

IS GOD TO BLAME FOR PAIN AND EVIL?

Introduction When we considered the marvels of creation which point to an all-wise and all-powerful Creator (Lesson 1), we called these evidences "The Footprints of God". In this lesson we are going to study the other side of the picture, for the world abounds with "footprints" of a vastly different kind. Consider these examples: Fear; pain; poverty; waste; filth; ugliness; cruelty; accidents; hatred; war; disease; death.

Are these the footprints of God? If not, whose footprints are they? And why are they present in a world that is supposed to be governed by a wise and loving God?

Does the Bible shed any light on these questions? It certainly does. It explains how evil began, why God has permitted evil, and how it will end. The Bible's answer is concentrated in two verses found in the 13th chapter of Matthew.

Verse 28: "An enemy hath done this."

Verse 39: "The enemy is the devil!"

The Bible traces all the evil in the world to a malignant, super-human personality called the Devil, or Satan, who was originally created as a perfect angel, but fell from his high position, and now lives in a state of hardened rebellion against God.

Discussion 1.—THE HISTORY OF SATAN

Here is a brief summary of the Bible's history of Satan:

Lucifer created perfect (Ezek. 28:12-15).

Lucifer's heart lifted up (Ezek. 28:17).

Coveted the throne of God (Isa. 14:12-14).

Lied about God. Deceived angels (John 8:44).

War in Heaven. Lucifer cast out (Rev. 12:7-9).

Invaded this world. Usurped man's kingdom (Gen. 3:1-6; I John 5:19).

Final victory over evil promised (Gen. 3:15).

Satan's doom sealed at Calvary (John 12:31).

Great wrath in last days. Knows he has only a short time (Rev. 12:12).

Arrested and chained for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

Destroyed in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

2.—THE MYSTERY OF SATAN

The mystery of Satan can be summed up in four puzzling questions:

(a) How could a perfect, sinless angel become a devil?

Answer: Lucifer made himself into a devil by the wrong use of his freewill. There was no external tempter. He became his own tempter. Honoured and loved by God and his companions, with every incentive to do right and with no excuse for sinning, Lucifer chose to withdraw his affections from God and focus them upon himself. Little by little, by welcoming these selfish thoughts and repeating these selfish actions, he at length became infatuated with himself. His whole existence became self-centered instead of God-centered. He came to live in one narrow dimension—"I". Thus, by a long succession of selfish choices, Lucifer, the Archangel, debased himself into Satan, the Devil.

(b) Why didn't God make Lucifer without freewill, so that he could not sin?

Answer: God could have made Lucifer without freewill—like a piece of clockwork, a puppet, or a machine. In this case, Lucifer would have been incapable of choosing evil, but he would also have been incapable of choosing good. Voluntary worship and obedience, and the development of character, would have been impossible. God did not want mechanical angels, any more than we would want mechanical children. God wanted beings who could give Him spontaneous, chosen love and affection. This could be possible only among creatures endowed with freewill.