

Did God Create Evil?

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Well, brethren, all throughout human history and particularly in our world today, there are many people who struggle with the concept of understanding that there could be this all loving, all powerful God who created everything in our world and sustains and controls it all. And He's this loving, nice guy, but yet there's still a great deal of evil in the world. People look at the messed-up world that we live in and think, "If this creator God is this all powerful, loving, nice guy, and He's in control of everything, well, why would He allow there to be so much evil in the world? And for that matter, where did evil come from to begin with? Because if this all loving, powerful God created everything and everything exists according to His will, well then, does that mean He created evil too?"

Well, today we're going to take a closer look at this subject of where exactly evil comes from, and again, what God's role is in this. Why does He allow this and how exactly did this all come about? Because as we're going to see, even in the Church of God, sometimes we have false paradigms attached to this particular subject. And oftentimes we don't actually understand it exactly the way the Bible actually explains it. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

Did God Create Evil?

Because to start off with, let's just look at a couple of scriptures that clearly tell us that God created everything that exists, and it all exists according to His will. Because this is stated in the Bible numerous times. Turn over to Revelation 4 and we'll start reading in verse 9.

Rev 4:9 *"Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11) "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (NKJV)*

Again, this is one of numerous scriptures that make a very clear picture for us that God created everything that exists and it's only by His will that everything that exists is allowed to continue existing. So again, this makes a very clear dogmatic picture for us.

Now again just as an additional note here, notice in these verses it used the phrase "Him who sits on the throne." Now, that is a reference to God the Father. You'll see throughout the book of Revelation that particular title is used numerous times. And one of the ways we can see very clearly that that refers to God the Father is in chapter 5. Now we're not going to take the time to read through chapter 5, but if you read down through chapter 5 here, what you'll see is it describes a scene where Jesus Christ

comes up to “He who sits on the throne” and takes a scroll out of His hand. The point that it's making is Christ is the only one worthy to open this scroll and reveal its contents. But just describing that scene tells us if Christ is taking the scroll out of the hand of “He who sits on the throne” then “He who sits on the throne” has to be the Father. That's very obvious by the description.

So, as we read here in verse 11, it tells us that God the Father, He created everything that exists, and it exists according to His will. Now the Bible also tells us that Christ had a very active role in creation as well. So, let's just turn over to Colossians. It's Colossians 1 and we'll briefly look at this. Again, this is going to show us the picture that the two of Them created everything that's in our world and it's only by Their will that everything that exists is allowed to exist. This is in Colossians 1 in verse 15.

Col 1:15 *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” (NKJV)*

Again, the Bible tells us very clearly that both of Them were involved in creation. They created everything that exists, and it's by Their will that everything that exists is allowed to continue existing. Well, then we have to ask the question, “Okay, well what about evil? Why do we have a very evil world? How did that come into existence and why is that allowed to continue existing?” Well, to take a look at this subject, turn over to Isaiah 45, because we'll see a couple of scriptures here that give us some insight into this subject. So, Isaiah 45 and we'll start reading in verse 5.

Is 45:5 *“I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6) That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; 7) I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.” (NKJV)*

Again, we have this picture of an all-powerful God who created everything and everything that exists is because His will allows it to do so. But now let's take a closer look at verse 7. Now what I just read to you is from the New King James translation and if you notice it used the word “calamity” there. Now there are a number of other translations that put a different word here that makes this verse a little more interesting. Now I'm going to read to you verse 7 from the regular King James version and notice that there's a significantly different word here rather than “calamity”.

Is 45:7 *“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (KJV)*

Again, this isn't the only translation that uses the word “evil” there. The American Standard Version does that. Young's Literal Translation does that, as well as a number of other translations. And the way you'll typically see this verse translated into English is

it'll either have the word "calamity" or "disaster" there, or it has the word "evil". Now, if you look at the Hebrew word that's translated into English here, it does have a broad meaning. It can mean "calamity" or "disaster", or it can mean "evil" as we understand evil. Again, it encompasses all of those meanings so you could debate the exact right English word to insert here. But let's look at another verse where the meaning is very clear because the Hebrew is very exact. Turn over to Proverbs 16 and we're going to read verse 4.

