

SIGNS *of the Times*

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

The Anatomy of Evil

One of the most difficult questions Christians face is this: Why is there so much suffering in the world? “After all,” critics say, “if God is loving and good—and if He is all-powerful—then why do we see so much pain, hatred and heartache everywhere? Couldn’t He stop it all? In fact, couldn’t God simply have arranged things so that everyone would always be happy and good?”

That’s a fair question. There is an answer—not an easy one; not a simple one—but a good, solid one.

SUFFERING DIDN’T ORIGINATE ON PLANET EARTH

1. According to the Bible, where did war begin? (**Revelation 12:7**)

The Bible teaches that pain and suffering didn’t actually start on this planet.

2. Who were the opponents in this war, and what was the result? (**Revelation 12:7-9; Luke 10:18**)

On one side of this war in heaven was Michael and the angels who remained loyal to Him. Opposing God was the dragon (the devil or Satan) and the angels who rebelled along with him.



God didn't create the devil. He created Lucifer—a beautiful, perfect angel. Sin originated in Lucifer's heart in the sinless environment of heaven itself. And sin made a devil out of Lucifer. As a result, he and his angels were expelled from heaven. God could not allow sin to remain there.

3. Where did the devil and his angels go after being cast out of heaven? (**Revelation 12:9, 12**)

The devil took his rebellion against God to earth. His goal? To deceive Adam and Eve into sinning against God.

4. How did the perfect angel, Lucifer, become Satan, the originator of evil? (**Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:13-17**)

Somehow, Lucifer grew dissatisfied; he allowed pride and jealousy to come into his heart. He began to want to be like God Himself. In the final analysis, there is no explanation for sin. Nothing in heaven—nothing in all of God's creation—was imperfect. There was no cause for Lucifer's pride or jealousy or rebellion. Jesus said of the devil, "He is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44) Sin originated in heaven with Lucifer. (1 John 3:8)

NO CHOICE, NO LOVE

5. Why didn't God destroy the devil and his angels when they rebelled? Or why didn't He simply make them in such a way that they couldn't sin? (**John 14:15; Joshua 24:15**)
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God created us in His own image. (Genesis 1:27) This means that we are free to make choices. We can decide to love and serve God—or we can decide to sin. God wants us to love and obey Him—not because we must, but because we want to. There can be no real love without the ability to choose. And love is the only motive that counts with God.

Think of it like this. Imagine your toddler daughter throwing her arms around your neck and saying, “I love you so much!” How would this make you feel?

Then imagine that she is doing this only because her brain has been wired to do this automatically whenever she sees you. If that were true, it wouldn’t mean anything, would it? In fact, it would probably make you very sad.

Real love depends on being able to choose; that’s the only way it means anything.



SIN IS EXPORTED TO EARTH

In the Garden of Eden, Satan successfully tempted Adam and Eve to believe his lies and sin against God. They gave this earth into Satan’s hands. That broke God’s heart, and He initiated a plan to save His human children.

6. What promise did God make after Adam and Eve sinned?
(**Genesis 3:15; John 3:16; Matthew 1:21, 22**)

God promised to send a Messiah—the Seed of the woman—who would save the human race. Jesus fulfilled this promise on the cross. Those who accept Him are saved and are welcomed back into God’s family. Those who choose to follow Satan do so of their own free choice.

Those two choices are still the choices we face today. God is calling you to choose to take your stand on His side. God won’t allow the devil to continue forever. Someday soon, Jesus will return to earth and destroy sin along with all those who refuse to give it up. Someday soon, there will be only one side—the side of truth. Where will you stand?

7. As God’s people wait for Christ to come and fulfill the promise how many distinct sides emerge? (**Genesis 3:15, Revelation 12:1-4**)
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8. What will be the final end of Satan and all those who rebel against God? (**Revelation 20:10, 15**)
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Satan and all his followers will be destroyed forever. Sin will never rise again. But if that is so, then why didn’t God just destroy Satan and the rebellious angels when there was war in heaven? Why didn’t He just end it all right then?

God could have done that, but it wouldn’t have solved the problem. You see, sin was something new, something none of the angels understood clearly. Lucifer accused God of being unjust, of being a dictator who demanded obedience—or else! Lucifer claimed he had a better way. If God had suddenly destroyed Lucifer, it would have confirmed in the minds of the angels that Lucifer was right—that God was a dictator. The angels would have served God from fear, not love.

The only way to show the true nature of sin was to allow it to play itself out. It takes time to expose just how disastrous Satan’s way really is. But eventually, everyone will see that “the wages of sin is death” and that “the gift of God is eternal life.” (Romans 6:23)

MY DECISION

- Lord, I choose to take my stand with You in this great struggle for truth and right. I choose to serve You, because I love You. Help me to remain faithful to You.

MY PRAYER

Father, help me to stay true to You. Guide me to make right choices in all the decisions of life. Come into my heart just now and take possession of my entire being. I pray this, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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