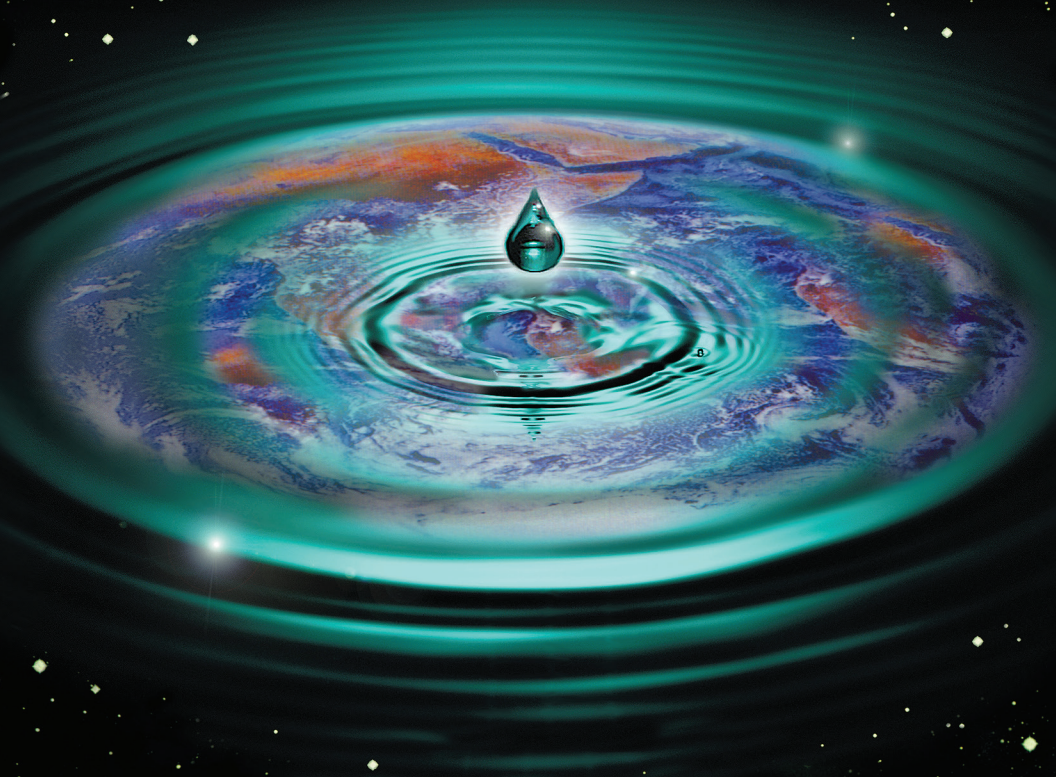


And God Cried

If He shares our suffering...

Why Does God Permit Evil
that causes suffering?



AND GOD CRIED

If He Shares Our Suffering . . .

...why does God permit evil that causes suffering?

INTRODUCTION

The question of “why God permits evil” requires a definition of what evil is. Evil is defined as that which produces unhappiness – anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind. There are a number of categories that evil might be divided into. There is the common enemy of disease, aging and the dying process. There are disasters of nature – hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, extreme heat and cold that afflict many. And there are the evils that human beings bring upon one another – wars, domestic violence and abuse, financial hardship, along with injustice and inequalities.

While all Christians are familiar with the compassion and tears of Jesus, our study of this subject adds another dimension to the question. Evil not only results in human suffering but also in God’s suffering. Genesis 6:6 (NAS) states that “The LORD was sorry... He was grieved in His heart.” Isaiah 63:9 (NAS) tells us, “In all their affliction, He [God] was afflicted.” Yes, when man suffers, our Heavenly Father suffers. Understanding that God can suffer is basic to any discussion of – Why God permits evil.

Over the past centuries Christian theologians have incorrectly taught that God does not/cannot experience suffering.¹ Some, like John Calvin, have gone so far as to state that God is without passion, hence God cannot feel compassion for humanity’s suffering.

This has led some to question – Can an unfeeling God love?

Thankfully we have a simple scripture that demonstrates that God does, in fact, have compassion. We read in Jeremiah 14:17:

“And do you speak to them thus: Let my [God’s] eyes run with tears, day and night let them not cease, for my hapless people has suffered a grievous injury, a very painful wound.” (Tanakh).

This expression – God’s tears – confirms the beautiful insight into God’s loving compassion, elaborated on by a Pastor with insight into God’s plans and purposes.²

The principle taught in the divine Word, that true love weeps with those that weep and rejoices with those that rejoice, is one which is also exemplified in the Divine character.

But God is not man. He is not bound by man’s limitations. God’s ability to suffer does not disturb His peace of mind. His fatherly love that shares the sorrows of His human family contains no anxiety over their eternal welfare. With Divine serenity, His wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all, and, in His serenity, He knows His Divine love and power will attain that goal.

The title of this booklet – **AND GOD CRIED** – is based on Jeremiah 9:9, 10 and 14:17, where God speaks of “weeping and wailing” for His people. Then God said He would shed tears together with His people Judah.

“Shall I not visit them for these things? Says the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are

burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone ... and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”

In these verses we learn that even though God had to punish Israel for their sinful rebellious conduct, to help correct them, yet, He sorrowed with them!

First, this presentation will consider the Scriptures that reveal the tenderness of God’s fatherly love as He shares the sufferings of His children. Then the question – Why does God permit evil? – will be Scripturally answered, demonstrating the eternal benefits of both human suffering and God’s suffering.

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Bible translations are abbreviated as follows:

JPS Jewish Publication Society

KJV King James Version

NAS New American Standard

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

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CHAPTER 1

AND GOD CRIED

*“Let my eyes run with tears,
day and night let them not cease,
for my hapless people
have suffered a grievous injury,
a very painful wound.”
Jeremiah 14:17 (Tanakh)*

PRE-FLOOD (2850-2270 BC). “The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth ... and it grieved Him to His heart” (Gen. 6:5, 6 NRSV). *Yes, God cried.*

EUROPE (AD 1096-1271). During the crusades, Christian soldiers en route to the Holy Land slaughtered Jews herded into their synagogues. Cries of anguish shrilled unto heaven as the wooden structures were torched. *And God cried.*

EUROPE (AD 1184-1799). Christian reformers’ blood flowed freely in Roman Catholic countries as victims of the so-called “Holy” Inquisition totaled in the millions. *And God cried.*

CHRISTIAN WORLD (AD 1450-1850). Over 20 million Black Africans were enslaved and between 2 to 4 million died, while in slave ships yet at sea, during the “Middle Passage” voyage to slave markets run largely by white Christians. *And God Cried.*

EUROPE (1933-1945). Six million Jews were hunted, hounded, driven, butchered, gassed and burned in the Holocaust. *And God cried.*

HIROSHIMA (August 6, 1945). The First of two atomic bombs claimed 129,558 victims and terrified the world. *And God cried.*

THE WORLD (20th Century). Over 175 million were killed as a result of the ruthless government policies of Nazi Germany, Communist Rule (USSR, China Cambodia), etc. *And God cried.*

THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES (21st Century). An estimated 14 million children under the age of five worldwide suffer from severe acute malnutrition, also known as severe wasting, yet only 25 percent of severely malnourished children have access to lifesaving treatment. *And God still cried.*

PLAGUE-LIKE PANDEMIC (2020 – ?). Reminiscent of the plagues of past centuries with millions suffering. It continues to challenge National and World Health Organizations. *And, again, God cries.*

Then there are the personal tragedies of loved ones endured daily by hundreds of thousands — senseless death or mutilation on the highways, babies born physically deformed or mentally deficient and victims of senseless crime. Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other disasters steal the lives of millions in their onslaughts of destruction and deprivation. Psychological tragedies of dysfunctional families, drug addiction and the multitudes of lonely, neurotic, homeless people in turn have left tens of thousands of families emotionally scarred. *And God cries.*

Yes, these statistics fill the daily news, but only when they strike us or our loved ones are we overwhelmed with the pain of tragedy. Every day these statistics have faces — millions of faces of real people shattered emotionally and mentally. The cries of sickness, sorrow, suffering and death encircle the globe. Not one of us can comprehend the enormity of the total sufferings of all humankind. Only God can and does see this humongous picture of human miseries. *And God continues to cry.*

Jeremiah 14:17 assures us even God cries over the tragic loss befalling those who have rebelled against Him. Yes, God does care when we suffer. He is concerned when tragedy strikes. God knows our frame that we are but dust (Psalm 103:14). He realizes the enormity of human suffering could and would cause some to doubt His love, and others to doubt He even exists.

The infinite Creator and God of the universe wants to convey to mere earthlings — frail humanity — His compassion and love for us. How can one so omnipotent communicate His capacity to suffer with finite man? He uses an imagery we can understand — “tears.” Far from being an indication of weakness, God’s imagery of shedding “tears” assures us of a profound fatherly care and concern. Just how deep is God’s fatherly love?

