

How Can a Loving God Allow
Evil to Exist?

Four Questions That Try Our Faith

- How can a loving God allow evil to exist?
- How can a loving God send anyone to hell?
- Why does a loving God allow me to be tempted?
- Why did a loving God make me this way?

Clarifying The Question

- Can God create a realm where there is no evil, pain, suffering, or misery?
 - 2Peter 3:13 - “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
 - Rev. 7:14-17 - “...These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Clarifying The Question

- If God can create a world without evil, and has prepared a heaven without evil, why didn't He create this world without evil?
- What people are really asking is why didn't God create this world to be perfect and free of evil?
- The right question is why does evil exist in the first place?

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Evil is a consequence of sin
 - Rom. 5:12-18 - “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Message of the prophets: God will bring evil upon those who disobey
 - 2Kings 17:7-23 - "...22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day."
 - Isa. 1:19-20 - "If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Jer. 15:1-9 - "...6 You have forsaken Me, says the LORD, You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am weary of relenting!"
- Amos 2:4-5, 13 - "Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have despised the law of the LORD, And have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, Lies which their fathers followed. 5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem... 13 Behold, I am weighed down by you, As a cart full of sheaves is weighed down."

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Occasionally, people experience evil because of their sin
 - Acts 5:1-11 - Ananias and Sapphira
 - “3 But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit ... You have not lied to men but to God.’ 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.”
 - Acts 13:8-11 - Elymas the sorcerer
 - “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- The sentence of hell is for those who do not believe and obey
 - Matt. 25:31-46 - Dividing those who do good from those who do nothing as shepherd divides sheep from goats

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Rom. 2:5-11 - “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each one according to his deeds: 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- 2Thes. 1:6-9 - “since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Children experience evil as collateral damage, the consequence of sin in the world
 - Rom. 5:14, 18 - “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come... 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Evil is a consequence of free will
 - God has not compelled anyone to follow Him, but gives everyone the choice to obey or disobey
 - Isa. 7:15 - “Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Ez. 18:18-20, 25-28 - “As for his father, Because he cruelly oppressed, Robbed his brother by violence, And did what is not good among his people, Behold, he shall die for his iniquity. 19 Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. 20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself... 25 Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? 26 When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. 27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. 28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- We practice sin and suffer the consequences of evil because of our own free will decisions and the free will decisions of others
- If God acted to remove man's free will, He would cease to be God

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- Powers, civil, military, and economic, currently rule this world
 - 2Cor. 4:3-4 - “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”
 - Eph. 6:12 - “For 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.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- The answer is unknown
 - Job asks why the innocent suffer and is not given an explanation
 - Job 38:4 - “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.”

The Biblically Accurate, But Emotionally Unsatisfying Answers

- The Preacher states that such questions are vain; he sees evil, but finds no explanation for it
 - Ecc. 4:1 - “Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter-On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter.”
 - Ecc. 8:14, 16-17 - “There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity... 16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”

Not Wrong Answers; Wrong Question

- Many are left entirely unsatisfied by these answers; none of them really get to why evil exists in the first place
 - So where is the problem -- the answers or the question?
- Why are we asking the question: “Why does evil exist?”
 - If we obtained a most satisfying answer, would it change anything?
- The mistaken idea is that if we could know why evil exists, we could somehow gain power over it

Not Wrong Answers; Wrong Question

- Evil is too complicated for that
 - Evil is pervasive - Eph. 6:12
 - Evil can't be separated from those who perpetuate it; and we all have, at some point, perpetuated evil - Rom. 3:23
 - If we could eradicate evil, we would have to do away with ourselves
 - Now that evil is in this world, it can never be removed from this world without destroying it

Not Wrong Answers; Wrong Question

- We learn to imitate our Father by bringing good out of evil
 - Death is generally considered an evil, but without death, we cannot eat meat, this world would be vastly overpopulated, people would suffer interminably with the decline of health with age, and we could never leave this world to be with God
 - The very forces that lead to natural disasters also generate life and healthy change; new growth after a forest fire, flood, volcano
 - James 1:2-4 - “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Not Wrong Answers; Wrong Question

- As Solomon said, the question is ultimately flawed and vain
 - No one has yet come up with a compelling, transforming answer
 - Even if such an answer could be found, it does not change the reality of evil and the pain, suffering, and misery it causes
- What purpose is served by the question, other than self torment?
 - Evil is here in this world to stay. Deal with it.
- Instead of asking, why does evil exist, we should ask what is God doing about evil?

God's Answer To Evil

- Matt. 17:5 - “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”
- Rom. 8:32 - “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

God's Answer To Evil

- 1Peter 2:21-24 - “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.”

God's Answer To Evil

- If God were truly able to just will evil away and remain God, would He have consented to see His beloved Son suffer on the cross for sin?
 - Matt. 26:39 - “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’”

God's Answer To Evil

- What did God do about evil? He defeated evil with the cross.
 - 1Cor. 15:20-26 - “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

Making Sense Of It All

- In the end, evil is not something that we can make disappear in this world; instead it must be conquered. We can only conquer evil through Jesus
 - Rev. 12:11 - “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”
 - Acts 14:22 - “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
 - Rom. 8:17 - “and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Making Sense Of It All

- While we may never be able to understand why evil exists, we can find meaning in our suffering, and accept its value
 - 1Peter 1:6-7 - “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 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”

Lessons

- Solomon, the world's wisest man, and Job, the world's most patient sufferer came to the conclusion that we will never know for certain why evil exists in this world
- But we can have all confidence that God acted definitively against evil through the death of Jesus on the cross