Prov 16:4 *"The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom."* (NKJV)

Now, if you look at the word "wicked" there, if we look at the Hebrew, it clearly means "wicked" as we use the word "wicked" in English. And again, it doesn't have a broad meaning. So, it makes it very clear what's the intended meaning in this verse. And just to demonstrate that, the Hebrew word here that's translated as "wicked" in English. It's transliterated into English as "rasa". It's Strong's # 7563 and the definition I'm going to read to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. And they define it as:

"An adjective meaning wicked, guilty, in the wrong, criminal, transgressor. This adjective is used 264 times, many more times than the verb formed from it. It means essentially someone guilty or in the wrong and is an antonym to the Hebrew word šaddiyq (6662), meaning righteous, in the right.... The word indicates people who are enemies of God and His people: the psalmist prayed to be rescued from the wicked (Ps. 17:13). Those described by this word are evil and do not learn righteousness. Instead, they pursue their wicked ways among the righteous (Isa. 26:10); but the Lord will eventually slay the wicked (Isa. 11:4)."

So, you can see from that definition, when it says God created the wicked, it's referring to the wicked! It's very clear. Now again, how are we to understand how an all-loving God, who is the very definition of righteousness. He sums up His character with the word "love". He created everything. But it also says that in some ways, He's related to the creation of the wicked and to evil. So how are we to understand that?

Well, to kind of just give you a preview of where we're going, the key to understanding this issue is understanding the very nature of free moral agency. Because the Bible is very clear to us that God does not sin. He cannot even be tempted by sin. The book of James directly states that He is not even tempted by sin. He sums up His character in 1 John that He *is* love. That one-word agape love just defines His character. So, it's not like He promotes sin or has ever sinned or wants people to sin. That's certainly not the case. But by allowing free moral agency, He creates the opportunity for individuals to then choose to be wicked. So, in that indirect way is His relationship with that, but we'll get into that in more detail later.

Because if you think about this, the Bible tells us that the originator of sin is Satan. He is the original sinner. He is the father of it, and it even describes those who choose the

path of sin as following him. They're following his way of life. So, we have this dichotomy. But we're going to see here, sometimes we create the picture as if there's this battle going on between God and Satan and they're duking it out. And that's really not the picture of what we're going to see. Because what we're going to see is that God the Father is always in control and managing everything and He does this for a specific purpose. But let's just first of all notice that again the Bible directly tells us that Satan is the father of sin is what it tells us. So, turn over to John 8. It's John 8 and verse 42.

John 8:42 *"Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43) Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44) 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.'"* (NKJV)

As it says, he's the father of lies. He's the originator of evil and sin. It's even referring to those who are following that mentality -- that way of life -- as they're following their father, Satan. Because if you turn over to 1 John, we'll see here again it defines those who choose the path of sin as they're following Satan. Because it's again connecting Satan as the originator of sin. Let's turn over to 1 John 3. We're going to read verse 8.

1 John 3:8 *"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."* (NKJV)

So again, it's very much attributing Satan to being the originator of evil and sin. But we also have to ask the question, "Where did Satan come from? How did he get into the equation? Who created him?" We're going to see God created him, but He didn't create him to be evil. Satan chose that. And again, we're going to see as we unwrap this subject that the whole key to the subject is understanding the very nature of free moral agency. And it was understood from the very beginning exactly how a free moral agency works. And that's one of the things that's sometimes gotten tripped up in the Church of God's understanding of this, but we'll get to that here in a minute.

Now turn over to Ezekiel 28. We'll see here it explains to us Satan's origin, because he didn't start off being created to be sinful and evil. God certainly did not create him like that. He created him as a righteous angel, but then Satan chose to rebel. This is Ezekiel 28 and verse 11.

