

# The Purpose of Life

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## Chapter 1: The Serpent and the Purpose of Life

One two-part question that used to haunt me when I was a child was this: If GOD knew ahead of time what Adam and Eve would choose, why did He place the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden? And why was the serpent allowed in, to tempt Eve with lies?

Clearly, the Bible reveals that GOD knows what each of us will choose to do in any given situation. And JESUS proved this when He said: **“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.”**<sup>1</sup>

Without a doubt, JESUS knew for certain that the cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented **if** they had seen the same miracles that He had worked in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, **but** because those great miracles were **not** shown to Tyre and Sidon, they did not repent of their rebellion against GOD, and they perished.

Also, the Bible records, when Saul was pursuing David to kill him, David asked the LORD: **“Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?”** And the LORD said, **“They will deliver you.”** So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. **Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.**<sup>2</sup>

So, in this case, the LORD knew for certain what the entire population of the city of Keilah would do if Saul’s army arrived and David was still in the city! And passages like these two show us: GOD not only foreknows everything that will

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:13

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 23:12-13

happen in the future, He also knows the hearts of mankind so well, that He understands what people will freely choose in any situation they could ever face!

Therefore, in the same way that JESUS knew that Tyre and Sidon would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they had seen His miracles (even though they were never faced with that choice), the LORD also foreknew what Adam and Eve were going to choose from the beginning!

And with this foundational principle in mind, we read: **Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made. And he said to the woman, "Has GOD indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "** Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. "For GOD knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like GOD, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.<sup>3</sup>

Before this world changing passage, GOD had said that they "**would surely die**" if they ate of that one particular tree. But the serpent directly contradicted the word of GOD! And then, with GOD's warning taken out of the way in Eve's heart by means of satan's lies, Eve listened to the rest of the temptation of the serpent. She trusted her own desires and perceptions over GOD's Word, and this led her to eat of the forbidden tree.

So, first: there was **deception**, which satan uses to twist or water down GOD's Word. And the deceiver typically begins by contradicting the Bible because he knows that GOD's Word is able to protect us from his attacks, just as JESUS demonstrated when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness!

And second: satan used **temptation**, which connected the forbidden fruit to Eve's selfish internal desires, based on her own ungodly **perception** of the situation.

The temptation would never had been successful if she would have maintained the perception of that fruit that she had been given by GOD, in His Word! But with GOD's Word taken out of the way in Eve's heart, the serpent's slimy

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

sentences were free to seduce her every step. And she settled on an incorrect assessment of the forbidden fruit, and the deeper spiritual issues at hand, based on her own sight, instead of simple faith in GOD's Word.

And all of this really highlights the importance of the Proverb: **Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.**<sup>4</sup>

You see faith in GOD and His perfect Word could have kept Eve from stumbling, but she allowed the serpent to deceive her, even when he directly contradicted the Word of GOD! And, once she surrendered to the serpent's assertion that GOD's Words were not true, nothing could really stop her falling headlong into sin!

Irrefutably: knowing, believing, and obeying GOD's Word, in the fear of the Lord, could have kept Eve safe through her time of testing. But instead, she chose to abandon GOD's word. Then she believed a lie instead of the truth. And the rest is human history!

About this, Paul writes: **“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”**<sup>5</sup>

This same battle will be playing out over and over again, for each descendant of Adam, all the way till the end of the age! Therefore, Paul also writes: **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason GOD will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**<sup>6</sup>

Now, I should mention here that we **must** not forget that satan does has power! He **can** perform signs, and he **can** present lying wonders. So, we **must** look at the message of every messenger, not the miracles they manufacture! And the Word of GOD is the only reliable way to test every teacher, and sort out the lies from the truth!

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<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 3:5-7

<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 2:13-14

<sup>6</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Just as Eve learned and JESUS confirmed: satan is the father of all lying, and the devil has been very busy filling the world with so much deception, that we **must**, I repeat **must**, receive an enduring love of the whole truth of GOD's Word, if we are to be saved from the many lies of the serpent!

The precious blood of JESUS saves us from the guilt of our sins, when we repent and turn from sin to follow Him in faith. But the Word of GOD saves us from believing the deceptions of the devil, and slipping back into the deadly mire of sin!

And compared to what Eve confronted, it is important for us to realize: we **now** face countless numbers of satanic lies in this world, that have been festering within the human race for millennia. Meanwhile, Eve only faced a couple of new lies that day in Paradise, and look what happened to her! So, we need to be that much more committed to GOD's Truth in our time, so that we are not deceived by the craftiness of the serpent ourselves!

But, back in the beginning, if GOD knew Adam and Eve would fall (*as He must have foreknown that they would*), why allow this testing in the first place? Well, to answer that question, let's, consider the alternative!

What if there were no choices for them? What if Adam and Eve were placed into a world where there was nothing forbidden, no free decisions ever happened, and there was no potential for rebellion against GOD? What would be missing from this hypothetical paradise?

Well, to answer that question, let me ask you one more, much simpler question. How can you prove to your spouse that you love them?

You might choose to spend some special "one on one time" with them, you might choose to give them an unexpected gift like flowers, you might choose to tell them often what you appreciate about them, you might choose to do some things around the house to show them that you care, or you might choose to hug them, or kiss them, or hold their hand, or put your arm around them.

But what if you did all of these things with more than one person, to the same level? If these choices express how we feel about our spouse, what would our spouse think if we choose to spend more special "one on one time" with someone else?

Or how would you feel if your spouse gave other people more unexpected gifts than they gave you, or praised others more than they praised you? Would you

doubt their love, if they served your neighbors needs more than they served your family's needs? And how would you feel if your spouse kissed, hugged, held hands with, or put their arms around others; in the same way they did those things to you?