God’s dealing with Israel past, present and future is a microcosm of His relationship with all humankind (Isa. 43 & 44; Rom. 11). A parent might discipline a child by sending the child to his room for the evening. A loving parent feels the pain of the child’s punishment and often recalls the many wonderful times they shared together. Likewise, it hurts God when He chastens His people. Listen to the parental sorrow of God in Jeremiah 6:26. “Thus says the LORD ... O my *poor*

people, put on sackcloth ... for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us” (NRSV). This is incredible. God puts Himself in the picture of sharing Israel’s suffering. This assures us that God chastens in love. He chastens to heal (Isa. 19:22). Listen to a loving Father’s thoughts of nostalgia while He is chastening Israel — a disobedient son.

Like [as pleasing as] grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel, Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season,

I saw your ancestors

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Hosea 9:10; 11:1 (NRSV)

Yet the more God called Israel the more they disobeyed.

The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.

I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

Hosea 11:2-4 (NRSV)

Israel continued to pervert the laws of God and neglect the “fatherless and widows.” Severe punishment was inflicted, but not without its toll on God. God’s heart sank to the

depths of sorrow as he withdrew his loving protection. God exclaimed, “I have given the dearly beloved of my heart into the hand of her enemies.” (Jer. 12:7)

When the punishment came Israel cried, but the Creator and God of the whole Universe cried with them.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts
Call for the mourning women.
And let them . . . take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters.
Jer. 9:17, 18 (KJV)

They were scattered to the ends of the earth. God’s punishment was most severe upon Ephraim, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. But the Creator and God of the Universe was suffering with Ephraim (Jer. 14:17) in this severe chastening of dispersion as noted in His further expressions of nostalgia:

Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me,
A child that is dandled!
Whenever I have turned against him,
My thoughts would dwell on him still.
That is why My heart yearns for him;
I will receive him back in love.
Declares the LORD.
Jer. 31:20, 21 (*Tanakh*)

Even while Ephraim (Israel) was cast off from favor, God in His tender nostalgia spoke of him prophetically as a son who would be received back in love.

How do we know that God’s expressions of fatherly love — a love that felt Israel’s sufferings during her chastening — were true? How do we know God’s nostalgic longings to

restore Israel back to His favor were true? The rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 is the proof. It is a miracle of history. Never before had the polity of a nation been destroyed, its people scattered to the ends of the earth and then regathered nearly 2,000 years later to their ancient homeland to be reborn as a nation. God's fatherly chastening of love will continue to restore the Jewish people to full favor and belief. Yes, God chastens to heal. Israel's gradual restoration is the precursor of all mankind's restoration to God's full love and favor in His Kingdom. In fact, Romans 11:15 states Israel's restoration to Divine favor will mean life from the dead for the whole world.

Oh, what a marvelous God we have! "In our affliction He is afflicted [suffers]" and we are assured God's chastening is rehabilitative, so that His beloved wayward children might be restored to the bosom of His favor. Yes, God chastens to heal (Isa. 63:7-9; 19:22).

YADA

Figuratively, God's tears convey the imagery of a profound fatherly love and concern. God's capacity to experience the sufferings of another is also conveyed in the Hebrew verb *yada* which is sometimes translated "to know" or "knew." *Yada* denotes both an intellectual and emotional act. It is frequently used to note a deep emotional experience between two persons. Therefore, it also means the ability to have a deep sympathetic love – the ability to feel the emotions of another.

In Exodus 3:7, "The LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know [*yada*] their sufferings." (ESV) Here God expresses His ability to feel

Israel's sufferings when they were slaves in Egypt. Psalm 31:7 contains a precious promise all Christians should cherish: "I will rejoice and be glad in Thy lovingkindness, Because Thou hast seen my affliction; Thou hast known [*yada*] the troubles of my soul." (NAS)

Yes, God's sympathy runs so deep that He actually knows, in the sense of feeling, our troubles, sorrows and tragedies. A suffering God puts the question of the permission of evil in a practical perspective. It is no longer an academic question or an abstract philosophy. If God suffers when man suffers, why does God permit suffering? Why does God permit the evil that causes the suffering of humankind? God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:9, 10). The foreknowledge of God adds another dimension to the scope of God's suffering.

If God shares our suffering, why would He conceive a plan that would result in His own suffering? Some believe in God and His tender care for His people, but in their own situation feel God has been too severe — seemingly unjust.

The question is no longer — why *do good* people suffer or why do *innocent children* suffer? Rather, why has God permitted a horrific human history of blood, tragedy, pain and mental anguish that would just tear away at His Fatherly emotions of love?

CHAPTER 2

MANY FEEL GOD IS UNJUST

Perhaps you feel like a modern-day Job — God is unjust; the tragedies of life are too harsh. Although the prophet Job lived nearly 3000 years ago, he echoed the cry of every generation since. Job and his wife were blessed with a loving family of seven sons and three daughters, possessed immense wealth and enjoyed a high rank. Job was considered “the greatest of all men in the East” (Job 1:2, 3).

Then a series of disasters struck. All his children were killed in a storm. His wealth was lost, his possessions destroyed, his devoted employees and servants killed. Physically he was afflicted with painful sores from head to toe. There is an indication that he was suffering from a form of leprosy. When his close friends saw him, they cried aloud at his pitiful condition and excruciating pain. With the heart piercing words, “curse God and die,” his wife deserted him. What else could happen? Job cursed the day he was born (Job 3:1-3). Yet he maintained his faith and trust in God. Even under the onslaught of his supposed comforters, Job asserted:

Though He slay me,
Yet will I trust Him. Job 13:15

But time and continued opposition eventually take their toll. Job's distress mounted with intensity as his comforters continued to distress him with wild incriminations. Now prostrated physically by total pain — mentally by opposition of friends and emotionally by total bereavement over his children — Job turned to God in passionate protest against God's unjust dealing with him.

I cry to you and you do not answer me;
I stand, and you merely look at me.
You have turned *cruel* to me;
with the might of your hand
you *persecute* me.
You lift me up on the wind,
you make me ride on it,
and you toss me about in the
roar of the storm.
I know that you will bring me to death.
Job 30:20-23 (NRSV)

But Job pleaded with God not to ignore his cry for help.

Surely one does not turn against the needy,
when in disaster they cry for help. Job 30:24 (NRSV)

Then he reminded God that he (Job) did not ignore the needs of the poor and those in distress. He spent much of his life caring for the poor and distraught. Would God do less for him?

Did I not weep for those whose day was hard?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor? Verse 25

Although Job didn't ignore the needs of others, he implied that God forsook him to evil and darkness and then ignored his cries for help.

But when I looked for good, evil came;
and when I waited for light, darkness came.

My inward parts are in turmoil, and are never still;
days of affliction come to meet me.

I go about in sunless gloom;

I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. Verses 26-28

Yes, Job himself stood up as an innocent man pleading for justice in an assembly court, but his cries fell on deaf ears.

My skin turns black and falls from me,
and my bones burn with heat.

My lyre is turned to mourning,
and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.

Verses 30, 31

Many feel the same anguish when tragedies devastate them. Seemingly, God does not heed their prayers for help. Like Job they cry — Oh God, where are you?

Job was not an atheist. He was not an agnostic. He was a man of faith. In essence his plea was, Why, oh why, God, do good people suffer? God didn't answer Job directly. Rather, God raised questions about the mysteries of His creation (Job 38-40). These questions were designed to remind Job that he really knew very little about God. Job had limited knowledge in all the diversified areas of God's works. Thus, we should not be surprised that Job failed to comprehend fully why he was permitted to suffer. God's questions revealed the wisdom, power and concern of God demonstrated in all of His creative works.

God asked Job if he was present when God laid the foundation of the earth, or if he understood the laws by which the tides of the sea were controlled. God asked him about the instincts and habits of the various birds and animals, and even of the great monsters of the sea. Then Job was asked if he could explain the wisdom and power represented in these marvels of creation.

As the questioning proceeds, Job answered and said:

Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?
I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken; but I will not answer:
yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. Job 40:4, 5
(KJV)

In Job's expression, "Behold, I am vile," the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "vile" is, according to Prof. Strong,³ literally, "swift, small, sharp." Apparently, Job acknowledged to the LORD that he had spoken too quickly; that his viewpoint was too limited and voiced too sharply.

The LORD replied to Job:

Gird your loins like a man;
I will ask, and you will inform Me.
Would you impugn My justice?
Would you condemn Me that you may be right?
Have you an arm like God's? Verses 7-9 (JPS)

Then the LORD continued to raise questions concerning the wonders of His creation. Three of these questions found in Job 38:31, 32, illustrate the dynamic logic conveyed in God's questions.