Ezek 28:11 *"Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 12) 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes*

Was prepared for you on the day you were created. 14) "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. 15) You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you." (NKJV)

So, notice when he was created -- when God the Father and Christ worked in conjunction with each other to create him -- he's not created as a sinful being. He's created as a perfect angel. And he has the opportunity to pursue a righteous way of life, but he makes the choice to rebel. So, this is how he becomes the father of sin. Let's just continue reading here.

16) "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. 17) "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. 18) "You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. 19) All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever." ' ' (NKJV)

Now notice in particular there the last two verses, because it's prophesying Satan's end. It tells us he is consumed in a fire, and he's destroyed. He is "no more forever". Now the reason I point that out is in the Church of God -- at least in my history growing up in the Church of God since birth -- one of the things I was taught growing up from childhood in the Church of God was the idea that angels can't die. Basically, when Satan and the demons are thrown in the lake of fire, they would basically be tormented for all of eternity with no end and they couldn't be destroyed. Now that came from a misunderstanding of Revelation 20 verse 10.

I won't go into detail unpacking that subject. I did that previously this year in a sermon on my website and YouTube channel that's titled "The Lake of Fire". That goes into detail unpacking the symbolic language there in Revelation 20 verse 10. But if you look, not only at the Biblical principle that the wages of sin is death. It's not never ending torment forever in the typical picture of hell fire that we have in our culture today. That's not really what the Bible describes. And there are numerous verses, just like what we just read here, that tell us that Satan and the demons, their ultimate fate is the wages of sin. It's death. It's to go out of existence.

Now the reason I point that out is we -- through a misunderstanding of several false paradigms -- kind of created a false picture in terms of how evil got into the world, and how it was created. Now we always taught that Satan was created as a righteous angel and then chose to rebel. But another false assumption that was taught when I was growing up in the Church of God, was the idea that God the Father didn't see this coming. That He created the angelic world, and He gave them free moral agency, but,

apparently, He did not really understand how it worked. I mean, they didn't say it that bluntly. It was the idea that He was blindsided by this. So, He didn't plan ahead for there to be rebellion and evil to come into the world. He was kind of surprised by all of this.

Well then there was a third false paradigm that we developed. And that was the idea that to remove Satan, that Christ had to qualify. That part of His ministry on Earth and what He had to go through to be the sacrifice for mankind was also supposed to have included somehow qualifying to be able to remove Satan from His role. Now obviously Christ came to earth as a physical human being, and He had to endure to the end without committing any sin so He could be the perfect sacrifice for us. But nothing in the Bible says He had to somehow qualify to remove Satan from His role. Because see, we kind of created all of these false paradigms, kind of struggling with how did evil come into the world and not realizing that God had planned for this the entire time. Because angels can die, first of all, as we just saw here.

But also, one of the false concepts that we had -- I'll just explain it the way I like to kind of humorously put it across. I like to explain it with the phrase it's the idea that "God is Gomer Pyle." Now again, I don't mean to disparage anybody in saying this. I'm just kind of humorously illustrating a point. Many of you hearing this may not be familiar with the reference of Gomer Pyle. So, let me just kind of explain where that comes from. In the US, back in the 1960s, there was a popular television program called "Gomer Pyle". It was based on this character played by Jim Nabors that had grown up in this small southern town where everybody knew each other and they were all friendly and nice with each other. And he's this very good-hearted, good natured guy who's kind and gentle and good to everyone that he meets. But he's very naive. He assumes that everyone else in the world is just as good-natured and good-hearted as he is. He just can't wrap his head around the idea that there are evil people in the world who will lie, cheat, and steal and do it on purpose because they have evil intentions. Because they have an evil heart. He just can't fathom that particular concept. So, he just kind of bumbles around through life assuming that everybody's just as good-natured and as nice and good-hearted as he is. That's the humor of the show that it is all based around.

Well, see, if we assume that God the Father and Jesus Christ made everything and made the angelic world and later made humans and then gave them free moral agency. The opportunity to choose life or to choose death. To be obedient and pursue righteousness or to rebel. And if it never occurred to them that someone might actually choose to rebel and go the wrong way, it kind of paints the picture that They were Gomer Pyle. They created free moral agency. They just weren't quite bright enough to understand how it worked. Well, obviously that was not the case.

