

The Origin Of Evil

by Armin A. Wolff

In any Bible study, do not just believe Armin Wolff or whoever, but be like the Bereans in Acts 17 - read the scriptures carefully, pray for the Holy Spirit to open your understanding of God's word and come to your conclusion on this or any subject. Points raised as questions will hopefully create an incentive for you for further study on your own.

There are some of course who will deny there is such a thing as “evil”. For many, if not most people reading their newspapers, watching television or on the Internet, will agree that there's something in our world that is rightly called “evil”. People who believe the Bible will often say that Satan created evil. Let's see what the Bible really says on the subject.

• **Did Satan “create” evil?**

Did he or does he have a form of destructive de-creative power to bring something to be that wasn't? In his Gospel, the Apostle John addressed the issue of whether evil is merely the absence of good. Speaking of Jesus in terms of light and darkness, he wrote:

John 1:2-5 He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

The word translated overtake here also means overcome, but either way if the darkness John referred to was simply the absence of light, as we know it to be, then by it's very presence the light would have replaced it. Darkness is not an entity or force and can neither understand nor overcome. It always yields to light, returning only when light is withdrawn.

If John was talking merely in terms of physical life and death, as some understand the passage, the same would be true because by definition death is the absence of life. So John had to be speaking in the spiritual sense. The light represents the Lord Jesus, the personification of good. The darkness

that cannot overcome Him represents Satan, the prince of darkness and the personification of evil.

So evil is not simply the absence of good. Did Satan create evil? Again, speaking of Jesus John wrote: *and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being*. Paul confirmed this in his letter to the Colossians.

Col 1:16 For all things were created in Him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through Him and for Him.

If you read these two passages as being all inclusive, then you have to conclude that Satan, who is himself a created being, did not create evil.

• **Where Then Did It Come From?**

So where did evil come from? Ezekiel and Isaiah have the answer.

Ezekiel 28:11-13 And the Word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Son of man, lift up a lament over the king of Tyre, and say to him, So says the Lord Jehovah: You seal the measure, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the turquoise, and the emerald, and gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and of your flutes was prepared in you in the day that you were created.

Through the first 10 verses of chapter 28 Ezekiel had been speaking to Ittobaal, the human ruler of

Tyre, calling him the prince of Tyre. Beginning in verse 11 the Lord had him look past the human figurehead to the power behind the throne, Satan, who Ezekiel addressed as the King of Tyre. Some commentators see the mention of precious stones as representing the fact that Satan was clothed in light. But one fact is clear. Satan was created, confirming what John and Paul said. He was not created to be evil, and in fact was the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezekiel 28:14 You were the anointed cherub that covers, and I had put you in the holy height of God where you were; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Satan's original role was to head up the squadron of Cherubim who guard the Throne of God. Among men, those chosen for the palace guard are considered to be the most loyal, highly skilled, and trustworthy, the finest examples of the King's warriors. As the leader of such a group charged with protecting the Throne of God, Satan would have been among the most admired of all created beings.

Ezekiel 28:15-18 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you. By the multitude of your goods they have filled your midst with violence, and you have sinned. So I cast you profaned from the height of God, and I destroy you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have spoiled your wisdom because of your brightness. I will cast you to the ground; I will put you before kings, that they may behold you. By the host of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trade, you have profaned your holy places; so I brought a fire from your midst; it shall devour you, and I will give you for ashes on the earth, before the eyes of all who see you.

It didn't need to turn out that way, Lucifer was not created to be evil, but like all of us, he had the potential for choosing evil. He was the most

beautiful, wise, and powerful of all God's created beings and became very proud of these things. It was this pride that caused his downfall, and when he was caught, his pride would not let him submit, so he rebelled, thus he became Satan. Isaiah 14:13-14 tells how he set out to elevate himself above the angels, to sit enthroned in the place of God, and become like God.

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will go up to the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will go up above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

In his pride Satan demanded that glory due only to God be redirected toward himself. In doing so he gave us the Biblical definitions of good and evil. Everything that yields to God or glorifies Him is good, and everything that rebels against God or glorifies someone or something else is evil.

God Himself holds this view:

Isaiah 42:8 I am Jehovah; that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images.

Shortly after the Creation, Satan introduced this evil into the world by convincing Adam and Eve to break the only rule God had given them. This seemingly minor act of unbelief with its resulting rebellion caused all of mankind's potential for evil to be greatly magnified and made rebellion man's natural state. Paul called it our sin nature and it turned the Creation upside down. Where Satan had been made as the model of perfection with the potential for choosing evil, mankind would hereafter be predisposed toward evil with the potential for choosing to be made perfect as God had created man to be. Satan had to choose evil. We have to choose good. And what's more Satan no longer had to personally see to every act of evil. By orchestrating that one act of disobedience he had set mankind on a downward spiral that

soon resulted in a state where every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Genesis 6:5 And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

• *Not only behavior*

It's important to recognize that evil is not merely a type of behavior. In fact it's more a function of intent. That makes evil a motivating force behind behavior. It's easy for us to judge behavior that's obviously destructive, cruel, or immoral as being evil. But behavior that outwardly seems to produce much good can still be considered evil in God's sight unless it's undertaken in submission to Him for the purpose of glorifying Him. The end does not justify the means with God. Motives must be pure to make actions pure.

This is something most people do not understand. We think something that looks good or produces a good result must be good. But the Bible is clear. It's the motive energizing our behavior that really counts, no matter how good the result looks to us or to others. Like the Lord said,

Matthew 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruits, nor can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Unrepentant, unregenerate man can never do anything good as far as God is concerned. Until a person is redeemed and justified by the blood of Jesus Christ, that person is totally corrupt, a corrupt tree.

1Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. And then shall each one have praise of God.

So evil is a spiritual power, a motivating force that began with a choice. It originated when a created being demanded to be treated as if he was the Creator and went downhill from there. The consequences of that choice are suffered by each one of us every day. It took the death of God's

own Son to reverse its effect on us, and then only if we choose to allow it. For those who don't allow the regeneration made possible by the cross, God will again say;

Genesis 6:13 And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Last time God wiped out sinful, depraved and violent humanity, he did it with water, drowning the unrepentant like rats. Next time he promised to do it with fire.

2Peter 3:7 But the present heavens and the earth being kept in store by the same Word, are being kept for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

So while you are still here on earth are allowed to choose