Obviously, every method of expressing love requires us to prioritize the people in our lives! And our marriages and relationships will inevitably begin to fall apart when we get our priority list out of order, and put the wrong people or things at the top of the list! That's why the greatest commandment is all about our ultimate priority!

JESUS said: **“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our GOD, the LORD is one. ‘And you shall love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ “<sup>7</sup>**

GOD must come first, above all else! And then comes our spouse, our children, our parents, our families, our neighbors, and ourselves. So, if our jobs, hobbies, or possessions begin to interfere with how we biblically love, according to this list of priorities, that means that we are deviating from GOD's plan, and we are stumbling into sin.

We must remember: husbands and wives express their love to one another with their tongues, time, talents, treasure, and touch; parents and children express their love for one another with their tongues, time, talents, treasure, and touch; and we also express our love for GOD with our tongues, time, talents, treasure, and touch! So, GOD must get the firstfruits of all of these things, then our spouse, then our spiritual and earthly families, and then our neighbors!

So, the answer to the question, “How can you prove to your spouse that you love them?” is: that we prioritize them above everyone else on our list, except for GOD! And that prioritization requires choice; meaning: the proper exercise of our GOD-given free will.

So, if GOD made a Paradise without any decisions for mankind to make, it could not have been a perfect world, since - we cannot have love without choices - and a world without love, is definitely not Paradise!

Choice was and is necessary for us to have the opportunity to **love** GOD with all our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength; just as choice was necessary for Adam and Eve to **love** GOD too!

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<sup>7</sup> Mark 12:29-30

But, with all we have learned so far, it seems that the really important question is: “since GOD knew ahead of time that they would fail in their mission to keep Him first, and trust in His Word above the lies of the serpent, why did He let the situation unfold as it did?” Why did He not just judge them right after they were created, for the sin they were sure to commit?

Well, then they could have accused GOD of being unjust, because He foreknew something that **they** had never actually experienced! But because GOD provided them with every tool necessary to defeat the serpent, and because He allowed them the time and **opportunity** to love and obey Him, when history recorded their failure to seize that opportunity, GOD remained blameless when He judged them!

So, you see: the situation in the garden was a test! And even though GOD foreknew how Adam and Eve would do on that test, they needed to experience their failure for themselves to know that GOD was just and blameless when He cast them out of the Garden for disobeying His Word!

However, even though Adam and Eve failed that test, a descendant of Adam and Eve named “David” later wrote: **You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men; by the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.**<sup>8</sup>

We really don't want to miss that it was by **“the words of GOD's lips, that David kept away from the paths of the destroyer”!** Eve could have had that same testimony, but she abandoned the Word of GOD, and believed a lie instead! And that led her into one of the **many** deadly and deceitful paths of the destroyer.

Also, David proves that when the Creator made Adam and Eve, He foreknew that there would be sons like Cain, and other sons like Able! So, GOD patiently endures the evil children who rebel against His ways, because **“...He seeks godly offspring...”**<sup>9</sup> who will hold fast to His word!

This is exactly why Paul writes: **“What if GOD, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory**

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<sup>8</sup> Psalms 17:3-4

<sup>9</sup> Malachi 2:15

**on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”<sup>10</sup>**

And this is also why JESUS said: **“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. “The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. “The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. “Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, “and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”<sup>11</sup>**

Life is simply the time when we human beings grow up, and demonstrate what GOD already knew! Namely, if we are like the wheat, or like the tares! And the fruit we bear in our lives, weather good or bad, determines if we are cast into the furnace of fire like a weed, that represents a child of the devil; or if we will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of GOD our Heavenly Father.

Paul confirms this analysis, as he writes: **“GOD... will render to each one according to his deeds”**: **eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with GOD.”<sup>12</sup>**

Truly, from Genesis chapter 2 to Revelation chapter 20, *which is all of the Bible except 3 chapters*, GOD is testing each and every descendant of Adam: to see if they are fit for His Kingdom, because they freely choose to hear and obey His word! Or at the opposite end of the spectrum, He is testing each person: to see if they will choose turn away from His word and share the fate of the serpent who deceived Eve; which is eternal suffering away from GOD's presence and all of His good graces.

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 9:22-24

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 13:37-43

<sup>12</sup> Romans 2:5-11

Even though GOD already knows what choices we will make, and if we will pass or fail the test of life; He allows us to freely live it, so that no one will have anyone else to blame for their failures but themselves!

**“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”<sup>13</sup>**

So, life is like a tiny little waiting room that serves as the lobby of eternity. And most of the time, people misunderstand the role of Satan, death, and even suffering, because they misunderstand the Biblical purpose of life.

If we think that this current life is all about having our “best life now”, then we will fail the test! And this is why JESUS said: **“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”<sup>14</sup>**

If we think that this current life is all about us “finding our happiness”, then we will fail the test! And that is why JESUS said: **“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”<sup>15</sup>**

And when Solomon examined the purpose of man's life, in the book of Ecclesiastes, he concluded: **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear GOD and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For GOD will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.<sup>16</sup>**

Only when we look past the passing pleasures of sin in this current life, and cast our gaze forward in faith to our future life with JESUS in the Kingdom of GOD, can we really say with Paul: **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”<sup>17</sup>**

Those of us who really follow JESUS Christ and believe the whole Bible see this life as our brief, trying journey through the wilderness, on the way to our eternal Promised Land! So, we: **Set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth.<sup>18</sup>** and **“...as sojourners and pilgrims, (we) abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul”.<sup>19</sup>**

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<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

<sup>14</sup> John 12:25

<sup>15</sup> Luke 6:21

<sup>16</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

<sup>17</sup> Philippians 1:21

<sup>18</sup> Colossians 3:2

<sup>19</sup> 1 Peter 2:11



And, like Paul, we not afraid to “cross the Jordan” into our Eternal Home with JESUS, who loved us and purchased us with His own blood! In faith, we consider dying whenever the LORD chooses to bring us home, to actually be gain! In fact, we earnestly desire for that sweet day to come, in the LORD’s timing!