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,
or loose the bands of Orion?
Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

Orion

"Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?" (38:31) Garrett P. Serviss, the noted astronomer, in his book, *Curiosities of The Sky*, wrote about the bands of Orion:⁴

At the present time this band consists of an almost perfect straight line, a row of second-magnitude stars

about equally spaced and of the most striking beauty. In the course of time, however, the two right-hand stars, Mintaka and Alnilam, will approach each other and form a naked-eye double; but the third, Alnitak, will drift away eastward so that the band will no longer exist.

In other words, one star is traveling in a certain direction at a certain speed; a second one is traveling in a different direction at a second speed; and the third one is going in a third direction and at a still different speed. Actually, every star in Orion is traveling its own course, independent of all the others. Thus, these stars that we see forming one of the bands of Orion are like three ships out on the high seas that happen to be in line at the present moment, but in the future will be separated by thousands of miles of ocean. In fact, all the stars constituting the constellation of Orion are bound for different ports, and all are journeying to different corners of the universe, so that the bands are being dissolved.

The Pleiades

“Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades ...?” (38:31) Notice the amazing astronomical contrast with the Pleiades. The seven stars of the Pleiades are in reality a grouping of 250 suns. Photographs now reveal that 250 blazing suns in this group are all traveling together in one common direction. Concerning this cluster, Isabel Lewis of the United States Naval Observatory tells us:⁵

Astronomers have identified 250 stars as actual members of this group, all sharing a common motion and drifting in space in the same direction.

Elsewhere, Lewis speaks of them as “journeying onward together through the immensity of space.”

From Lick Observatory came this statement of Dr. Robert J. Trumpler:⁶

Over 25,000 individual measures of the Pleiades stars are now available, and their study led to the important discovery that the whole cluster is moving in a southeasterly direction. The Pleiades stars may thus be compared to a swarm of birds, flying together to a distant goal. This leaves no doubt that the Pleiades are not a temporary or accidental agglomeration of stars, but a system in which the stars are bound together by a close kinship.

Dr. Trumpler said that all this led to an important discovery. Without any reference whatsoever to the Book of Job, he announced to the world that these discoveries prove that the stars in the Pleiades are all bound together and are flying together like a flock of birds as they journey to their distant goal. That is exactly what God said. “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?” In other words, Canst thou keep them bound together so that they remain as a family of suns?

Incredible! God’s laws of cosmology are loosing or dissolving the constellation Orion. Sometime in the far distant future, Orion will be no more. Conversely, wonder of wonders, every last one of the 250 blazing suns in the Pleiades are ordained of God to orbit together in their symmetrical beauty throughout eternity.

Arcturus

“Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?” (38:32) Garrett P. Serviss wrote:⁷

Arcturus, one of the greatest suns in the universe, is a runaway whose speed of flight is 257 miles per second. Arcturus, we have every reason to believe, possesses thousands of times the mass of our sun. Think of it! Our sun is traveling only 12½ miles a second, but Arcturus is traveling 257 miles a second. Think then of the prodigious momentum this motion implies.

A further observation of Arcturus by Serviss:⁸

It could be turned into a new course by a close approach to a great sun, but it could only be stopped by collision head on with a body of enormous mass. Barring such accidents, it must, as far as we can see, keep on until it has traversed our stellar system, whence it may escape and pass out into space beyond to join perhaps one of those other island universes of which we have spoken.

Charles J. Burckhalter, of the Chabot Observatory, added an interesting note regarding this great sun:⁹

This high velocity places Arcturus in that very small class of stars that apparently are a law unto themselves. He is an outsider, a visitor, a stranger within the gates; to speak plainly, Arcturus is a runaway. Newton gives the velocity of a star under control as not more than 25 miles a second, and Arcturus is going 257 miles a second. Therefore, combined attraction of all the stars we know cannot stop him or even turn him in his path.

When Mr. Burckhalter had his attention called to this text in the book of Job, he studied it in the light of modern discovery and made a statement that has attracted worldwide attention:¹⁰

The study of the Book of Job and its comparison with the latest scientific discoveries has brought me to the matured conviction that the Bible is an inspired book and was written by the One who made the stars.

The wonders of God's universe never cease to amaze us. Arcturus and his sons are individual runaway suns that seem to be out of orbit in our galaxy. Traveling at such immense speeds, why don't they crash with other suns or planets? Where are they headed? Only God knows. Indeed they are not runaways. They will not crash. Why? God is guiding them.

The Lesson of the Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus

Few have suffered the multiple tragedies of Job. How could God reach through the enormity of Job's self-pity? (Job thought God just didn't care.) In these three questions (Job 38:31, 32) God is in reality saying:

Job, you think I am not concerned about your suffering. Well, let Me ask you these questions. Can you loose the bands of Orion? No, you cannot. But My Divine power will — some day Orion will no longer exist. Job, can you bind the 250 stars of the Pleiades together in their symmetry of beauty and not have a single one drift off? Only I have this power and wisdom. Can you prevent the runaways — Arcturus and his sons — from colliding as they go dashing out of the Milky Way? No, only My Divine power and wisdom can.

Job, if I am caring for the details of the universe, do you doubt that I not only care for the details of your life but I have the ability to solve your problems?

Trust that there is a good reason I am permitting these tragedies. Remember, Job, I work from the perspective of your eternal welfare.

What an awesome way God chose to tell Job that He was in full control of human affairs, including Job's life! When God finished His series of questions, Job exclaimed:

I know that thou canst do everything,
and that no thought can be withholden from thee.
Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that I understood not;
things too wonderful for me, which I knew not . . .
I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:
but now mine eye seeth thee. Job 42:2-5

Job finally learned the meaning of his severe trial. He learned that its loving purpose was to give him a clearer understanding of God, that he might serve him more faithfully and with greater appreciation. He speaks of this clearer understanding as “seeing” the Lord, instead of merely having heard about him. Since he had gained such deep insights of God, Job's brief period of suffering was a most valuable experience.

Besides restoring Job's health, “the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12-15).

The Lesson of Job for Us

Perhaps like Job in utter misery, you have cried out to God — even questioning his justice. Some write off the history of Job as Old Testament folklore. Whoever heard of God talking to a man! These are hand-me-down tales! However, the account of Job cannot be gainsaid. Whatever the method of communication used by God, the astonishing facts cannot be refuted. These scientific facts recorded

in the book of Job concerning the Pleiades, Orion and Arcturus anticipated scientific discovery by nearly 3000 years. Scientists only discovered these startling facts in our 20th Century, yet they were recorded in the book of Job nearly 3000 years ago. What an awesome confirmation of the Bible! Who can doubt the Bible is the inspired word of God? Yes, the book of Job has a powerful, exclusive lesson for 20th Century man. Twentieth Century science proves God's Word, the Bible, is true. The Bible does contain the answer to why God permits evil.

Honest Doubt

Job 2:10 states: "In all of this Job sinned not with his lips." How does this harmonize with chapter 42 where Job accused God of being unjust? Where there are facts, there can be no doubts. But our relationship with God is by faith, not facts — "according to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Where there is faith, there is room for doubt. Through trials and adversities (1 Peter 1:7) the man of God must develop a mature faith, "a full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). We watched the drama of Job's struggles to a mature faith. An immature faith has doubts. Job had doubts, but they were not sins, because he didn't try to inflict his doubts upon others. While doubting, he lacked trust, but still had belief in God. So he took his doubts where a man of God must take his doubts — to his God. And God dramatically answered Job's doubts and developed in him a full assurance of faith.

We will have doubts in our journey to maturity. At such times we must copy the examples of Job, Jeremiah, David and John the Baptist, and take our doubts to the Lord in prayer. If our heart is sincere, God will answer our doubts. He will speak to us. And He speaks to 21st Century people through His Word, the Bible. In God's providence the book of Job

was especially written for 21st Century people. Much of the scientific probing of chapters 38 through 41 can only be fully understood in the light of modern scientific discovery. God in his foreknowledge knew the cunning deceptions of human philosophy and sophistry would reach their zenith as a challenge to faith in the “last days” of the Christian Age (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). In arrogance, modern humankind dares challenge the very existence of God. As will be seen in the following chapter, this debate between them is a part of the many vital lessons humankind is learning during God’s permission of evil.

How do we know there is a God? Where do we find the answer to — Why does God permit evil and suffering? In the book of Job God is telling us:

Just as I answered Job’s questions and doubts, I can answer your questions and doubts. My answer is found in My Word, the Bible. How do you know the Bible is My inspired Word? Many of the startling scientific facts I caused to be recorded in the book of Job nearly 3000 years ago were only discovered in the 20th Century. This is My assurance to you that the Bible is inspired. Thus, it provides a logical faith and hope-inspiring answer to modern man’s question — Why does God permit evil?