And once we understand that we realize that, yes, in an indirect sense, they did create evil. Not in terms of that They had any ill motive or were trying to encourage sin in any way. No, that was certainly not the case. But they allowed for the opportunity for angels and human beings to choose sin and to choose to go the wrong way. And so, in that indirect manner, yes, they kind of brought evil into the world by allowing for its existence and knowing that it would happen. And this was by design! You see, if we just

understand how free moral agency works, we realize it's just inherent to how the concept works. And to see that, turn over to Deuteronomy 30. And we'll start reading in verse 11.

Deu 30:11 *"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. 12) It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 13) Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 14) But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. 15) 'See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16) in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17) But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18) I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19) I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20) that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."* (NKJV)

Now notice here, He's making things very clear as He's laying it out here. He says, I'm giving you the choice of pursuing life, of being obedient, following God's commandments, and that will ultimately result in life for you. But there's also another path here. You can choose to rebel. You can choose to do your own thing. But I'm warning you. That's going to end badly. That's the way of death. And if you choose that route, things are going to go very badly and you're going to die. But notice He's saying, I'm going to allow you to choose. And if you choose death, I'm going to let you, and I'm going to kill you if you do. And I'm warning you, don't do that. That's not the right choice and you're not going to like the results. But if you insist on doing that, I'm going to let you and I'm going to kill you.

See, He's making it very clear. He's not encouraging evil. He's allowing for it. He's very much trying to direct people away from evil and away from sin, but He's warning them of the consequences and allowing the choice. This is how free moral agency works. And see, this is how God has worked with mankind from the very beginning. Even the story in the Garden of Eden paints this exact same picture for us. So, to notice that, turn over to Genesis 2 and we'll start reading in verse 8.

Gen 2:8 *"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9) And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life*

was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (NKJV)

Now jump down to verse 15.

Gen 2:15 *“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (NKJV)*

Notice here, once again, He's making the choices very clear. He's telling them what the good choice is. He's saying this is the route you want to go. You want to pursue righteousness. You want to obey. You don't want to pursue the way of rebellion and sin. That's going to bring death upon you. So, I'm warning you. I'm telling you what the right choice is. I'm encouraging you to do the right thing, but I'm going to let you choose. And inherently letting them choose, what do you automatically get? You're going to have some percentage of individuals, whether angels or humans, that are then going to make the wrong choice and they're going to bring on the death penalty for themselves. And see, that's exactly what happened with the angels as well.

Because notice what we read at the end of Ezekiel 28. Satan is going to be eventually thrown in a fire and consumed, and “you shall be no more forever”. He dies. He takes on the death penalty. Well, if you just understand this concept, then we realize it wasn't a situation where God kind of fumbled His way into the plan as we know it today. Because if you look back at the literature that the Worldwide Church of God published back when I was a kid growing up, it literally presented the idea that God's creation of mankind was actually His plan B. They didn't really call it a “plan B”, but it painted the exact scenario I'm about to explain. Because the literature literally stated that God's plan A was the angelic world. That He created them initially, but He didn't foresee the concept of rebellion.

I'm not trying to disparage anybody, but basically what we put across was the idea that He created free moral agency. He just wasn't quite bright enough to understand how it worked. Because He didn't realize if He gave people the opportunity to choose, they might actually choose the wrong choice. I mean, it was a naive way to look at this, but that's the concept of how we had it put across. And we also, as I explained earlier, had this idea that angels couldn't die. So, the explanation that we came up with is, well, since He had done this with angels and it went bad in a way He apparently didn't anticipate. Well, then He turned around and created mankind as physical beings and that way if they rebelled, He could kill them, and they could receive the death penalty. That was literally the paradigm that was put across.

As I mentioned previously there was also this concept -- which was a false idea as well. The idea that Christ had to somehow qualify to remove Satan from his role currently as “god of this world” and to be taken away and removed during the millennium. Well, if

you have that whole viewpoint, it just trainwrecks all of your logic when we get to the point that Satan is released again after the millennium. And we'll look at that a little bit later in this particular sermon.

But the point I want you see in all of this is this was all by design. God didn't kind of stumble His way into this and then evil just kind of came about because He just didn't really plan ahead and didn't really understand how free moral agency worked. No, it was by design. This is how He created things knowing how it was going to work. Now, He didn't want Satan to rebel. He doesn't want any human beings to rebel. He tries as hard as He can to steer us in the right direction. But, again, He allows free moral agency and choice, and He understands how that works. And that's how it was done from the very beginning.

But God already had a plan for how He was going to harness this and use it for His purposes. Because see, the book of Job explains to us that He has taken Satan as His servant. And again, it's not that Satan is obedient to Him. Satan is an adversary who is trying to fight God in every way possible. But if we just understand how the dynamics are explained to us in the book of Job, we'll see how He utilizes him as a servant. Because, again, this is part of the whole plan of how He operates. He didn't stumble His way into this, and evil just kind of got created unknowingly and it was a big accident. All of this was by design because of free moral agency.

So, turn over to Job 1. We'll see here the interaction that God the Father has with Satan. And this will also not only reveal to us the nature of their relationship working together, but it also helps us to more clearly understand our trials that we go through. And I'll explain that a little bit more in detail after we read these accounts. But just notice here in Job 1 and verse 6.

Job 1:6 *"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ 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 from walking back and forth on it.' ⁸ 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?' ⁹ So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!' ¹² 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."* (NKJV)

Now notice first of all that it was God the Father here who started the exchange. Who basically kind of baited Satan into wanting to go after Job. And that He was the one who gives Satan permission to go after Job and then sets restrictions on how far he can go.

That's very important to pay attention to. And we'll see that again here in chapter 2. Let's look over in chapter 2 because they have another interaction here that's very similar. Let's start reading in verse 1.

Job 2:1 *"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2) And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.' 3) 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? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.' 4) So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5) But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!' 6) And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.' 7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."* (NKJV)

Now notice once again here, the interaction is God actually initiating this exchange and basically kind of baiting Satan into this. And then when Satan takes the bait to then go and attack Job. God is in full control in saying you can go this far and no further. See, He's playing him like a fiddle. He's got him like a dog on a leash. And this is why Job 41 describes Him as He's taken him as a servant. That God has taken Satan as a servant. And again, this doesn't mean that Satan is obedient and trying to fulfill God's will. No, he's very rebellious in doing the opposite, but it's through this control that it's describing here that God the Father plays him like a fiddle and utilizes him for His purposes.

So, just pick up here in Job 41, and we'll start reading in verse 1. Now, it's going to refer to Leviathan here. Now, this is basically a symbolic picture that's referring, obviously, to Satan. Leviathan is pictured as kind of a sea monster, but again, it's a symbolic picture here, is what He's painting. This is God speaking to Job here.

Job 41:1 *"Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, Or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? 2) Can you put a reed through his nose, Or pierce his jaw with a hook? 3) Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you? 4) Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him as a servant forever?"* (NKJV)

Now notice here, He's asking a lot of rhetorical questions. We're going to see here as we keep reading, He's basically warning Job that Satan is this powerful angelic being. You don't want to mess with him. He can beat you up and make mincemeat out of you. But He's basically explaining His relationship, God the Father's relationship with him. And He's saying, I play him like a fiddle. I've taken him as a servant. In other words, I control him. He does my bidding for me. He's like my dog on a leash is the way He's describing it. But He's doing this through rhetorical questions. Now pick up in verse 5.

*“5) Will you play with him as with a bird, Or will you leash him for your maidens?
6) Will your companions make a banquet of him? Will they apportion him among
the merchants? 7) Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing
spears? 8) Lay your hand on him; Remember the battle—Never do it again!”
(NKJV)*

In other words, Job, you don't want to mess with him. He's way more powerful than you, but he's basically my dog on a leash. I got total control of him. That's what God is saying, the point that God is making here. And verse 9.