**For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from GOD, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is GOD, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.<sup>20</sup>**

And only when we are thinking and living in this way, are we actually living as children of Abraham, who was a type of father to all those, who: **all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore GOD is not ashamed to be called their GOD, for He has prepared a city for them.<sup>21</sup>**

But since we have not yet reached the Promised Land, and we are still in our period of testing in the wilderness of life, we must heed Peter’s warning and: **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.<sup>22</sup>**

And just as Peter was concerned with believers being devoured by the devil, Paul wrote: **“I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”<sup>23</sup>** So Christians are frequently warned to beware following Eve’s bad example!

And the Bible explains who the serpent is, and what his primary job revolves around, when the Apostle John wrote: **So the great dragon was cast out, that**

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<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 11:13-16

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 5:8-9

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:3

**serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.<sup>24</sup>**

Now, the word “devil” is used here as a title, and it means “accuser”. And the word “satan” is also used here as a title and it means “adversary”. And the same fallen angel who bears these two titles was described as a serpent and a dragon too. But we must not be fooled into thinking that satan is always dark and ugly in appearance!

Because Paul explains: **Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.<sup>25</sup>**

The point is, the devil is a liar! And he won't always appear as dark and evil! Yet JESUS said to those who followed the lies of the devil: **“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”<sup>26</sup>**

Therefore, we must receive a deep and lasting love of GOD's truth, if we are to recognize and withstand the lies of satan, and pass the test of life! And this battle between satan's lies and GOD's truth, and which side we choose to follow, will ultimately decide our eternal destiny!

Obviously, at any time GOD, could lock the devil up and throw away the key. And while GOD and satan are by no means an even match for even one second, satan is allowed to deceive the whole world, to sort out who really loves GOD, and who prefers lawlessness and selfishness.

In a way, satan is like GOD's winnowing fan! He uses the devil, and the angels who fell with him, to challenge and test every descendant of Adam; to see if they truly love GOD, His Truth, and His Ways, or if they can be drawn away from GOD's Kingdom because they prefer unrighteousness and rebellion!

And if we choose to think like satan, who refused to submit to GOD and His Word, we will share the serpent's fate! And one day JESUS will say: **“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”<sup>27</sup>**

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<sup>24</sup> Revelation 12:9

<sup>25</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

<sup>26</sup> John 8:44

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 25:41

So satan is simply a part of life's sorting system, but ultimately, it is our GOD who has said: **I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.** <sup>28</sup>

And I also should mention that we must not think that satan's influence can only be found **outside** of the church, in the world! Peter prophesied that **"even as ...there were also false prophets among the people ...there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the LORD who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction."**<sup>29</sup>

In fact, Paul wrote: **For also heresies need to be among you, so that the approved ones may become revealed among you.**<sup>30</sup> So GOD even allows false teachers to exist, so that the testing and sorting process continues once we begin to follow Jesus!

But: **Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the LORD has promised to those who love Him.**<sup>31</sup>

## Chapter 2: Devastation and Causation

Previously we learned three important principles that we must build on today, and the first principle was: **love cannot exist without choice.**

The second principle was: from Genesis chapter 2 to Revelation chapter 20, **GOD is testing** each and every descendant of Adam to see if they are fit for His Kingdom, by observing if they will freely choose to hear and obey His Word!

And the third principle was: Life is like a tiny little waiting room that serves as the lobby of eternity. And, most of the time: people misunderstand the role of satan, death, and even suffering, **because they misunderstand the Biblical purpose of life.**

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<sup>28</sup> Jeremiah 17:10

<sup>29</sup> 2 Peter 2:1

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:19 RYLT

<sup>31</sup> James 1:12

Now with those principles in hand, let's begin to answer the most prevalent question there is about GOD that involves His justice, and the many overwhelming tragedies that we seem to face in this life.

Several years ago, author Lee Strobel commissioned a national survey and asked people: what question they would ask, if they could only ask GOD one thing. And he reported that the number one response was: **"Why is there suffering in the world?"**

Now today as we answer that question, we will begin by categorizing suffering into two seemingly separate types, which are: **"Human caused suffering"** and **"Nature caused suffering"**.

**"Human caused suffering"** would be things like war, or rape, or violence; because these terrible things obviously occur when one or more human beings decides to abuse their other fellow human beings, or even act in irresponsible ways, like a drunk driver might.

And **"Nature caused suffering"**, which, at first glance, seems much less directly tied to human choice, involves things like tornados, tsunamis, cancer, or plagues.

So, let's begin by dealing with **"Human caused suffering"** first. And then, after we understand how much of the devastation in this world can be easily traced back to wicked human choices, we will deal with **"Nature caused suffering"**.

In a Sermon delivered in Colorado, on July 22, 2012, just days after the Aurora Colorado Movie Theater shooting (where 70 people were shot by a gunman, and 12 of them were killed), the very talented and renowned Christian apologist, Lee Strobel said: **"If you ask me, "Why did GOD allow the gunman to spray the Aurora movie theater with gunfire just two days ago?" the only answer I can honestly give consists of four words: "I do not know."**

Now this answer not only suggests that there is not an easy answer to this question, it also implies that GOD actually **did** "allow" the gunman to murder 12 people and injure many others! But I would contend that GOD did not "allow" any such thing! And I suggest that we can easily demonstrate that fact from Scripture, once we actually define the word **"allow"**.

