



Why Do Bad Things Happen? Part Three: Good vs Evil

If God Is In Charge, Why Do Bad Things Happen?

I must admit that I was not raised in a church that spent a lot of time talking about Satan or spiritual warfare. There was something that happened in that church that impacted my thinking about Satan and the demonic realm which opened my eyes to the devil's work. A middle aged woman in the church used to have seizures at the worship service, often quite debilitating and many times they occurred when the pastor was preaching. They of course put the congregation in a state of chaos for a period of time until she was made comfortable and often brought out of the sanctuary. It was much like a fit and it was disconcerting for someone like me, a teen. She was on anti-seizure medications but although they seemed effective everywhere else, they did not work during our worship services. Several years later after I had been away to college and graduate school, I returned to the church and after hearing her story from a former member of the church, asked Diane if I could meet with her. She said the seizures continued after I left for college and even got worse. Many times the church had prayed for her but it all changed when a particular pastor, as she was in the midst of one of the fits, placed his hands on her and with the congregation all around, prayed for the demon in her to come out from her. She convulsed and said she felt something leave her body immediately. The seizure ended and Diane experienced psychological freedom. For a few months, minor seizures would strike her but nothing like before. Finally, after a few months, the seizures were completely gone. To this day, Diane will tell you that a spiritual force of evil in her was removed when the church prayed over her and the supernatural force that caused her seizures was cast out of her.

In previous messages we have discussed the role of Satan in the Garden of Eden and the presence of evil Satan brings into the world. Now we will turn to what Satan's purpose is and how Satan fits into God's plan. Let's go back in time to before Adam and Eve were created and the hint we have in Scripture of Satan's presence in the distant past. There is an intriguing passage which is debated in scholarly circles. It is in Ezekiel 28 that we find God's prophetic comments on the city state of Tyre and God's judgment upon them and its king. **Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God..."** (Ezekiel 28: 12-13a NIV) Later we read, **You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.** (Ezekiel 28: 14-17 NIV)

Clearly this poetry was given as a condemnation of the King of Tyre and his people. I had for years seen this passage only in this way but after decades looking at it and then considering everything else we know about Satan that is clearly about him, I am certain it also is about the origins of Satan. God uses the metaphor of the king of Tyre and his sin as the way of subtly giving us insight into Satan's early history. Originally, Satan was made perfect and was set apart by God as a guardian cherub. In other words, Satan was a protector against evil, a defender of good. What that entailed we cannot say. Perhaps his original job was to guard Eden, the home of the first humans and that is reasonable but it seems it was more a non-earth responsibility as his punishment for becoming wicked was to be cast down from the mount of God. He was of course a cherub which we cannot say with precision what those beings are. They are spiritual beings, not bound by physical limitations like people. Most importantly though is this matter of wickedness coming into Satan. How did this happen? It is simply stated that it did. There was no tempter for Satan as

far as we can tell because God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. Temptation and sin simply rose up within him. Satan had in himself the capacity, as the guardian cherub to not only be tempted by his own thoughts and considerations but also to fall to that temptation by sinning. That is a quite fascinating consideration when it comes to the Sovereignty of God. Satan had freedom to accept self-initiated temptation and act on it in rebellion against God. Freedom is built within the Sovereign will of God. Satan was free to protect either or both the Garden of Eden and the mountain of God or bring evil into one or both. True good and true evil were each a possibility for Satan as a guardian cherub.

Remember again the place testing has within God's sovereign will. It is the way of maturity. Without testing we cannot reach maturity and it is so for the spiritual realm as well. Perhaps Satan's test was the beauty given him and the intelligence he possessed as well as the grave responsibility of being a guardian cherub. At some point within him the test became his own temptation and he chose wickedness and rebellion against God. Thus the ability to test, which was of God, transformed into the capacity to tempt and rebel chosen in his freedom to live for God or against Him. Revelation tells us what happened next. He took his ability to test and morphed it by the evil within him to tempt a great number of angels. Some think it was as many as a third of them. **And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.** (Revelation 12 :7-9 NIV) The unthinkable took place. Satan led a revolution against God but he was beaten down and cast from heaven. No longer was the holy mountain of God his home.

Thus was initiated not just the war of the worlds, but the war of the universe and it is to this day still taking place. Satan, given by God the ability to test, has corrupted it into the skill to tempt and as John the Apostle makes clear, Satan is going after the entire world to tempt anyone he can. Satan, free to roam the world, set his sight on the great prize, God Himself. Here it seems that Satan thought he had his shot at wrecking God. When the Lord became flesh, and as John puts it, "dwelt among us", Satan had what he thought was the golden opportunity to bring the house of God to destruction. The three famously documented temptations of Jesus as He fasted in the wilderness reveal Satan's plan and how he tried to crush the Kingdom of God. Temptation 1: Turn the stones into bread. **The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."** (Matthew 4: 3 NIV) Satan's strategy was to get Jesus to disconnect from the Father. Rather than relying on Him to provide Jesus food when it was time, Satan wanted Jesus to take off on His own and satisfy His hunger without being in unity with the Father. Temptation 2: Throw yourself off the Temple and force angels to save You. **Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."** (Matthew 4:5-6 NIV) The plan of Satan here was to entice Jesus into pulling the angels to Him and away from the Father. Satan was pushing for Jesus Himself to be a tempter like him, getting the angels to do what was not in the Father's plan. Temptation 3: Worship Satan. **Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."** (Matthew 4: 8-9 NIV) If Satan could just get Jesus to commit Himself to the authority and rule of Satan, the entire universe and beyond would be His to rule.

Satan's last gasp was Good Friday when he entered the mind of Judas and convinced him to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities, bringing on Jesus' death. If God dies, it would be all over. Yet Satan fell right into the trap of the Sovereign Lord. The tempter became the means of salvation. Satan was the tool of God for making all the evil Satan did fall apart and morph into eternal life for the world. Just when it seemed Satan had stolen the crown from God, Jesus died and that day a Savior was unveiled. Never forget that with all the evil Satan does in the world even now, the sovereign will of God remains unyielding. **"For God so**



loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV)