

Where is God? Elie Wiesel wondered desperately from within Auschwitz. He later wrote,

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed, and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Wiesel emerged from Auschwitz a different person, wondering why God had seemed absent during the atrocities of the Holocaust. 'I was angry at God,' he wrote, 'and still am' (Elie Wiesel, *Night*). His struggle echoes the cry of many hearts. If an all-powerful God exists, why is there suffering? Why doesn't He intervene? Or is He just indifferent to our suffering?

There are no easy answers to these difficult questions. But there is a perspective worth considering. A bit of backstory might be helpful when we deal with questions of suffering.

The Problem of Evil

What is evil? Many people view 'survival of the fittest' as an explanation for how humanity has evolved. But this view fails to account for many touching examples of altruism and cooperation. Why do we recoil from the horrors of the Holocaust? If survival is the primary explanation for human existence, it wouldn't make sense to care about morality. But we do.

According to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, the original state of the universe was one of perfection. Every human being was endowed with dignity and worth. But this blueprint was disturbed long ago. The Bible describes a war that took place in heaven. A perfect angel named Lucifer chose to rebel

against God and the selflessness that characterised God's created domain. Lucifer felt that life would be better without the 'restrictions' of God's law, so he introduced anarchy and evil into the universe.

Eventually, he and his angels were evicted from heaven (Revelation 12:7-9), and he began to inject his agenda into human society.

How could evil have developed in a perfect place? Let's pause and reflect: if God created preprogrammed, deterministic robots, that would mean Satan's rebellion was ultimately caused by God. But if God created angels and human beings with true *freedom of choice*, then with that choice comes the possibility of choosing evil. According to the Scriptures, God is interested in a genuine relationship with us, His children. Only true freedom makes this kind of love possible.

God chose not to immediately eradicate the rebellion started by Satan. If He had, other beings would have served Him out of fear, not love. So, God needed to allow time for evil to mature in the universe in order that its truly destructive nature would be revealed to everyone. Only then could He proceed with an adequate, fair, and transparent judgement to deal with the presence of evil once and for all.

A Transparent God

To answer everyone's questions about evil, God designed three separate periods of judgement. You can read about them in the Bible. **The first judgement** is in favour of those who have trusted God, who are cleared of all wrong accusations. They have chosen to receive God's forgiveness and live according to His will (Daniel 7:10). They will be raised at the first resurrection.

The second judgement will take place in heaven during a period of 1,000 years.

The followers of God will be in heaven with Him doing this judgement (Revelation 20:4, 5), while all who chose the path of evil will rest in their graves. The heavenly record books will be opened so that all can be perfectly convinced of God's fairness in judgement. If anyone has a question about why someone *is* or *is not* there, this will be the opportunity for them to know. The books will say it.

The final judgement will take place at the end of this millennium, when those who are evil are raised from the dead. They will be given the opportunity to understand why they are not granted eternal life. They will agree that this consequence is just. It is written: 'Every knee will bow' (Romans 14:11), as they recognise that all God's judgements are 'just and true' (Revelation 15:3). These individuals will not be tormented forever in eternal fire. According to Malachi 4:1, they will be completely consumed, and all evil will be eliminated.

Convinced of God's Love

At last, the problem of evil will be forever solved. The inhabitants of heaven and the restored new earth will never again choose evil because they understand its terrible results. But, above all, they will be convinced of the love of God because He has been completely transparent with them.

We don't have all the answers to every question, and suffering is here to stay, until the end of time. Yet God invites you to trust Him as one who is loving, transparent, and just. Someday soon, everything will be made clear, and we will see all the things as they really are. The promise is for us:

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

The Great Controversy

unveils the cosmic struggle between good and evil affecting our planet.

God will soon put an end to suffering and sin. Read this book to know & get ready for the **end-time events**. (EN / FR / ES / PT)



Interested in a **new perspective** on life's challenges? See our free Bible courses.

In print or online, time-tested courses such as **Discover, Ten Questions for God, The Bible's Teachings** or **Start into life** are available.



www.reflectinghope.org

Powered by AWR.