To "allow" anything, one individual must grant another individual permission to do something. So, did GOD ever give permission or consent to murder, or did He directly prohibit murder in two tablets of stone, with His own finger?

The answer is obvious!

You see the devil often hides his darkest deceptions in the details! And that means that we need to dig down deep, into every truth claim, to see if there is even the smallest error in thinking that might lead us off of the narrow path that leads to life!

Clearly and repeatedly, GOD forbids all murder, to the point that He even imposed strict penalties, which are to be applied to any perpetrator who takes another person's life.

In truth, GOD could not possibly **be** more opposed to murder, and He has promised that murderers will “...**have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**”<sup>32</sup>

And the devil knows this, so he tries to change the definition of the word “allow” from “giving permission” to “not stopping”. Therefore, those who have stumbled into the serpent's snare will put the blame on GOD instead of the murderer, as they ask: **Why didn't GOD stop the Aurora Colorado shooting?**

The Biblical answer to that question though, is: Because GOD uses His Word to stop His creation from committing sins like murder! And if we refuse to listen to His Word, then we will fail life's test and continue to live in sin. Plus, we will eventually reap the wages of sin, which is death; meaning the second death of the lake of fire!

And in order to verify that statement, please think about every time the Bible records GOD stopping someone from sinning before He actually judged them. How did GOD actually cause them to stop?

Genesis records: **Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But GOD came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.” But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? “Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she, even she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.” And GOD said to him in a dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.”**<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Revelation 21:8

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 20:2-6

GOD spoke to Abimelech in a dream to stop Him from sinning! But what if Abimelech refused to listen to GOD's word on that issue? Could GOD have been accused of allowing Abimelech to sin? Absolutely not!

And after Nabal insulted David, and his wife Abigail came to plead with Israel's future king: **Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the LORD GOD of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! "And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. "For indeed, as the LORD GOD of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!"**<sup>34</sup>

So again, GOD spoke to David through Abigail, and David gave the LORD the glory for keeping him from sin through Abigail's advice. But what if David would have refused to listen to GOD's Word on that issue? Could GOD have been accused of allowing David to sin? Absolutely not!

You see, David, Abimelech, and every other descendant of Adam has the freedom to choose to hear and obey GOD's Word, and turn from their sins; or to ignore the Creator's commands, and walk into a theater and commit murder. But all those who choose to continue in sin will suffer the serious, scorching, consequences.

And those who choose sin will only have themselves to blame, because Solomon has recorded in Scripture: **Truly, this only I have found: That GOD made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.**<sup>35</sup>

GOD did not create us as sinners, He created us in His own image! Adam and Eve rebelled against His Word and became sinners, just as all of us, at some point in our lives, rebelled against the commandments of the Creator, and became sinners also!

However, JESUS came so that we could be forgiven for our rebellion, and cleansed from the stubborn stains of sin that can only be removed by His precious blood, when we repent of our sins. And once we have been restored into a loving, obedient relationship with GOD, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, who enables us to live lives of obedience to the commandments of our Creator!

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<sup>34</sup> 1 Samuel 25:32-34

<sup>35</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:29

But even though GOD has clearly issued commandments that condemn all sin, and He has even provided a way of escape, and forgiveness, so we don't have to remain enslaved to sin any longer, satan consistently tries to assert that GOD is responsible for sin, not us!

The subtle serpent wants us to blame GOD for our sins and the suffering that sin causes, instead of blaming the individuals who commit the sin, and actually cause the suffering in question!

But when we think back to what the Word of GOD explains in Genesis, we can see that the Aurora Colorado shooting was not the first time that a man's sin caused death and suffering in the world, nor will it be the last!

After Adam and Eve first sinned, GOD spoke, and: **To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."**<sup>36</sup>

Then to Adam He said: **"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, And to dust you shall return."**<sup>37</sup>

In a translation of the older Septuagint text, the Creator said to Eve: **"I will greatly multiply your pains and your groanings; in pain you shall bring forth children, and your submission shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you."**<sup>38</sup> So the pain and suffering of labor was greatly multiplied as a result of sin. And a wife's submission to her husband was only mentioned after sin too!

Adam was told that because of his sin, the ground was cursed; and, instead of the earth easily yielding its fruit, mankind would have to toil (or work hard) to eat, all the days of his life.

Plus, after sin, the ground began to bring forth prickly, painful plants like thorns and thistles; which have the ability to hurt us, and not just help us.

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<sup>36</sup> Genesis 3:16

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 3:17-19

<sup>38</sup> CAB Genesis 3:16

And finally, Adam was told about the terminal universal reality that all of his offspring faces, which is death. We were created from the dust of the ground and our bodies will eventually return to that same dust.

Scripture is clear that mankind's first sin brought all of this pain and suffering into the world, and it even changed the very world itself. And that is why Paul writes: **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, also - in this manner - death spread to all men, because all sinned"**<sup>39</sup>

Now, some sins only lead to our own personal death, and separation from GOD for eternity. But sins like murder lead to more than one person dying; and that is why GOD commands that murderers be strictly punished. So, even a society that has turned away from GOD will not tolerate one individual taking another individual's life intentionally.

Thus, while death is the ultimate form of devastation and destruction in this life, according to Paul, death was not present in the world until sin entered first! Sin provided a vehicle for death to come into our reality, and if no one had ever sinned, no one would have ever died!

And this leads us to the second type of devastation in our world, which is **"Nature caused suffering"**!

We have seen how Adam and Eve's choice to sin against GOD directly caused great suffering and death in the world, and how any rebellion against GOD's Commandments will still lead to suffering and death, even the second death in the lake of fire. But why do Natural disasters happen? And why do adults and even children sometimes have to suffer through terrible things like cancer?

