

The Bible provides answers to the timeless question, "Why are there suffering, pain, and death in the world?" Scriptures make known that evil in all of its forms is not an equal and opposite reality for the good within the universe. Rather, evil is something foreign, as a cancer, bringing with it separation and ultimately death. Further, Scriptures also establish that there are absolutes in the world, right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, and not mere degrees of these opposites. Though difficult to accept in an era of relativism, where standing for truth is unfashionable, even deemed bigoted; God has established laws, truths, and precepts that are as timeless and unchanging as He is.

It was the departure from these rules, laws, and precepts in the most unlikely place that eventually brought suffering, pain, and death to the earth. The Bible details the moral fall of a once exalted angel, second in glory and honor to God in heaven, before the creation of the earth (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17). This angel, once called Lucifer, meaning "Son of the Morning", though created, and sustained by God, in selfish pride sought to exist independent of his Creator and to overthrow His throne. The **mystery of iniquity**, the moral fall and rebellion of Lucifer, a being created perfect, morally upright, and dwelling in a *perfect environment*, was the catalyst for a war that erupted in heaven and was brought to the earth (2 Thess. 2:7; Revelation 12:7-9). The battle centered on God's unchanging laws, and ultimately God's character. Lucifer argued the uselessness of rules and laws among perfect moral beings, insinuating God to be a

tyrant in His position as Supreme Ruler [for an example of Lucifer's spirit, see Num 16:1-3]. He then argued that a society under his direction would liberate the heavenly hosts. The artful suggestions of Lucifer presented a test of loyalty to the other heavenly beings, who only knew their Creator to be loving and benevolent. The blissful peace once enjoyed by heavenly beings was disrupted by an **alternate perspective**, breeding in many a spirit of discontent by the suggestion that God had duped all of heaven. God's conferring freedom of conscience to all intelligent creatures enabled each to choose a side in Lucifer's contest. Based on their personal knowledge and experience with God, or the unproven promise and desire for a higher existence outside of God and His government, all heavenly beings were to decide their destiny. God permitted the rebellion to foment, while in love pleading with Lucifer and other angels, who in their deception sided with him, to repent of their course, of which they knew not its end. It is God's *selfless love*, called **agápē** [Greek], which would allow Himself to be questioned and rejected. To immediately suppress with force the rebellion and punish the rebels would give an appearance in support of the slanderous claims of Lucifer regarding God's character. Short of allowing a complete rebellion among the heavenly host, God expelled Lucifer and a third of the angels, numbering in the millions, from heaven (Luke 10:18; Rev 12:3, 4, 7-9). That which Lucifer claimed would elevate himself and the rest of the heavenly host caused him and his rebels to be debased, never to be granted the privilege of life

in heaven again, and ultimately condemned to death. Though two-thirds of the angels remained loyal to God, questions remained regarding God's character, and the claims made by the once exalted angel and his rebel host. God Himself was placed on trial by the rebellion, and would endure centuries of maligning by His foe until His character would be vindicated. The selfish claims and prideful spirit behind the rebellion would have to be revealed in their true light to all of creation before God's laws and His character would be restored to their proper beauty.

As God made the angels free moral agents, God bestowed the same privilege upon humankind at their creation. Scriptures declare that mankind was made a little lower than the angels, yet crowned with a glory that angels did not bear (Psalm 8:4-9), namely, humanity was granted dominion over the earth, and the ability to procreate (Gen 1:27, 28; Matt 22:28-30). Humankind, created in the image and likeness of God, so closely resembled their Creator that they immediately became the object of jealousy and hatred for Lucifer, turned Satan, meaning "adversary". God would grant humankind the privilege of helping to vindicate His character, His timeless laws and government, and His truths by permitting them to be tested as the angels of heaven were tested. Only after God had demonstrated His love towards the innocent pair and had given them warning of a looming threat would He permit the test to occur.

Q: What was the purpose of God placing the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* in the Garden? Read Gen 2:8-25.

A: The *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* was one tree among thousands bearing fruit in the Garden of Eden. This tree was no more glorious than any other, however, as a test of loyalty to the perfect couple, God placed a restriction upon it. In this one tree, God permitted the rebel, Satan, to tempt the pair.

Adam's holy and upright character bore no trace of rebellion or sin and therefore, was naturally inclined towards obedience to God. In addition, God gave Adam an equal mate, so that through their combined support they could encourage each other for good. The happy couple's contented life in a perfect world, created for their benefit, was filled with activities and discoveries that would occupy and satisfy their every interest. The daily face-to-face communion with their Father and His holy angels, as well as the entire day of blessings found in God's presence each seventh-day (Sabbath), were the joys they anticipated. God and His angels gave warning of a potential threat in the Garden so that the pair would be vigilant. Within the Garden was placed another tree, the ***Tree of Life***, whose fruit God had empowered to perpetuate health and life to all who partook of it. Adam and Eve would have continued access to the *Tree of Life* provided they successfully passed the one test of love and loyalty to their Father (Genesis 3:22-24).