CHAPTER 3

WHY GOD PERMITS EVIL

A suffering God puts the question of the permission of evil in a practical perspective. If God shares our suffering, why would He conceive a plan that would result in His own suffering? Remember our definition of evil — anything that causes unhappiness or suffering. To fully understand why God permits evil, we must go back in time before man’s creation on the earth, *before* the mountains rose majestically over plains, *before* the millions of galaxies sparkled in orbit throughout the universe, *before* the angels graced the heavens, *back, back to when God dwelt alone.*

God desired to have a family, to be a parent — a father or life-giver — the Heavenly Father. All things were created by and for God’s pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Evidently angelic children and human children were the desire of His heart. Ephesians 3:14, 15 speaks of God as the Father of “the whole family in heaven and earth.”

Raising children entails suffering — both the suffering of the parents and the offspring. How much suffering does parental love demand? The most loving parents are not overly protective; rather, they are willing to permit hard knocks, realizing it will cost themselves dearly in pain as they watch their children struggle to maturity. Our Heavenly Father, the most loving and wise parent in the universe, is willing to suffer to the ultimate degree for the eternal welfare of His

children. How could a blessed paradise, a utopia, be attained for His children?

God desires mankind to live in peace, harmony and happiness. He knows this will happen only as each practices the principles of righteousness and love. Otherwise, evil will result with its consequences of suffering and unhappiness. Here we glean an insight into what may be referred to as the “dilemma of God.” The planetary systems move in mechanical obedience. The animal creation is driven mainly by instinct. But God desired the human race to have free will and “worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). God could have programmed the ideal man — utopia would have been inevitable; but man would be no better than a robot, without true happiness. God knows it is only as man is fully motivated by the principles of righteousness, that he can really attain happiness for himself and be in that attitude of cheerful concern for the happiness of his fellows. This is the true meaning of worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.”

Free will has a built-in dilemma. Man can rebel against his Creator. The Lord was willing to bestow free will, fully aware that it would cost Him dearly before man became fully responsible to this freedom. And what an awesome power! Man can stand in stiff-necked rebellion against his Creator. He can refuse to submit to His authority. He can refuse to accept His favor. He can choose to avert the mercy of God and adamantly stand upon his decision against God. For by free will, man is man — created in the image of God and neither a mere animal nor a machine.

Put yourself in God’s place to appreciate this dilemma. A parent will tell a baby not to touch the stove because it is hot, but what does a baby know about pain? The anxious parent knows the inevitability of the baby touching the

stove before learning the consequence of heat. A wise parent will create a controlled experience with heat — lightly and quickly placing the child’s hand where the heat is not too severe. All through life, parents will admonish their children, knowing that they will only learn certain lessons the “hard way” — by experience. Likewise, God is giving mankind a controlled experience with sin.

As our Father, God knew man would not comprehend His warning about sin — disobedience — and its dire consequences. So, God formulated a plan whereby man, by his own choice, might first experience evil and then righteousness (in God’s kingdom). This contrasting experience will manifest — as no other educational process could — the wholesome influence of God’s law and the dire consequences of its violation.

The process of recovery from sin is called redemption in the Bible. Redemption simply means the release from sin and death through the payment of a price. The thought is similar to the release of a person from prison when a benefactor pays the fine the prisoner couldn’t afford to pay. This release through the death of Jesus is generally considered as an afterthought of God, to salvage some of the human race. However, the depth of God’s wisdom is shown in His foresight to devise a plan that provides for man’s free choice and experience with evil, redemption through Christ and then ultimate eternal happiness. Thus Isaiah 46:9, 10 speaks of God knowing and declaring the end from the beginning.

The Blessings of Eden

God created Adam and Eve and established them in Eden — a perfect paradise. There they enjoyed a perfect home. Eden provided an abundance of food containing all the wholesome

nutrients to sustain their perfect life. Adam was given dominion over the whole earth and all the animals therein. The crowning feature of this experience was Adam's close fellowship with his Creator and God (Gen. 1 & 2).

The third chapter of Genesis details the history of man's free will choice. God instructed man that if he practiced righteousness, he would live forever. If he disobeyed, then "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17, margin). Death would be a process of sorrow and suffering culminating with the grave. Note well that death, not eternal torment, is the penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4). Like the child and the hot stove, Adam did not know what suffering and death would mean. These were mere words to him. By information he knew that his disobedience would lead to his own death. No matter how many times God reiterated "dying thou shalt die," these were only words devoid of meaning. Adam never saw death. The dying scenario was never played out. Adam could not look down through the corridors of time and visualize all the suffering and death that would be brought about by human sin and selfishness, all of which would have their beginnings in his own disobedience.

Let's set aside his eating of the fruit for a moment and focus on the principle. Something far weightier was involved here. Adam of his own free will chose not to continue in the fellowship of God. This important detail is recorded in Genesis 3:8.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [breeze] of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

This account indicates that a very familiar routine had developed between the Heavenly Father and our first parents. “They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool (Heb. Breeze) of the day.” Evidently, God spoke to Adam frequently, perhaps daily — “in the breeze of the day.” A familiar pattern developed by which they knew when God was approaching. Now that he had disobeyed, Adam heard God approaching to fellowship with them and knew the consequences of his actions. By his disobedience, Adam realized he had willfully chosen to withdraw from God’s fellowship; therefore, he hid from the presence of God. Notice that even before God cut off fellowship with him Adam hid or withdrew from fellowship with his Heavenly Father.

A Fully Responsible Choice

Ponder well Adam’s choice. Just think, Adam enjoyed perfect communion and fellowship with the Heavenly Father. Communion with his Creator was not just a momentary experience. Some teach that from Adam’s creation to his disobedience was a short time — a few minutes or a few hours at the most. No wonder many are repelled by the absurdity that a momentary decision by a just-created Adam could plunge the human race to long millennia of horrific tragedies. The record in Genesis 2:7-9, 15-23, allows for a much longer period of time. It elaborates on the events that occurred between Adam’s creation and Eve’s.

God planted a garden in Eden and put Adam in it. Adam, after receiving instructions from God, worked in the caring of the garden. This took time. There was extensive communication pertaining to things Adam could and could not do. Then

Adam was instructed to name all the birds and all of the living creatures. This took time. And, during this time of extensive responsibility in caring for all the plants and naming all the animals, Adam enjoyed communion with God. Then Eve was created and became the wife of Adam. Now Adam had time to spend with his wife and enjoy her companionship. All of these events covered a period of time. (Reasoning on other scriptures indicates a period of two years.)

In his talks with God in the “cool of the day,” Adam should have realized there was something vastly different about his God compared to himself and Eve. He was such a loving Father. God not only practiced benevolence, kindness, love, justice and mercy, but God also loved these qualities. They were the very core of His being. He loved them so much that He wanted to exercise them in every relationship with His creatures. This was the “spirit” or “essence” of God’s holy principles which He wanted to crystallize in the human heart. If God had programmed these qualities into man’s heart, man would have been a mere robot, devoid of fulfillment and happiness. But in order for mankind to live eternally in peace, harmony and happiness with each other, they must have these qualities perfected in their heart. The only way this moral crystallization of God’s likeness could have been developed by Adam, would be by Adam choosing (free will) to maintain close fellowship with his God and daily choosing to learn and practice — obey all of God’s holy principles. God was the epitome of holiness and wholesome benevolence. Due to a lack of experience, Eve chose the way of self-interest, selfishness. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:13, 14, Eve was not fully responsible, but Adam was. Adam was faced with a choice between loyalty to God and His benevolent ways or loyalty to Eve and her ways of self-interest.

Over time, Adam's love for Eve grew. Adam not only disobeyed God but chose love for Eve above his love for and obedience to his Creator. He loved Eve more than he loved God. Man had to learn this basic principle. It is only as he loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind, that man will be enabled to love his neighbor (fellowman) as himself.

Educational Process Changed

The crystallization of God-likeness in man ended, but only temporarily. Before God pronounced the death sentence, withdrew His fellowship and expelled the first pair from Eden, He did a remarkable thing. God slew an animal and clothed Adam and Eve with its skins. What a ray of hope! This pointed to the shedding of Jesus' blood that would cover the sins of Adam and all his children who would be born in sin — inherited from father Adam. "As in Adam all die ... so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22) in God's Kingdom. Then they will individually be given the opportunity to crystallize God-likeness in their hearts. Meanwhile, the educational process has changed. Adam and his descendants would first learn the bitter consequences of sin — disobedience to God's law (Eccl.1:13; 3:10). Man would reap the dire results of the ways of selfishness which Adam chose when he cast his lot with Eve and her ways.