From our current perspective in time, if we don't properly rely on the Bible for our answers, it would seem like human volition (meaning each person's freely made choices) should have nothing to do with things like cancer or a natural disaster. But the Bible teaches otherwise.

We just read how Eve's pain during childbirth was multiplied after she sinned against GOD, and how the "cursed" ground would cause Adam to have to work hard to eat, and provide for his family. Plus, we heard about the prickly thorns and thistles the ground began to produce after they sinned! So clearly,

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<sup>39</sup> Romans 5:12



even Nature itself was profoundly affected by the sinful actions of Adam and Eve!

And about this great change in nature, after Adam and Eve's sin, Paul writes about a future time when: **"...the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."**<sup>40</sup>

You see the world you and I live in today is no longer perfect, like it was when GOD originally made it! And, while GOD has a plan to restore the whole creation through JESUS Christ, His Son, that plan is not yet complete! So, we still live on a fallen, sin-filled, planet, which was cursed, due to man's rebellion against GOD's Word!

Satan first tricked Eve into sinning by falsely claiming that they would not surely die, if they ignored GOD's instructions. And then, when death came as GOD warned that it would, the serpent switched his scheme around, and he began to blame GOD for the very same consequences that the deceiver falsely claimed did not exist!

You see, satan and his servants always want to argue from all sides of an argument, instead of sticking steadfastly to the sound doctrine of the Savior! They want to have their cake and eat it too, to keep on living in sin. Sometimes, they even claim to be disciples of the MESSIAH, and they deceive out of both sides of their mouths, while claiming to speak the truth! But GOD never changes! And His true servants exclusively live and teach the truth, as it is contained in the unchanging Word of GOD!

When we meet someone who has fallen into the devil's devious deception, and they try to place the blame on GOD for the suffering and death we experience in this life, we can take them back to GOD's warning, that the serpent deceptively denied. When GOD clearly told His Creation that **they would surely die** if they violated His simple instructions!

If I tell you not to drink the poison under the sink, that works great for clearing out drain pipes, but will kill you on the spot if you drink it: am I responsible for your death and suffering if you ignore my warning? Or are you responsible in such a case?

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<sup>40</sup> Romans 8:21-22

If a stewardess warns you not to play with the emergency door latch on an airplane because it may kill everyone on board the plane, yet you pull the latch and get sucked out at 30,000 feet, can you really blame the stewardess as you plummet to the earth below?

That is what it is like when we blame GOD for the suffering and death in this world after He directly warned us, and we ignored His warning! Sin is the ultimate cause of all suffering, and death; and without mankind's sin as the causation, the devastation would not exist!

This means that “**human caused suffering**” is simply suffering that is directly caused by human sin. While “**Nature caused suffering**” is simply suffering that is indirectly caused by the first human sin that brought death and the curse into the world.

But now that we have established that even “**Nature caused suffering**” is ultimately caused by the sinful fall of mankind, that led to “**the creation being subjected to futility**”, we can explore another question, which is: “**Is there ever any purpose in suffering**”.

Now I must stress that we must recognize the difference between causation and purpose; because, for example, Joseph's brothers were the cause of his being sold into slavery. But GOD had a purpose for Joseph's suffering, and He used their bad act to bring about a safe ending for the whole family!

Similarly, while the Sanhedrin directly caused the crucifixion of JESUS, GOD used their actions to bring about salvation to all who repent and follow JESUS as their LORD and Savior! So, GOD finding a purpose in our suffering is very different than GOD being the cause of it!

Now with that having been said, the quintessential book of the Bible on suffering begins by saying: **There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared GOD and shunned evil.**<sup>41</sup> So, the suffering Job is about to experience will not be because he has personally done something wrong, because the Bible calls him blameless and upright.

And this is confirmed when we read: **Now there was a day when the sons of GOD came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and**

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<sup>41</sup> Job 1:1

from walking back and forth on it.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears GOD and shuns evil?”<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, even GOD Himself, confirmed Job's good testimony. But to that: **Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear GOD for nothing? “Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. “But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.**<sup>43</sup>

Do you remember how last week I mentioned that Satan is like a winnowing fan in GOD's hand? Well, it is because he is occasionally allowed to bring fire into our lives to consume the impurities, and stormy winds to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Just as Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat, here he received permission to test GOD's faithful servant, Job! And from this point forward, the Bible records how Job responded to some of the worst suffering anyone has ever experienced.

But one of the key lessons of the book of Job was that Job's suffering was not a result of some hidden sin, it was a period of testing allowed by GOD! And by pushing through his doubts, while trusting in the character of GOD, Job became an example of suffering and endurance for us all!

About this James writes: **My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the LORD is very compassionate and merciful.**<sup>44</sup>

Did you notice that James speaks of **“the end intended by the Lord”**, in the life of Job?

At the end of his suffering, the Bible records that Job was blessed more than he was at the beginning! And Job is a real-life demonstration that **“...all things**

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<sup>42</sup> Job 1:6-8

<sup>43</sup> Job 1:9-12

<sup>44</sup> James 5:10-11

**work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”<sup>45</sup>**

Now, hypothetically: if Job had been born into a perfect world, like Adam and Eve experienced, Job would have only faced temptation. But he would not have faced suffering at that point in time, and that is an important distinction.

However, once mankind listened to the serpent, and let sin and death into the world, everything changed! And the challenges became much more challenging, just as the difficulties always increase when this current world slides further and further into lawlessness and selfishness!