The Bible describes a day when the woman, Eve, separated herself from her husband, Adam, and was found close to the forbidden tree, the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

Q: What did Eve encounter upon the forbidden tree and what

was its suggestion? Read Genesis 3:1-5.

A: Eve was lured to the forbidden tree by her own curiosity and through the marvel of a talking serpent. God had not vested intelligence, reason, and speech in any other earthly creation outside of humanity and therefore, Eve was captivated by the near perfect deception of Satan (Rev 12:9). Utilizing the serpent as a *medium* for his ruse, Satan spoke to the woman *through* the animal perched upon the forbidden tree. The serpent's words and suggestions, that its wisdom and enlightenment came by way of the forbidden fruit, were intriguing, yet compelling to one of an innocent disposition, never having known trickery or craft.

Q: *What was the serpent's thoughts regarding God's prohibition of fruit from the forbidden tree?*

A: Speaking through the serpent, Satan suggested that if the woman ate of the fruit, she would *"not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"* Genesis 3:4, 5. Satan added to God's words, claiming that one might disobey God's expressed commands and live as a god. More explicitly, one may sin, departing from God, and still have right to the *Tree of Life*; a deadly deception propagated to this day. God's perfect law demands perfect obedience, which was the natural inclination of the couple before sin. Satan then subtracted from God's words and His benevolent character by suggesting that He was withholding good from the pair, knowing their eyes would be opened by eating the forbidden fruit. God is the Father of Lights and dwells in light

and truth, unlike Satan, the father of lies (James 1:17, John 8:44). As the eyes' pupils are opened (dilated) by darkness and contract in light, Satan's suggestion encouraged Eve to pursue a course of darkness, learning evil by rebellion. God's desire for the perfect pair, created in His image and likeness, and thus already like God, was to only know what is good, never evil.

The Bible states that Eve fell to Satan's deception, perceiving that the forbidden tree *"[was] good for food, and that it [was] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make [one] wise"* (Gen 3:5, 1 Tim 2:14). An abundance of food, the indescribable beauty of a perfect world, daily communion with angels and with God was the pair's priceless possession; a gift from their Father that Eve was deceived to believe was insufficient. The spirit of *self-exaltation*, the same spirit of Satan, who sought to rise above his assigned post and even supersede God, overcame Eve. Being tricked into disobedience and eating of the forbidden fruit, Eve immediately became an ally and agent of Satan. Unaware of any change from her rebellion, Eve brought the forbidden fruit for Adam to partake. Adam faced the dilemma of trusting His Father's loving counsels and the warnings given to him by the heavenly angels, or facing the unknown, death, by joining his wife in rebellion. As firstborn of God in the creation, head of the earth and all that was contained within it by order of God, Adam's decision would affect not only humankind, but the fate of all earth's inhabitants.

Scriptures declare that Adam also ate of the forbidden fruit, at which time both his and Eve's eyes were opened to know

good and evil. The fateful decision of Adam, once king of the earth, ushered the entire creation into rebellion against its Creator (Rom 5:12, 8:19-22). The once blissful peace known throughout the earth would be marred by fear and anxiety. Happiness would be challenged through sadness and grief. The unspeakable joy of communing face-to-face with God would be replaced by loneliness and separation by a humanly insurmountable gulf. The blessing of life, given by its Creator, would be spoiled by suffering, pain, and death. **Spiritual Death**, resulting from man's moral fall from God's original glory, caused his once perfect nature, now infested with selfishness to need a Savior (Rom 3:23-26). These are but few of the results of Adam's rebellion and Satan's reveling.

The earth and its inhabitants became the one planet in God's vast universe in rebellion to Him and His government (Matt 18:11-14). It is here that the **Great Controversy**, the contest of Satan against God, would be enacted in the lives of the inhabitants. Satan and his host usurped dominion over the earth, having been forfeited by Adam. The entire creation would be left under Satan's cruel sway were it not for the love (*agápē*) of the Creator! Each page of the Bible chronicles God's plan of intervention, the **Plan of Redemption**. This plan foretells God's acts for redeeming humanity from the condemnation of death; restoring His perfect image in humankind, now marred by sin; eradicating sin from the universe; restoring earth to its former perfection, and its dominion to mankind. Let us embrace **God's wonderful plan by heeding every word of the Bible!**

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The Fall of Humanity

Genesis 2, 3
[Based on Genesis 2, 3:1-7]



Lesson 3