God's Foreknowledge

Because of Adam's lack of experience, God knew he would disobey. Therefore, before God even created the earth and man, He planned for man's redemption. Revelation 13:8 speaks of Jesus as "slain before the foundation of

the world.” From eternity God lovingly planned the best for His future human children. This meant a Plan that would deeply grieve His fatherly heart as He watched man trampled down into death by the machinations of evil while learning the consequences of sin. Further, man’s highest interests required a Plan that would cost God’s fatherly love the ultimate in suffering — watching His only begotten son suffer the agony of being vilified and crucified. Only profound love would conceive and pursue such a Plan. The foreknowledge of God’s own suffering proves that the permission of evil is a necessary experience for man’s eternal welfare. God’s gift of Jesus was the greatest demonstration of fatherly suffering in history. Pastor Russell caught the degree of this suffering love when he wrote:¹¹

Ah, did the Father let him go on that errand of mercy without the slightest sensation of sorrowful emotion? Had he no appreciation of the pangs of a father’s love when the arrows of death pierced the heart of his beloved Son? When our dear Lord said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” (Matt. 26:38) did it touch no sympathetic chord in the heart of the Eternal? Yea, verily the unfeigned love of the Father sympathetically shared the Lord’s sorrow. The principle taught in the Divine Word, that true love weeps with those that weep and rejoices with those that rejoice, is one which is also exemplified in the divine character. God could and did sacrifice at great cost to his loving, fatherly nature, the dearest treasure of his heart and thus he manifested (1 John 4:9) the great love wherewith he loved his deceived and fallen creatures.

The Consequences of Sin

Sin literally means, “missing the mark” — disobedience to God’s principles. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, God withdrew His fellowship. This was devastating! Alienated from God, man became alienated from his human companions. Rivalry and jealousy raged, and soon murder shattered the first family. Loneliness, stress and depression overwhelmed them rendering both mind and body prone to disease. The latest scientific research confirms the Biblical account of man’s “fall” into sin. Mental distress does disease the body and mind. The dying process had begun, and thus man is out of harmony with himself and struggles within himself. This adds to his mental anxiety. Fear, hostility and aggression became the norm. Exploitation, crime and violence were the inevitable consequences. Man was learning the dreadful consequences of sin and its resultant evils. Yes, Adam’s children, the human race, were born sinners (Psalm 51:5) worthy of death (Rom. 6:23). This is “the sore travail God hath given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith” (Eccl. 1:13; 3:10).

After Adam and Eve disobeyed, they were cast out of their Edenic paradise into the unfinished earth, where the components of nature were yet unbalanced. Man is learning by experience that death is the bitter consequence of sin and evil. Yes, disease, another natural consequence of sin and imperfection, has taken its ravaging toll. Natural disasters, too, take their toll, but frequently selfishness is the cause. Man’s greed for industrial profit created the pollution that burned the hole in the ozone layer. This has accelerated and accentuated the scope of nature’s catastrophes. More vicious than this, man’s inhumanity to man has resulted in the slaughter of billions. Man’s greed enslaved and

exploited his fellowman, resulting in hunger, pestilence and human depravity of every form.

Remember the illustration of the parent (p.9) who disciplined his child by sending him to his room for the evening while still having loving thoughts of their continual relationship. God has restricted His human children to their room — the unfinished earth. In their “affliction He was afflicted” and yet He has wonderful loving thoughts — recorded in the Bible prophecies — concerning their restoration to His favor. Yes, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:22 — “as in Adam all die” but he continues, “so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Why? Because Jesus died “a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6 and Heb. 2:9).

Original Sin

Some will say, “Don’t tell me you still believe in original sin! Just because Adam and Eve were disobedient, the whole human race are sinners?” In 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22; Romans 5:14; and John 8:44, both Jesus and the apostles refer to this event in Eden as an actual historical event. What better proof can we have that the Genesis account of Eden occurred? Unfortunately, the logic of the original sin concept has been obscured by Dark Age superstitions that have been attached to it, such as “hell fire” and a vindictive God who must be placated. Modern people are rightly repelled by the superstitions contained in some church theology, but these superstitions are not taught in the Bible. Shorn of Dark Age theology, there is no better explanation of our miserable plight than the Scriptural teaching of original sin and its penalty, death — extinction, not eternal suffering.

CHAPTER 4

ANOTHER LOOK AT SIN

During the first part of the 20th Century, sin was treated lightly. It was called “ignorance,” only a growing pain of the human race. The prevailing theory then was to give man a bit more education, let him become a little more civilized and he will evolve out of his sin, leaving evil behind him. But now we are not so sure. We refer to the heinous events of World War II (75 million murdered, cities leveled, deliberate genocide), followed by the continuing senseless acceleration of war, crime and violence. The 20th Century’s senseless killings, racial abuses, human trafficking, and women and children being molested have continued into the 21st Century. Those and other immoralities have forced man to take a second look at the problem of sin and evil.

A fresh look at sin is pointedly stated in the words of Dr. Cyril E. M. Joad, who was a noted Professor of Philosophy and Psychology at the University of London, and listed by the editor of *The American Weekly* as one of the world’s great scientists.¹² Joad said:¹³

For years my name regularly appeared with H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, and Aldous Huxley as a derider of religion Then came the war, and the existence of evil made its impact upon me as a

positive and obtrusive fact. The war opened my eyes to the impossibility of writing off what I had better call man's "sinfulness" as a mere by-product of circumstance. The evil in man was due, I was taught, either to economic circumstance (because people were poor, their habits were squalid, their tastes undeveloped, their passions untamed) or to psychological circumstances. For were not psychoanalysts telling me that all the regressive, aggressive, or inhibited tendencies of human nature were due to the unfortunate psychological environment of one's early childhood?

The implications are obvious; remove the circumstances, entrust children to psycho-analyzed nurses and teachers, and virtue would reign.

I have come flatly to disbelieve all this. I see now that evil is endemic in man, and that the Christian doctrine of original sin expresses a deep and essential insight into human nature.

As Dr. Joad, we must take another look at evil. It can no longer be considered a growing pain. It is too deadly a disease to be explained away by environment. Standing in the 21st Century and looking back, the sad history of the 20th century confirms that Dr. Joad was right.

In his book *Out of Control*, written in 1993, Zbigniew Brzezinski (former National Security Advisor and professor of American Foreign Policy at John Hopkins University) notes that the 20th Century began amid great hope and promise. But it became the century of insanity. In elaborating on his observation of 175 million slaughtered in the name of the "politics of organized insanity," he says:

Contrary to its promise, the 20th Century became mankind's most bloody and hateful century of hallucinatory politics and of monstrous killings. Cruelty was institutionalized to an unprecedented degree; lethality was organized on a mass production basis. The contrast between the scientific potential for good and the political evil that was actually unleashed is shocking. Never before in history was killing so globally pervasive, never before did it consume so many lives, never before was human annihilation pursued with such concentration of sustained effort on behalf of such arrogantly irrational goals.

Dr. Joad is right. Sin is not just ignorance — a temporary experience in man's evolution. Evil is a basic flaw in human character that can only be explained by the Biblical account of original sin.

Speaking collectively of the human race, the Psalmist said, "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 says, "By one man sin entered the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Since father Adam sinned, justice required that he die. Before he died, Adam had children who were born in sin — they inherited Adam's imperfections. Thus, the whole human race is born dying. This is how it is learning the consequences of evil. However, the permission of evil is a brief controlled experience when compared with eternity. What are some of the grim lessons? God permits evil to demonstrate that man without God results in:

Possible extinction through the science which created the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons;

Affluence that spends about 100 billion dollars a year in the world for pet food and pet care, while 9 million humans starve to death;

Religious institutions whose assets total 1.2 trillion dollars, while more than 85 million people live in poverty;

Technology and its deadly tentacles of pollution encircling the globe, giant gyre of garbage floating in the pacific twice the size of Texas and micro plastics already in human bodies;

Towering cities with their concrete honeycomb buildings, filled with lonely, faceless people, often experiencing a hopeless struggle — lacking opportunity.

God has allowed evil to reveal that man's existence without Him can only result in man's inhumanity to man.

The Problem of Communication

In our era of permissiveness, the justice of God seems to be an offense to the rationalist. Perhaps the problem is one of communication, which can be shown in the simple illustration of an argument. All of us at some time have been engaged in an argument in which we really never objectively listened to the other party. We were too busy thinking up our answers to hear their logic. Similarly, the rationalist is carrying on a debate with God. If he would only stop and listen to what God has explained in the historic account of Eden (Genesis 3), he would catch a glimpse of the wisdom and justice of God that guarantees man's eternal happiness in due time.

Is God's Justice Severe?

Some question the severity of God's justice in the death penalty. Could not a penalty other than death have been a just recompense for Adam's disobedience? No doubt, another penalty might have also been just. However, God chose this penalty because it is the wisest and thus best suited His overall plan for mankind. Once Adam was informed that death was the penalty for disobedience, then the penalty was fair.