But back to the case of Job, we can see that the purpose of **his** suffering was testing, and refining his faith in GOD! And about this kind of suffering, Peter writes to those, like us: **“...who are kept by the power of GOD through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of JESUS Christ”<sup>46</sup>**

For the believer, the fires of suffering can test and also refine our faith! And that proven and purified faith, that can endure trials and temptation, is much more precious than gold! But GOD can also use suffering to chastise us when we stray into sin; and that can be another purpose for our suffering.

About this, Hebrews explains: **“...you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, GOD deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”<sup>47</sup>**

And one practical example of this kind of chastening, is mentioned in the context of Passover, when Paul writes: **“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.**

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<sup>45</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>46</sup> 1 Peter 1:5-7

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 12:5-8

**For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”<sup>48</sup>**

GOD can use suffering to chasten us, and turn us away from sin, and back to Him. Therefore, it is important to evaluate our own walk, if we are facing a period of suffering; to see if there is anything the LORD is dealing with, or if we are simply facing a time of testing.

And with Paul, we can say: **“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ JESUS my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from GOD by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”<sup>49</sup>**

**“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”<sup>50</sup>**

But... **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of GOD rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify GOD in this matter.”<sup>51</sup>**

## **Chapter 3: The War Against GOD**

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<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:28-32

<sup>49</sup> Philippians 3:8-11

<sup>50</sup> Romans 8:18

<sup>51</sup> 1 Peter 4:12-16

Over the last two chapters we have learned about the foundation of our Christian world-view from the first three chapters of Genesis. And the **first** principle that we have learned about that we should remember today is that GOD made a perfect world, which He called “very good” after He created it.

It is very important that we note that the world that now exists is different than the world that GOD originally created! Since, for example, 10 out of 10 people die, and there is pain and suffering in our world today; but GOD told Adam that they would die, **only** if they ate of the forbidden tree!

Secondly, we learned that GOD made Adam and Eve upright and sinless, in His own image; and they had the freedom to choose to love GOD and obey Him, or to rebel against His simple commandment about the tree in the midst of the garden.

So, we must also note that Adam and Eve were presented with a clear choice, when GOD commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And I should mention that the word knowledge, in the name “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” could more literally be translated as “experience”. So Adam and Eve had not actually “experienced evil” until after they willingly ate of the tree, in disobedience.

Third, we learned about how Adam and Eve allowed death, suffering, and the curse into the world when they sinned against GOD. And because of their fall **“...the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”**<sup>52</sup>

So, the transition from GOD’s original creation that was very good, to a world that contained death, suffering, and the curse occurred at the time of the fall of man, in Genesis Chapter 3.

And **fourth**, we learned that all suffering, pain, and death can be traced back (*either directly or indirectly*) to sin, which is rebellion against the law of our Creator.

Truly, if no one had ever sinned, no one would ever have suffered or died! So, the misuse of the free will of mankind allowed evil, death, suffering, and pain into our existence, and the rest is history!

These fundamental facts about the Biblical origin of all things, including death and suffering, can be directly observed in the first three chapters of the Bible.

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<sup>52</sup> Romans 8:22

And they are repeated and supported in the Bible by Jesus, Paul, Luke, Jude, and others.

Now, the reason we have devoted three chapters to learning about these important issues, is because: one of the most common reasons for people to reject GOD and the Bible flows from what has historically been called “**the problem of evil**”!

We have read how the number one question people have for GOD is “**Why is there suffering in the world?**” And survey after survey will prove that the suffering mankind experiences in this life often leads people to doubt the existence or character of GOD!

So, the way we answer this issue is extraordinarily important; and we should be preparing to answer these foundational questions about suffering long before tragedy strikes, not after!

Everyone you know has an unavoidable appointment with what we call physical death, including you and me! And there will undoubtedly be suffering during our lifetimes, too! But if we don't spend the time to understand **why** these things exist in our world according to Scripture, and **how** we should understand and respond to them - **before** the hard times come - we will not be ready to deal with them when they happen and our emotions become much harder to control!

Sadly, many people live their lives pretending that death and suffering do not exist. Thus, when they inevitably face these harsh realities, only then - in a highly illogical emotional state - do they seek to understand what GOD's Word teaches on the issues of suffering and evil.

Understandably, because of the heightened emotional state suffering often produces, the sufferer's logical thinking process is much less rational in the midst of their time of suffering; so, they become much less open to the Truth of Scripture! Therefore, we need to look very carefully at these issues before or after the storms of life, when we are not emotionally overwhelmed!

But now that we know the Scriptural basics to begin to answer the problem of evil, let me share with you the formal logical argument that sometimes causes people to question the character or existence of the GOD of the Bible.

Typically, the formal argument known as “**the problem of evil**” states: A. GOD is all-powerful, B. GOD is all-knowing, C. GOD is completely good, and D. Evil exists. So this objection against the GOD of the Bible states that: “GOD could

stop evil because He is all-powerful, He knows that evil exists because He is all knowing, and He would want to stop it, since He is completely good, yet evil still exists". Therefore, the skeptic concludes: "GOD must not exist or He must not be all-good, all-knowing, or all-powerful!"

Some folks attempt to answer these four facts by stating: either GOD is not all-powerful, all-knowing, or all-good; and by doing this they deny the character of GOD.

And others simply deny the existence of GOD; and they claim that the existence of evil means that the GOD of the Bible could not exist.

But the real problem is that this shortsighted classical argument is not really accounting for **all** of the Biblical details presented about GOD **and** the world we live in! In fact, it is a gross oversimplification!

We can all agree that A, B, C, and D are true; but as we learned in detail over the last two weeks: because GOD created mankind to enjoy a loving relationship with Him, and love requires the freedom to choose, it was the abuse of man's free will that introduced evil into the world when Adam and Eve disregarded GOD's commandment.

