your best interest in mind and that He is holding back the best things for Himself to keep you from attaining to His level.

(k) Beginning to doubt God's goodness, Eve felt the need to look out for herself. With a new spirit of independence she moved forward without consulting with Adam or God about her new experience. She partook of that which had not been given her, seeking a mysterious and exalted wisdom.

- It is interesting that Satan suggested that they would be as God when, of all the creatures in God's universe, it was the human couple that God had declared to be made in His image.

- Here are the steps that go on to promote sin in our lives. The first is to doubt God's goodness; the second is to sever our need of dependence on Him and others, and third is to turn our attention from the gifts of life to pursue those things that seem to be denied to us.

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- The power of suggestion is the second most powerful force in God's universe. It thrives in the lack of knowledge and understanding. More damage has been done to mankind through this means than by any weapon of destruction ever created by man. It is second only to the truth of God's love, which, although its result comes much more slowly, will ultimately win out in the end when all will see and understand.

Guilt – the feeling

Genesis 3:7-11 MKJV And the eyes of both of them were opened. And they knew that they were naked. (a) And they sewed fig leaves together and made girdles for themselves. (b) (8) And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. (c) And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God in the middle of the trees of the garden. (d) (9) And Jehovah God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? (e) (10) And he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I am naked, and I hid myself. (f) (11) And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat? (g)

- (a) While enjoying the gifts of God they had no thought for themselves, but now all they could see were themselves, and they did not like what they saw.
- Adam knew there had been a loss: a loss of glory, a loss of fellowship, a loss of completeness, and a loss of oneness with God.
- Sin (self-centered thinking and actions) caused extreme changes in way they now saw life.
- (b) They were ashamed and tried to cover their loss.
- (c) Having left the warmth of the circle of love, they felt cold.
- (d) The contrast between the love of God and their selfishness was unbearable, and they did not want to see God.
- (e) It was not God's attitude that had changed. He still desired fellowship with Adam and Eve.
- (f) What had once been joy to be with God had turned to fear of Him. Shame had so deranged their minds that they could no longer see how God could love them.
- It is the essence of God's plan of salvation for Him to break through this shame, fear, and hostility toward Him with His love.
- (g) It was not God who was condemning them. It was sin itself. They had now entered the experience through which they would come to understand both good and evil.

Guilt – the fact

Genesis 3:11-19 MKJV And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat? (12) And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. (13) And Jehovah God said to the woman, What is this you have done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. (h) (14) And Jehovah God said to the serpent, Because you have done this you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every animal of the field. You shall go upon your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. (15) And I will put enmity [abhorrence] between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise [crush] your head, and you shall bruise [crush] His heel. (i) (16) To the woman He said, I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception. In pain you shall bear sons, and your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you. (j) (17) And to Adam He said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it! The ground is cursed for your sake. In pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life. (k) (18) It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. (19) In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return. (l)

- (h) Immediately there was the sense that someone, through the use of their freedom to choose, had caused this loss, and that someone should be held responsible for their actions. Pride is quick to cast blame on someone else.
- (i) God began to declare who was responsible. Beginning with the most responsible party, He describes what the consequences of their actions would be. The serpent would never enjoy the finer things of life and would be detested by those who love righteousness. In the end his life would be crushed out by the righteousness of Christ.
- (j) Self-centered thinking would continue through their children, resulting in many disappointing and hurtful consequences, such as the murder of Abel by Cain.
- (k) Adam's occupation would change from the joy of keeping the Garden to toilsome labors to provide food.
- (l) "The ground is cursed for your sake." God took responsibility to set up safeguards to keep them mindful, accountable, humble, and dependent.

Genesis 3:24 MKJV And He drove out the man. And He placed cherubs [angels] at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (m)

- (m) Man was no longer allowed access to the tree of life. He began the dark and lonely journey into the ways of death.

- In the next study we will be looking at the first sacrifices made on account of sin. We find that God has taken FULL responsibility for both the existence and the remedy for sin.