A basic fact to always remember is that God in His foreknowledge knew Adam would disobey. Therefore, long before the creation of Adam, God's wisdom devised a Plan of recovery and ultimate benefit for the human race, but a Plan that would require the death of His only begotten Son.

Reading 1 Peter 1:19, 20, and Ephesians 1:4-7, we learn that the blood of Christ was foreordained for the redemption of mankind before the world began. The Creator used man's experience in Eden to demonstrate the dependability of His justice. It is vital for man to know that "justice and judgment [just decisions] are the habitation of thy [God's] throne" (Psalms 89:14). Justice is the foundation of the government of the universe, the basis of all God's dealings. Judgment is also spoken of as part of this foundation. The Hebrew here means "a just decision." We can take comfort in the realization that throughout eternity all of God's decisions will be just.

Man was placed in the Edenic paradise to thoroughly enjoy the love of God. Suppose that after Adam and Eve had lived obediently for a while, God changed His mind and expelled them from the garden condition into the thorns and thistles of the unfinished earth. His love would be worthless, whimsical, because it was not based on justice. It would be changeable.

Another hypothetical situation: If when Adam disobeyed, God said, “Oh, I will overlook your disobedience this time, I will not punish you as I promised to do.” Adam might say, “Wonderful! I am surely glad God is more loving than just.”

Wonderful? No! This, too, would have been whimsical, capricious, arbitrary. The Creator and Ruler of the whole universe could never be trusted throughout eternity. At any time, in any place, with any order of intelligent creatures, God might at the slightest whim change His mind and turn on His creatures. Eden proved the unchangeableness of God’s justice. Thus, God declares in Malachi 3:6, “I am Jehovah, I change not.” And James 1:17 states, “The Father of lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

How unchangeable is God’s justice? It is so unyielding that God’s court of justice required the payment of the costliest fine ever stipulated in a court of law. What judge has been willing to give up his own innocent son to death in order to cancel the criminal debt of the defendant?

Another Problem of Communication

Our Creator wants us to know the depths of His love — that He is the most loving Being in the universe. But how can God communicate this to our finite minds? In human relationships words of love can be quite meaningless. Actions speak louder than words. How did God show His love? With tender fatherly emotions of sorrow, God took the dearest treasure of His heart — His only begotten Son — and sent him to earth to suffer and die at the hands of man. At great cost to Himself, the wisdom of God formulated a Plan which reveals that He is both just (unyielding justice) and the justifier (benefactor) of mankind (Rom. 3:25, 26).

The events of Eden and Calvary reveal so much about our God. Calvary is the greatest manifestation of love and mercy in the history of the universe. The combination of Eden and Calvary stand as a pledge throughout eternity that there “is no variableness, nor shadow of turning” in God’s justice (James 1:17).

Natural Calamities

Many natural calamities are not a question of “Where is God?” or “What’s wrong with God?”— rather, “What’s wrong with man?” Take for example, the train of catastrophes around the world spawned by El Niño. A monster El Niño could not exist without a large hole in the ozone layer. There would be no hole in the ozone layer without pollution. From whence came pollution? It came from diverse sources that are all rooted in man’s greed for profit. Many natural disasters find their cause in global warming — the mischief of ultra-violet rays escaping through this hole in the ozone layer as well as the abundance of hydrocarbons (CFCs).

Is this a new idea? It was at the end of the 19th Century. In 1896 the Swedish Scientist Svante Arrhenius published a *new idea*. As humanity burned fossil fuels such as coal, which added carbon dioxide gas to the Earth’s atmosphere, we would raise the planet’s average temperature. In the 21st Century Scientists believe that earth’s billions are running out of time to resolve global catastrophe.

The extreme toll of human life accompanying other natural catastrophes have often been aggravated by man’s selfishness. Tens of thousands of lives have been taken by earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis, floods, mudslides and forest fires. Earthquake casualties were largely due to

shoddy construction of high-rise apartments over a well-known fault area. Again, illustrating human callousness and greed. Californians dwelling over a huge fault area are hoping it won't happen in their lifetime. When the "Big One" does strike, you will hear the cry, "Where is God?" But the cause will be man's gamble and loss — not God's.

Man has long observed and recorded the patterns of natural calamities such as floods, monsoons, hurricanes, etc., yet frequently he chooses not to respect the danger of these killer patterns. It's well documented that certain rivers will periodically — every 10, 15, 25 or 50 years — swell over their banks into an ocean of destruction. Yet thousands continue to rebuild in the path of the inevitable ruin. Hurricane paths have temporarily obliterated shorelines and coastal isles. Still, the vanity quest for the ultimate in ocean front luxury and prestige continues to provide a path of future victims.

Some disasters could have been eliminated or minimized if the recommendations of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had been followed. Yes, the killer force of natural catastrophes spirals numerically — thanks to human selfishness and greed. This is one of the many lessons we are learning from the permission of evil.

Another observation must be made on the destructive forces of nature (an earthquake and tsunami in 1755 took 60,000 lives in Lisbon, Portugal). Since the days of Voltaire (1790s), atheists and agnostics always seized on nature's catastrophes to loud-mouth, "Where is God?" What a distortion of proportions! Numerically, the victims of natural disasters pale into insignificance compared to man's inhumanity to man. Actually, these atheists and agnostics need the lessons of the permission of evil to explode their naive view of evil. At the close of the 19th Century, they were predicting

that Darwinism and social evolution would usher in a 20th Century utopia. What has happened?

It Is Horrific

Remember, Zbigniew Brzezinski's book described the 20th Century as the century of insanity — in which 175 million were brutally slaughtered in the name of the “politics of organized insanity” (pp. 32, 52).

It's horrific! — “175 million slaughtered” because of mankind's most bloody and hateful century. Total all the deaths from natural disasters in the 20th Century and what do you have? It is a drop in the bucket compared to man's killing machine of our insane century. This is what the schooling of the permission of evil is all about.

CHAPTER 5

A SUFFERING SAVIOR AND SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

Even if humankind learns the lesson of the dire consequences of sin in this lifetime, how do we know God's Kingdom will actually succeed — the very Kingdom for which Jesus taught his disciples to pray? (Matt. 6:10) What assurance is there that at least the majority of humanity will ever crystallize the God-likeness character enabling them to live in eternal peace, harmony and happiness?

Jesus is our assurance. He is the “surety of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22), the New Covenant which will bless all mankind in God's Kingdom. As King, Priest and Judge in that Kingdom, his name will be called “Wonderful” (Rev. 20:6; John 5:22; Isa. 9:6). Yes, Jesus' rule will be a “Wonderful” success.

Why Jesus Suffered

Not only did Jesus die to provide the payment — a perfect human life that will eventually release the human race from death — but also during his lifetime he suffered at the hands of his fellow man so that he could fully sympathize with their every need.

Isaiah prophesied of Jesus' suffering. “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows acquainted with grief ...

Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... He was wounded for our transgressions ... and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:3-5). Additionally, Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus is a sympathetic high priest who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Jesus continually permitted himself to be afflicted through contact with sinful man. Furthermore, Hebrews 2:10 explains that Jesus, “the captain of our salvation,” was made “perfect through sufferings.”

Every time Jesus healed, it was at the expense of his own strength. We read that “virtue [strength] went out from him” (Mark 5:30) as he healed the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers. He was expending his own strength so that he might be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Further, Jesus was mocked; he experienced brutality, violence and murder at the hands of his fellow men. As a Jew, he tasted the racial scorn of the Romans. He identified himself with poverty, drudgery and obscurity. Full of compassion, his heart was moved for the mentally ill, the physically sick, the lame, the deaf and the blind. Why? So that in God’s Kingdom Christ will know just what lessons mankind will need. “Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb. 5:2). Jesus assumed upon his shoulders the ills of this world. Indeed, he can have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. Those whom he ransoms from death, he will know how to restore — mentally, morally as well as physically.

Your High Calling

Jesus died nearly 2,000 years ago. The question naturally arises, Why the long delay before setting up his Kingdom

for the blessing of all mankind? One thing is clear throughout the Bible: God has not been attempting to convert the world since Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Scriptures speak of God dealing with only a few for a specific purpose. Christ's followers are spoken of as a little flock. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). God is only calling a representative few of the whole human race to be part of the church of Christ. The Greek word *ecclesia*, translated "church" in the New Testament, means "called out ones."

What is this special calling or selection of the church? Christians are called to the multiple profession of judges, priests and kings of mankind in Christ's Kingdom. What an honor! At first our faith staggers. But the Scriptures are explicit on this point. 1 Corinthians 6:2 states that "the saints shall judge the world." 1 Peter 2:9 shows Christians are called to be a "royal [kingly] priesthood." Similarly, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 states we are called of God to be "kings and priests" and "they shall reign over the earth." Revelation 20:6 states that Christians "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him the thousand years."