Therefore, one key ingredient to remember in the equation of evil, is that GOD does not force the descendants of Adam to love Him and obey His Word! He simply warns them of the consequences if they disobey His commandments, and allows them to make **free** choices!

Therefore, it bears repeating that this short life is the one and only test that will determine where we spend eternity. And GOD actually presents His Word to stop His creation from committing the sins that cause all evil! So, if we refuse to listen to GOD's Word, then we will fail life's test, we will continue to live in sin, and we will end up in hell, with the devil and his fallen angels!

This means that life is like a sorting process that determines if we are fit for GOD's kingdom, because we choose to love and obey Him; or if we will share the fate of satan and all those who follow him, in sinful rebellion against GOD.

The truth is: every type of evil that exists, is a result of the creation rebelling against the Creator! Human evil is a direct result of mankind breaking GOD's commandments in the present, and Natural evil is the consequence of mankind breaking GOD's commandment in the past. In this way, man allowed sin, death, suffering, and the curse into the world.



Similarly, another Biblical truth that the classical argument of the existence of evil ignores is that the Bible refers to a “ruler of this world”, and the “god of this age”. And when Scripture speaks of this individual, it is not referring to our omnipotent, omniscient, omni-benevolent GOD!

Satan the “adversary” is the one that the Bible calls “the ruler of this world”, “the god of this age”, and “the spirit who is at work in all the children of disobedience”; and JESUS told Paul: **‘I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’**<sup>53</sup> So, every single human being is either under satan’s authority or GOD’s!

This is why the Bible explains: **Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**<sup>54</sup>

Likewise, this is why JESUS explained: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”**<sup>55</sup>

So, we have established over the last few weeks that Adam and Eve committed sin, so then what did that make them? Obviously, at least for a time, they became slaves of sin, and children of disobedience, who followed satan and not GOD!

They had fallen into **“...the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”**<sup>56</sup> And they gave the serpent authority over themselves, along with every one of their descendants who followed the will of the devil, which is sin.

This is why Satan could say to JESUS, about all of the kingdoms of the world: **“I will give all this authority and their glory to You, because it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.”**<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Acts 26:17-18

<sup>54</sup> 1 John 3:7-8

<sup>55</sup> John 8:34

<sup>56</sup> 2 Timothy 2: 26

<sup>57</sup> Luke 4:5-6

JESUS did not dispute the devil's claim to authority over the sinful nations of the world, and the Apostle John even writes that **"...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."**<sup>58</sup>

You see, the Bible reveals that the fall of Adam and Eve marked the beginning of a cosmic conflict that corrupted all of GOD's perfect creation. It cast every created thing into a raging clash between good and evil. Therefore, every descendant of Adam must choose between sin or righteousness, darkness or light, selfishness, or love, and satan or GOD. And the eternal fate of each soul depends on which side they choose!

Plus, in life's invisible war, satan is trying to steal souls from their Creator, by tricking people into sinning. And that is why JESUS said: **"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."**<sup>59</sup>

When Adam and Eve sinned, they submitted themselves to the devil's authority and willingly rejected GOD's authority. And to this very day, that is still what happens when any descendant of Adam and Eve chooses to rebel against GOD and follow satan's example into sin!

Because of this, John also writes: **In this the children of GOD and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of GOD, nor is he who does not love his brother.**<sup>60</sup>

We can either be "of God" or "of the devil", there is no third team in this great invisible war for souls! And over and over again the Scriptures declare that our choices expressed in actions reveal which team we are on! But when we are choosing sides, we should remember that it is was never GOD who sought to deceive, murder, and devour mankind!

Instead, JESUS explained to those who were under satan's influence **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."**<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> 1 John 5:19

<sup>59</sup> John 10:10

<sup>60</sup> 1 John 3:10

<sup>61</sup> John 8:44

And Peter added: **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**<sup>62</sup>

So, the primary source of all of the evil in the world, is actually the serpent! And when Adam and Eve heeded the deceitful words of the devil, they introduced the cancer of sin into the world, and death along with it! But the devil conveniently tries to pretend like he does not exist when the problem of evil is discussed. Meanwhile, the truth is: he is the author of all evil, and the father of all lies!

And just as Adam and Eve's sin can never be blamed on GOD because "they were made upright", in the very "image of GOD", no one can blame GOD for satan's wickedness either!

This is because the Bible records about the cherub we now know as satan, or the devil: **You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.**<sup>63</sup>

So even the devil was also made upright by GOD! But he became puffed up with pride because of his beauty, and he rebelled against his Creator, instead of being grateful to GOD for all he had been given.

By the way, satan is not alone in his invisible, spiritual war against GOD's Truth, which is why Paul warns us that "... **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**"<sup>64</sup>

There are many fallen angels who foolishly followed satan's lies, just like Adam and Eve did. And they now serve under him, as the rulers of the darkness of this age that promote wickedness and rebellion towards the Creator.

So satan is the slimy, deceptive captain of the entire anti-GOD, anti-Truth team. His wicked fallen angels serve as regional rulers of wickedness and corruption. And every human being who practices sin (which is the breaking of GOD's law) has actually joined the side of the serpent, in his personal war against GOD!

Therefore, an enormous part of why there is so much suffering and evil in this world is due to the fact that the earth is caught up in this ultimate war for the souls of men! Even the creation itself is currently cursed and corrupted by this terrible ancient conflict!

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<sup>62</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ezekiel 28:15

<sup>64</sup> Ephesians 6:12

And we must remember that the pain and suffering of this life serves as a tiny, microscopic reminder of the much greater suffering that awaits Satan's entire sinful team in hell. Meanwhile, the pleasures of this life are only a miniscule taste of the glories of the kingdom of GOD that await all that love Him and keep His commandments!