*“9) Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false; Shall one not be overwhelmed
at the sight of him? 10) No one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who
then is able to stand against Me? 11) Who has preceded Me, that I should pay
him? Everything under heaven is Mine.” (NKJV)*

Again, we have this picture of an all-powerful creator God who not only created everything, but everything that exists is allowed to exist because of His will. He's allowing it to happen. Now again, that doesn't mean He wants evil, that He wants to promote evil. He just allows for it. But He also harnesses it for His purposes. Because one thing that we need to understand too is the purpose of trials and why He allows this to take place, but also who is in control of them.

And the reason I mention this is a false paradigm that I've heard in the Church of God my entire life kind of sounds like this. Now most Church of God people would probably agree with the general observation. If you've been in the Church for many years or many decades, you probably kind of noticed a pattern that life tends to beat you up more in the weeks and months kind of going into the spring Holy Days before Passover. Or like in the weeks right before the fall Holy Days. It seems like your trials just tend to get a lot worse and more intense around that time. That's an observation I've made, and many other Church members have made over the years.

But oftentimes how we talk about that isn't really accurate. Because the way it oftentimes gets presented is around that time of the year Satan's extra mad because he just hates these Holy Days and what they picture so he's just extra stirred up and that's why you're having more trials. Now I would totally agree that Satan hates the plan of God. He would love to attack everything that God does and I'm sure it gets him worked up and angry and such. But the false paradigm in this is the idea that Satan's in the driver's seat. That he just gets extra mad and that allows him to persecute us more or to have more severe trials upon us. We have to remember the picture that we just read in Job 1 and 2. God the Father was in charge the entire time and He was restraining how far Satan could go.

Well, that's exactly what He does in our lives as well. See, it's never a picture where Satan's in the driver's seat. The reason that we have periods throughout the year or just periods in our life when trials intensify for us, it's not because Satan's extra mad. It's because God is allowing it because He's utilizing it as a tool. Because realize that Satan

is evil to the core. He's a homicidal maniac, as I like to describe it. And he would gladly kill all of us at the drop of a hat given the opportunity. The only reason he doesn't is because God restrains him. So, see, when we go through times that our trials increase and they get more intense, it's not because Satan's increased his activity. That he's put extra effort into it. No, it's because God's allowing it to take place. God allows this again for His purposes, again because of the character it builds for us.

But we also need to understand this is an inherently designed part of the plan of God. Just turn over to 2 Timothy 3. We'll see an all-encompassing statement here. There's really no wiggle room to rationalize around it. And if we just think it through, what we see here is again from the very beginning, when God created the angelic world and offered them free moral agency, He knew all He had to do was sit back and wait. Because some percentage of this group was going to make the wrong choice -- was going to rebel. He didn't have to know exactly which individuals would do that.

He was just smart enough to understand free moral agency. And He knew if He made millions of angels, gave them a choice, and sat back and waited, they were going to sort themselves out. And there was going to be a group who would follow righteousness and do whatever He commanded them to do. And there was going to be a group that was going to decide to do their own thing and was going to rebel. Well, see, He already had this built into His plan of how He was going to utilize the rebel group for His purposes. And if we read here in 2 Timothy 3:12, we can see how this was designed into the plan.

2 Tim 3:12 *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (NKJV)

Now notice that that is an all-encompassing statement. It doesn't give any wiggle room for exceptions. This is telling us that everyone who's going to pursue salvation through the sacrifice of Christ -- which is required of everyone. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant. He is the atoning sacrifice for all of us. There is no such thing as pursuing salvation without accepting Christ's sacrifice and following Him. Well, it says everyone who chooses to do that is going to get persecuted. That requires a persecutor. That requires someone who's going to carry that out.