Judges, priests, kings! What a profession Christians have been called to! But what a rigorous training course the Christian must pursue to attain this profession.

Not Many Wise

For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the

foolish things of the world to confound the wise ...
and the base things of the world, and things which
are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which
are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no
flesh should glory in his presence (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

For the most part, God is bypassing the world's standards of greatness and calling the ordinary of the human race to compose the "little flock." How will this "bring to naught things that are?" Down through history, man's wisdom has tried every conceivable philosophy and political and/or economic ideology, but man has failed to solve humanity's problems. Each page of history is a record of man's inhumanity to man. The flaw is not so much the ideology, but man's selfish heart. History confirms the Biblical teaching that man is born in sin and "shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5).

The 20th Century started with great expectations. Through science and technology, utopia would be attained! Alas, the 20th Century closed disillusioned. Communism has failed. Capitalism is on the verge of bankruptcy. European nations are struggling with political and social unrest. Refugees have swarmed into Europe as the Middle East and Africa face political rebellions. China has risen to economic and military prominence. Unprecedented teen suicide, vice, drugs and immorality are the symptoms of a self-destructing civilization. In the meantime, the earth is becoming a wasteland of pollution. With seven billion people thinking of themselves first — could it be otherwise?

Thus, the Lord has "brought to naught things that are." Human history has proven the futility of man's efforts. No flesh can glory in God's presence. No president, prime minister, dictator, statesman, or anyone, can boast that he has the solution for all man's individual or collective ills.

An Understanding Heart

But there are a few who have learned early not to trust in the arm of flesh for solutions. Through faith in God's Word they realize that only God's Kingdom will completely solve man's ills. They have accepted Jesus as their savior and made a full consecration to do God's will. Their calling is to be judges, priests and kings with Christ in God's Kingdom (Rev. 1:6).

These Christians are not relieved of their share of the tragedies common to man (1 Cor. 10:13). Although many of mankind become bitter or hardened by the tragedies of this life, consecrated Christians have the peace of God which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7). Their faith realizes that tragedy provides the Lord an opportunity to develop in them a tender and understanding heart.

The loss of a loved one — husband, wife, parent, child — can mentally scar. Physical tragedy such as being crippled, blind or deaf can leave one a forgotten member of the human family. Drug addicts, alcoholics, the mentally ill have found that few can understand. There are the scars of mental or physical abuse by a stranger or even a loved one. To those in economic poverty, nothing could be worse. Then there is loneliness. Some have experienced a darkness of loneliness that no human hand could reach. To consecrated Christians, these various experiences provide a unique opportunity to patiently endure, while the Spirit of God transforms them day by day into the sympathetic likeness of Christ (1 Peter 1:7; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Foremost is the internal struggle of subduing sinful flesh and its interests. These are the "conflicts without, fears within" (2 Cor. 7:5 (NAS); 10:4-6; Heb. 12:4). The Christian's

struggle against his own fallen flesh gives him compassion and understanding concerning the sin ingrained in the hearts of men. A priest is one “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb. 5:2).

This can be illustrated by the noble work of Alcoholics Anonymous. An essential step of AA therapy is to assign a former alcoholic to each alcoholic that comes for help. The victim being driven by alcohol will not readily accept help or advice from just anyone. How could anyone know his agony, his depression, his desperation, if he has not shared the same experience? But the alcoholic will accept help from a former alcoholic because he knows that this person can understand his agony. And this former alcoholic stands ready at any time to come to his side to plead with him, encourage him and make good suggestions for overcoming. It requires a former alcoholic to rehabilitate an alcoholic.

Psalm 51:13 beautifully portrays this principle. Because the followers of Jesus were once sinners and transgressors, they will be able to say of their work in the Kingdom —

Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

Finally, the church will be united with Christ during his return and share the glory of his Kingdom. Like him (1 John 3:2) they shall be compassionate priests, understanding judges, and benevolent kings (Rev. 20:6; 1 Cor. 6:2). United as part of the Body and Bride of Christ, they will fully understand the sin sick, mentally warped, emotionally scarred and physically marred world of mankind.

CHAPTER 6

GOD IS NOT TRYING TO CONVERT THE WORLD NOW

Many believe the opportunity for eternal life ends with the second advent of Jesus. Nothing could be further from the Truth.

The common words ALL and EVERY are two of the most important words in the Bible. In Luke 2:10 the angel who announced the birth of Jesus said, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people.” Verses 30 and 31 speak of salvation for “‘ALL’ people.” 1 Timothy 4:10 speaks of God as “the Savior of ALL men.”

The simple logic of Jesus dying for “ALL” is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22: “As in Adam ALL die even so in Christ shall ALL be made alive.” Similarly, Romans 5:18 shows that “by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon ALL men.” Father Adam sinned with the unborn race yet in his loins. Therefore, ALL were born in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psa. 51:5) and thus worthy of death. God knew that Adam, due to a lack of experience, would disobey. Thus 1 Peter 1:19, 20, speaks of the blood of Christ as being foreordained for our redemption even before Adam was created. Since ALL were lost in Adam, it was necessary that Jesus “by the grace of God should taste death for Every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

John 1:7 speaks of Jesus as “the Light, that ALL men through him might believe.” Verse 9 says he is “the True Light, which lighteth Every man that cometh into the world.” How can this be? Countless millions died before the time of Jesus. They never saw the True Light! They never heard the name of Jesus. And since the death of Jesus, millions died never hearing of the only “name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). If you are a Bible-believing Christian, you know that no one is saved through ignorance — but only by believing in Jesus as his or her savior. This is a seeming contradiction. The answer is found in 1 Timothy 2:5, 6, where Apostle Paul writes, “Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for ALL, to be testified in due time” — a plain statement that Jesus died for “ALL.” If Jesus died for “ALL,” why is it that ALL do not have the opportunity to hear this good news? The key of harmony is found in the phrase “due time.” The Greek word translated “time” is plural; i.e., times (Thayer’s Lexicon of the New Testament). The knowledge that Jesus is a ransom for ALL will be testified “in due times.” The due time for those God is calling to be of the Church is during the Christian Age. The due time for “ALL” other people to understand is during the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

Now is not the time for “ALL” to hear the name of Jesus. God is not trying to convert the world between the first and second advents. If He was, then He has obviously failed. For after nearly 2,000 years, less than one third of the world’s population even claims to be Christian. The fact is, Jesus predicted that the Gospel would only be taught as a witness to the world — not that all would be converted before the end of the Age. Mark 4:11, 12 specifically states that God is not trying to convert the world now. Jesus said to his disciples, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of

God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” Ponder well this scripture.

If Jesus died for “ALL,” why has God arranged that many would not be able to understand the Bible and, therefore, not be converted and have their sins forgiven? The Bible is not written like a textbook system of logic. God purposely had the Bible written in parables and symbols, so that many would not be converted and have their sins forgiven. This is why there are over 30,000-40,000 Christian denominations (3/4 of them are independent churches) with many different interpretations of the Bible. God has not attempted to convert the world, but is only calling a “little flock” at this time. If man’s eternal destiny was dependent upon understanding the Bible now, our God of love (1 John 4:8) would have surely made the Bible plain and simple for all to understand.

Acts 15:14-17 reveals that “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name [not to convert all]. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return [Second Advent] and build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God] ...t hat the residue [Remainder] of men might seek after the Lord and ALL the Gentiles ...” God’s work since the death of Jesus has not been to convert all humankind, but merely to take out or to call out a “people for his name.” In the Kingdom, all the Remainder of men, who are not of these called out ones, will have their first real opportunity to seek the Lord.

Similarly, 1 Timothy 2:3, 4, states that God “will have ALL men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge [Greek,

accurate knowledge] of the truth.” This is a salvation that comes before knowledge. Jesus’ ransom for “ALL” (verse 6) guarantees that ALL who died in Adam will be saved from Adamic death.

The “ALL” of 1 Timothy 2:6, who are ransomed, parallels the “ALL” of John 5:28, 29, who come forth from their graves. Jesus divides this “ALL” into two classes — the “good” and the “evil.” The “good” is a reference to the church who are united with Jesus in the resurrection. The “evil” are the remainder of mankind — come forth “unto the resurrection of trial (Greek — krisis).” The Greek word “krisis” has the same meaning as our English word crisis. Crisis is the time a situation can take a turn for the better or worse. The crisis or time of probation for the majority of mankind will be in the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S KINGDOM

In the Kingdom, Jesus and his church will embark upon the greatest educational program in history. Isaiah 11:9 states, "... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Also, Jeremiah 31:34 says, "... for they shall ALL know me from the least of them unto the greatest." Verses 29 and 30 show that for the majority, the Kingdom will provide the first full, fair opportunity for salvation. "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."