Plus, we can directly establish that the devil is actually responsible for much of the suffering we experience in this world, because, *after JESUS healed a suffering woman*, He asked the indignant ruler of the synagogue: **“ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”**<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, Peter described the ministry of the Messiah by saying: **“GOD anointed JESUS of Nazareth with the HOLY SPIRIT and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for GOD was with Him.”**<sup>66</sup> So the people JESUS healed, and cast out demons from, were “oppressed by the devil”, not by GOD! And JESUS came to destroy the wicked works of the devil!

Also, JESUS (as GOD manifested in the flesh) stepped into the mess our rebellion against Him made, to do more than just heal those oppressed by the devil! Because Scripture even explains: **“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”**<sup>67</sup>

But now that we have completely dismantled the oversimplified classical logical argument against GOD, known as **“the problem of evil”**, let's consider why our loving Creator allows this spiritual warfare to continue, even when it causes so much suffering and devastation.

The Apostle Peter once wrote: **The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**<sup>68</sup>

Now the promise Peter is referring to, is explained a few verses before, when he wrote: **“...scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own**

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<sup>65</sup> Luke 13:16

<sup>66</sup> Acts 10:38

<sup>67</sup> Hebrews 2:14

<sup>68</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

**lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."<sup>69</sup>**

And Peter also writes about this same promise, saying: **Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.<sup>70</sup>**

So, when we read a literal translation of 2nd Peter three nine, which says: **The LORD of the promise is not slow, as some deem slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not having purposed any to perish, but all to come to repentance.<sup>71</sup>**

We **first** must understand that the promise Peter is referring to, is that guarantee that the LORD of glory will return to this earth and re-create the perfect heaven and earth that He promised in Isaiah 65!

Then secondly, we must recognize that GOD is being patient, or long-suffering towards mankind; and this indicates that He is not satisfied with the current fallen and rebellious state of His creation. But if He returns before the last soul is saved, His ultimate purpose would not be realized.

So, GOD's ultimate purpose is for all to come to repentance and salvation through His Son, JESUS CHRIST so they can share in the joy of His love for all eternity! And He does not desire that any one perish in hell; so He is patiently enduring the disaster sin has made of His creation, thereby allowing every soul the chance to repent and turn back to Him before the end of the age!

Truly: **"...our LORD JESUS Christ... gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our GOD and Father"<sup>72</sup>**

Yes, while satan comes **"...to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. JESUS came that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly."<sup>73</sup>**

Plus: **"He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us"<sup>74</sup>**

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<sup>69</sup> 2 Peter 3:3-4

<sup>70</sup> 2 Peter 3:13

<sup>71</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>72</sup> Galatians 1:3-4

<sup>73</sup> John 10:10

<sup>74</sup> Acts 17:26-27

Truly: **GOD our Savior... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**<sup>75</sup> But satan, and his minions desire for all men to perish with them in hell. So they fill the world with wicked lies and sinful temptations designed to ensnare mankind into continued rebellion against GOD!

And even though it is GOD's desire that no one perish, when JESUS was asked: **"Lord, are there few who are saved?"**, He said to them: **"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."**<sup>76</sup>

And in another place, He said: **"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."**<sup>77</sup>

Sadly, Scripture explains that most people are following satan to eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell, even though GOD clearly does not will for that to be their destiny! And this demonstrates beyond all reasonable doubt that mankind has the freedom to choose, and we can foolishly resist GOD's amazing, loving will for us!

This is why Stephen rebuked the Sanhedrin by saying: **"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."**<sup>78</sup>

And this is also why JESUS cried out: **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"**<sup>79</sup>

GOD has clearly declared: **"All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."**<sup>80</sup> Even though this was originally said to Israel, it really applies to most of the descendants of Adam, who have unknowingly sided with the serpent against the will of the Creator!

There is a reason JESUS taught us to pray to the Our Father in heaven **"...Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven."**<sup>81</sup> Because GOD's will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven! However, when JESUS

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<sup>75</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4

<sup>76</sup> Luke 13:23-24

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>78</sup> Acts 7:51

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 23:37

<sup>80</sup> Romans 10:21

<sup>81</sup> Luke 11:2

brings the kingdom of GOD to earth, in all of its fullness, He will rule from Zion with a rod of iron, and this prayer will truly be answered!

And while GOD has said: **“...‘As I live,’ says the LORD GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...”**<sup>82</sup>

He has a special way of perceiving the sad reality of mankind’s rebellion against His love, that puts things into the proper perspective, especially in regards to hell.

JESUS said: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; “but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. “But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. “So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ “He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ “But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ‘Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”**<sup>83</sup>

And later He explained: **“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. “The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. “The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. “Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, “and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**<sup>84</sup>

Friends, we can either be children of the kingdom who follow JESUS and practice righteousness, or we can be children of satan who follow lies and practice lawlessness. This world is limited to only these two choices, according to the One who created it. And He will also be the final judge of every soul!

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<sup>82</sup> Ezekiel 33:11

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 13:24-30

<sup>84</sup> Matthew 13:37-43

Truly, the Bible does not only describe the origin of evil, and the cause of suffering and death, it also describes how we can have eternal life through the cross of JESUS Christ, our Victorious Messiah!

When the last human soul is saved, and GOD finally fulfills His long-awaited promise of a New Heavens and New Earth, His plan will be complete! And Scripture assures us: “...**GOD will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**”<sup>85</sup>

**Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.**<sup>86</sup> Remembering: **you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.**<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Revelation 21:4

<sup>86</sup> 2 Peter 3:14

<sup>87</sup> 1 Peter 2:21