

# EVIL IN THE WORLD: "WHY?" (PART 1)

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The presence of evil in the world is vexing: some say that the presence of extensive, pervasive and continuing evil in the world is incompatible with the existence of an Almighty God, Who is love.

The argument is that, if God were all-powerful, He would manifest His love by stamping out evil.

The permanence of evil therefore demonstrates that — although God may be all loving and thus desirous to eliminate evil — He just can't do it, because His power is, after all, somewhat limited.

Or: He indeed has the capability to stamp out evil, but His love is limited and He relishes that evil be visited on folks, whom He wishes to punish or whom He does not love that much, for one reason or another.

The inescapable conclusion is that either God is potent, but not very loving or God is loving, but not very potent. The existence of an Almighty and loving Living God is incompatible with the observable facts.

Logically, the argumentation is quite correct and obviously unassailable.

Spiritually, however, the argumentation is ignorant nonsense, as we shall see shortly and, in fact, it is much worse, as we shall see in Part 2, next month.

Why is it ignorant nonsense?

This God explained, a long time ago, clearly and rather forcefully to Job, who had broached the subject with the Lord, as a personal, rather than universal matter, after God had let Satan afflict Job with all manner of evil:

**Job 1:12a** *Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." [NASB]*

Everything was lost: all belongings, all family and all health: all, but life.

Job was in despair to know why: what were the causes or the reasons for such evil?

**Job 23:3-5** *"Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! 4 I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would learn the words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me." [NASB]*

That was a logical approach: have a hearing with God about the matter and find out what was the problem and why God caused (or allowed) such a great catastrophe.

For many chapters Job repeatedly asked God: "Why?"

That, we would surmise, was reasonable: after all, God Himself deemed Job to be "blameless and upright."

**Job 1:8** *The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." [NASB]*

One might think that Job did not "deserve" such a great evil: even in God's view, Job was a "good" person.

Finally, the Lord — in His mercy — did speak to Job and He did so from a position of full authority: from the whirlwind. However, let us note how God did respond to Job's request for an explanation:

**Job 38:1-4** *Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: 2 "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? 3 Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. 4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much." [NLT]*

It was God, Who used the word "ignorant" with regard to Job's request. God, in effect, said: "Who is such an ignorant person? To Whom do you think you are speaking?"

In more modern terms, we might understand this, as God saying: "Job, who do you think you are, to bring your intellectual exertions to the Living God, the Creator? Spiritually, your argumentations are silly, ignorant and arrogant and so are you."

After four chapters of such chastening by God, Job finally shed his arrogance, repented and gained spiritual understanding:

**Job 42:1-3, 5-6** *Then Job replied to the Lord: 2 "I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. 3 You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I — and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me. .... 5 I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. 6 I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance." [NLT]*

Immediately, as Job repented and understood his arrogance and the foolishness of wanting a justification for God's actions, the Lord restored everything Job had lost.

**Job 42:10b** ..... *the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!* [NLT]

The Lord loved Job all along.

Even today, we do not know why God gave Satan permission to attack Job. What we do know is what, through this trial, Job learned.

Until then Job had only "heard" of God, now he had come to "see God" and to know Him.

We should not guess that this was the reason, nor even that this was one of the reasons.

All we read and know is that the great harm became a great blessing, thus confirming that God's ways are not like our ways.

**Isaiah 55:9** *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* [KJV]

God's ways are higher: not as a mountain may be higher than another mountain or higher than the valley below. His ways are in an altogether different realm, as the heavens are in a different realm than anything on earth.

At times, God does tell us the reason of His actions and then we do know. For example:

**John 3:16** *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."* [NLT]

Hence, if one were to ask: "Why did God send Jesus?" The reason is that "God loved the world so much."

However, when God does not tell us, we do not know. We simply are not equipped to understand, on our own, God's ways of doing things and we should not try.

There is a further confirmation of such a lesson, when we read of how God judged the three friends of Job (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar), who visited him.

The friends not only were interested in why God inflicted such anguished misery on Job, they said they knew the reason and they told Job so. They claimed to justify God's actions by accusing Job of having sinned. Eliphaz told Job:

**Job 22:5** *"Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities."* [NRSV]

However, Eliphaz and the two other friends were very wrong in their efforts of wanting to find a human reason for God's ways.

Therefore, God was very displeased with their sermons; in fact, he was angry for such a misplaced effort:

**Job 42:7** *After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."* [ESV]

God never needs justifications or logical explanations for what He does.

Further, we may note that God never even bothered to engage in the logic of Job's argument, nor with the explanations invented by his friends: God simply ignored all.

God is not interested in logic: God wants not logic from us, but obedience — for our own good.

**Luke 18:17** *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.* [KJV]

We are aware that a little child on earth often does not know why the parents do or say something: the child does not need to know. Rather the little child trusts the parents and obeys them.

The Lord taught Job and teaches us about the foolishness of trying to contrive, on our own, a reason or justification for His actions; rather we are to trust Him and obey Him.

A short paragraph by Oswald Chambers captures the matter concisely:

"My questions arise whenever I cease to obey. When I do obey God, problems come, not between me and God, but as a means to keep my mind examining with amazement the revealed truth of God. But any problem that comes between God and myself is the result of disobedience." [My Utmost for His Highest, Dec 14, Discovery House Publishers]

In Part 2, we shall see that seeking or devising justifications for the Lord's actions is worse than foolish ignorance, because it is rooted in the original sin and it is an expression of it.