Now sometimes we kind of limit the definition of persecution. And we just think of that as like what the Apostle Paul went through where you're being beaten up and stoned and put in prison and lynch mobs or the government is persecuting you. We have to realize that there's a broader definition here. The persecutor it's referring to is Satan. Because he's the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Him and his demons pursuing us, that's the persecution that we're talking about. But as the Bible repeatedly tells us, that's something we have to successfully overcome. That's why we're required to endure to the end. You don't endure through wonderful positive circumstances. You endure through things that are painful and difficult. But that's required for us to be worthy of the Kingdom of God. And that's specifically stated for us in 2 Thessalonians. Turn over to 2 Thessalonians. We'll start here in chapter 1 in verse 3.

2 Thess 1:3 *"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4) so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 5) which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;"* (NKJV)

Notice successfully enduring through this persecution and suffering, facing hard trials, that's necessary for us to endure to the end. Because who is saved? Those who endure to the end. And again, you don't endure through comfortable, pleasant circumstances. You endure through something that's painful and it's hard. This is a requirement. This is how our character is developed and it's how God tests us. Because see, it's also an issue of testing where our heart is. Notice the exchange between God and Satan, what did Satan say? He said, "Well, you've made life comfortable for him. You've blessed everything that he's done. Make it painful and hard." And that'll really test him. Because Satan was convinced that he could turn Job, and he didn't.

But see, just as human beings as we age through life. I'm sure most everybody who's lived into retirement age can look back at their younger life and you go, "When I was a teenager and in my 20s, I did some dumb stuff. And I learned as I got older to make some smarter choices." Well see, we just naturally, if we have some brain cells to rub together, and we're not just purposely being stupid. We learn through life that there are certain choices that just help us avoid pain. And then we learn, and we just instinctively start doing the things that are going to try to avoid pain and make life more enjoyable. Well, that's just having some common sense.

But see, it's a whole new test of character for us if we have to choose what's right even when that's going to hurt. Even when that's going to bring pain upon our life. But to obey God, we have to go that route. See, that's a whole new level and that's what's required to test our character. But notice here, even divisions in the Church. As we're going to see, even factions and heresies and such, the Bible literally tells us that that must exist. It's a requirement because it tests us. It creates those situations that sort out who's going to follow God when it's difficult and who isn't. So, turn over to 1 Corinthians 11 and we'll see this directly stated. 1 Corinthians 11 and we'll start reading in verse 17.

1 Cor. 11:17 *"Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18) For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. 19) For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you."* (NKJV)

Notice it says this must happen. We didn't wind up in this situation kind of stumbling into it by accident. By design, God created free moral agency. He knew that there would be rebels. He knew that there would be some group of angels that would choose to rebel. And He knew how He was going to utilize them to stir up trouble. But at the same time,

there's a positive purpose in this. Because it forces us into situations where we'll make decisions and we'll sort ourselves as to who's going to put God first and who's going to diligently obey even when it's painful for them. And who's going to choose to go their own way.

This even explains why we oftentimes even see heresies and factions within God's Church. Because if you notice here in verse 19, I just read to you from the New King James translation. It has the word "factions" there. It's similar to "divisions", but the word there can also mean "heresies" and you'll see a number of translations of the Bible that put "heresies" in this verse as well. And again, notice it says this must exist. In other words, this is by design, because again, it sorts out who loves the truth and who's going to follow God even when it's painful versus those that are going to follow Satan and go that direction.

And see, this is important to understand -- as I mentioned from the beginning of the sermon -- to really grasp how evil came into the world. The design that includes evil being part of it. And again, not because God wants people to sin or wants them to go the wrong way. No, He does everything possible in His power to get us to make the right choice and to go the right direction, but this is designed into the plan.

As I mentioned before -- and I've kind of explained throughout this sermon. As I grew up in the Church of God, there were several false paradigms where we had this idea that somehow God the Father was shocked when Satan and the demons rebelled because He somehow didn't see that coming. Well, if you have that idea, and then you also have this idea that Christ had to somehow qualify to take Satan out of his role. Well, that kind of gives you a paradigm of why He's putting up with Satan for thousands of years prior to the return of Christ. But if that's your logic, well then how do you explain why Satan is released again after a thousand years? If you've endured all of this and you kind of got to having a bad guy and all this evil, kind of stumbled into this and you didn't really see this one coming. But then you're somehow contractually obligated to put up with it. But then you finally get the opportunity to remove him, why in the world would you ever allow him to be released again? That would be insane based upon that logic.

Well, see, if we understand this was the design to begin with, then we understand how all of this really works. Because turn over to Revelation 20. The chapter starts off with a section of scripture that I think we've always looked forward to with great anticipation, and that's the binding of Satan. Satan being removed from afflicting mankind and creating all these evil and all these problems and mankind getting a break from that for a thousand years. Notice here in Revelation 20 in verse 1.

Rev 20:1 *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3) and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."* (NKJV)

Notice, it's a requirement that he be released again. It's not a situation where the guards weren't fully paying attention and oops, he escaped, and the bad guy got out again. That was planned from the beginning for a very specific purpose. Now, as I point this out, as I mentioned growing up in the Church of God most of my life, we always looked forward to this event happening and Satan being bound, which again is something we should look forward to. It'll be a fabulous time for mankind to get a break from that. But what would typically happen is we'd just pretty much ignore the fact that he was released again.

In fact, how we'd typically teach the plan of God is that most everyone called after Christ's return, well, they would just have an easy, comfortable slide in the Kingdom of God because there would be no Satan, and they wouldn't have to overcome that. Well, that just, again, ignores all the requirements for salvation that the New Testament just very clearly lays out. I mean, if you have questions about that, I have sermons on my website and even study papers that they go into explaining this in great detail. But just jump down to verse 7 here, because again, this is the aspect that we oftentimes just try not to look at because again, it's an unpleasant picture. It's the bad guy being released again. This is in verse 7.

Rev 20:7 *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8) and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9) They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."* (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned previously in this sermon, I gave a sermon a few months ago titled "The Lake of Fire" that unpacks the symbolic language in that last statement there at the end of verse 10. Because when you unpack the symbolic language, you realize it's not referring to tormenting Satan and the beast and the false prophet -- who are physical human beings -- of tormenting them for all eternity. That's not what that's referring to. It's symbolic language referring to their permanent destruction.

But what I want you to see here is how the rest of mankind has to overcome Satan as well. And again, I did several sermons for the Feast last year explaining how this concept affects the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day. Those are on my website. There are also study papers that go into that as well. I won't take the time to break all of that down. But what I want you to see in this, we started off with the question of "Did God Create Evil?" And in an indirect sense, you could say yes. And again, by saying that, I'm not saying that He in any way commits sin or wanted people to sin or in any way encourages sin. He very much warns against it and does everything possible to get people to choose righteousness and turn away from sin. That's very much His purpose. With the angels and with us, He's never wanting anyone to sin. But

He obviously built this into the equation by creating free moral agency. Because He understood from the very beginning, even when He created angels, that the very nature of free moral agency would bring about evil. Because you're giving both angelic beings and human beings the opportunity for choice. And there was going to be a group that made the wrong choice. And that was going to bring about evil.

But again, understanding that whole relationship there is important for understanding the whole plan of God. And realizing that the same set of standards and the same requirement for enduring to the end to obtain salvation, the same requirements that we face today are what the rest of mankind will face during the Eighth Day period.

So, brethren, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's understand that God understanding free moral agency and having designed that from the very beginning. He didn't stumble His way into a world where evil exists, not having foreseen what would happen. No, He understood from the very beginning that evil was going to exist. He didn't personally bring it into existence by causing anyone to sin. Or encouraging anyone to sin. He did the exact opposite and tried to get everyone to choose righteousness, but He understood that that would bring evil into existence. And then He harnessed it. As He explains in the book of Job, He took Satan as a servant to utilize him for His purposes. And ultimately, when the whole plan of God is fulfilled, all those who chose the way of sin will face the death penalty and be destroyed. And at that point, all that will exist is righteousness.