When "ALL" who are not of the church come forth from the grave in God's Kingdom (Acts 15:14-17; John 5:28, 29), they will be informed that they have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ. And they will be made aware of the fact that they are now under the reign of Jesus Christ and his church (1 Cor. 6:2). What confidence they will have that the church will know just how to enter into their problems! Why? Because the members of the church also were once sinners. Further, humanity will realize that the church representatively experienced all the problems, hardships, and emotional and mental tragedies endured by them. Because "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" for them (John 3:16), the church will cherish each individual of the human race. The personal experiences

of true Christians in overcoming sin and struggling with their own emotional and psychological problems (2 Cor. 10:4, 5; Heb.12:3, 4) will give them an “understanding heart” so that they will know when to show compassion on ignorance and when to administer discipline where willfulness is involved (Heb. 5:2; Luke 12:48). This plan of rehabilitation will work. The majority of humanity will gladly receive the instruction, the discipline and the nurture necessary to pass their trial for eternal life.

The Blessings of the Kingdom

Isaiah 35 portrays some of the wondrous Kingdom blessings. “... the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose” (verse 1). The blind shall see. The deaf shall hear. The lame shall walk. The dumb sing (verses 5 and 6). Verses 8 and 9, speaking of the Highway of Holiness, state that it will be for the “unclean,” but the unclean shall not pass over it.

This interesting phrase can be compared to an automatic car wash. It is for dirty cars, but dirty cars don’t pass over it — because they are clean by the time they reach the end of the car wash! Similarly, the Highway of Holiness is for the morally unclean. Through the instruction and nurture of Christ and his church, they will step by step be made morally clean. Verse 9 shows “no lion shall be there.” Peter identified Satan as symbolized by the “lion” (1 Peter 5:8) and Revelation 20:1-3 reveals Satan will be bound (unable to tempt or hinder mankind) during the 1,000-year Kingdom. “But the redeemed shall walk there.” Verse 10 concludes, “And the ransomed [Jesus died a ransom for ‘ALL’ 1 Tim. 2:6] of the LORD shall return and come to Zion [the Kingdom] with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

The climax of the Kingdom work is described in Revelation 21:4, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

CHAPTER 8

SUPPOSED OBJECTIONS

Some say God was unjust to judge and then condemn the whole human race in father Adam. What was the alternative? Create each of the billions of humanity individually and give each an individual trial? Recall the scenario of the baby and hot stove. Lacking experience, Divine wisdom knew most, if not all, of humankind would disobey Him — just as father Adam did. Then there would be billions of individually condemned sinners, not just one. To salvage that disaster, each sinner would require a separate redeemer. What a mathematical challenge that would pose! But God, in His infinite wisdom, found a way to condemn all in one man (Adam) so that He could redeem all in one man's death (the perfect Man Jesus). “For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

Human History Horrendous

Some complain that the tragedies of history have been horrendous — at times unbearable. If God is loving, why hasn't He at least limited their severity?

Psalm 76:10 assures us that God is limiting man's wrath (man's inhumanity to man) to only those experiences that will praise Him — by accomplishing the purposes of His Plan for mankind. All human evil which is in excess of what

is necessary for humanity's schooling will be restrained. Actually, civilization would have aborted or adversely mutated itself time and again if it wasn't for this Divine restraining. But the schooling of the permission of evil must of necessity be severe.

Man has to learn once — for all time — not just the error of sin, but also its horrific consequences. For the most part, the scenario of sin must be played out in ghastly detail in order for this lesson to be thoroughly learned. Further, these terrible details of sin's consequences must become the facts of history to be studied for the eternal welfare of all. The experiences of each have not been the same. This is obviously true of those who died as babies or children. Actually, the Scriptures reveal that man's total experience with sin will be studied throughout eternity. Certainly in the Kingdom, when the dead are raised, the total experience of all mankind will be shared. What a motivation this composite history of evil will be to inspire all to love the ways of righteousness!

Future Creations

Isaiah 45:18 informs us concerning the earth that God "created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." It is logical to conclude that this is true for the myriads of other planets in the universe. Thus, in future creations on these planets, intelligent beings will not need a learning experience with sin. Sin and its sequel of evil will no longer be mere theory. Sin and evil are now an actual fact not only in the history of the earth but also the universe. A vivid account of this history will be conveyed to all future creations. This is another reason the scenario of sin must be played out in such sordid detail on earth.

Spectacle to Angels

The angelic hosts of heaven are intensely watching the drama of sin and evil as it unfolds on earth. Angels are primarily learning the bitter consequences of sin by observation. In order for this lesson by observation to be effective, it must run its course in gruesome details.

Restraining the Severity of Evil

But there are ways in which God is limiting the severity of humankind's experience with evil. In love, God has cut off nations and whole groupings of people before their consciences became irrevocably scarred by experiencing evil (Gen. 15:16). Otherwise there would be no conscience left to which God could appeal when they come forth from their graves in the Kingdom (John 5:28, 29).

Both the Ten Commandments and the preaching of the Gospel for a witness in all nations have had a tremendous influence on the moral laws of the nations, thereby limiting the practice of evil.

In his book, Brzezinski reminded us that the insane evil of the 20th century was due to the unprecedented knowledge of our day. God kindly withheld this explosion of knowledge until the "Time of the End" (Dan. 12:1, 4). This explosion of knowledge is having its God-intended effect — the destruction of our social order to make way for God's Kingdom.

Why Will the Kingdom Succeed?

If Adam failed in his test of obedience, what assurance is there that mankind will pass the test for eternal life in the

Kingdom? The fundamental reasons are experience with the consequences of sin and the Blessing of being in the hands of a sympathetic Priesthood.

Experience

The factor of personal experience is all important. Adam had no experience with the consequences of sin. In the Kingdom each person will have a vivid memory of every pain, sorrow and tragedy, and realize their debilitating effect on mind and body. Every encounter with man's inhumanity will be relived time and again as they interact with these same individuals in the Kingdom. What a challenge each will face, to ask forgiveness and to forgive. This is one of the many practical ways they will learn to develop love one for another. What a refreshing contrast life will be in the Kingdom when they experience the rewards of health, peace and happiness for righteous living. Also, Satan, the one who took Eve down the "primrose path of deception," will be bound to deceive the nations no more until the end of the Kingdom.

A Sympathetic Priesthood

Humanity will be in the hands of Jesus and His Church (his faithful followers) who will be Kings and Priests to the world. Think of being in the hands of King Jesus — a King who was willing to die for his subjects that they might have life. Think of the compassion he developed for sinners by the sufferings he received at their hands. The more they opposed him and harmed him, the more he learned to understand and love them. Think also of humankind being ruled and helped by members of the faithful Church, who will be associate rulers and priests. They were once fellow sinners — representatives of every type of humanity. They have experienced every sort of tragedy which man has suffered. Oh, what an incentive it

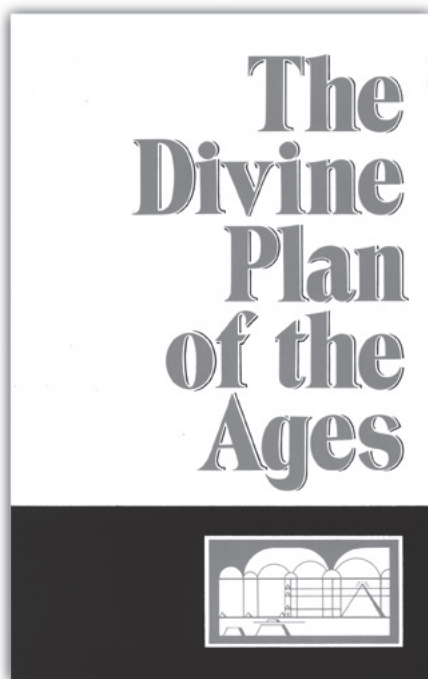
will be to realize that members of the Church understand and can help them out of every temptation to disobey!

Because man's past experience with sin, and assistance from the sympathetic priesthood, in the Kingdom will be so effective, the Scriptures speak of those who gain eternal life as the "sand on the sea-shore" in number (Gen. 22:17, 18). Yes, the experience with evil will enable the vast majority of mankind to share the joys of eternity.

When the testings of the Millennial Kingdom are over, as mankind stands at the threshold of eternity, they will look back on the permission of evil and thank God for every tragedy and every sorrow. What an invaluable lesson! Compared to eternity, it will seem but a moment. And when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death neither sorrow, nor crying" (Rev. 21:4) — then God too will have stopped crying.

END NOTES

1. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)
2. *Reprints*, (Chicago, IL: Chicago Bible Students) p. 1833
3. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, #7043
4. Garrett P. Serviss, *Curiosities of The Sky*
5. Phillip L. Knox, *Wonder Worlds* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1964) p.61
6. *Ibid.*
7. Serviss.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Knox, p.60
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Reprints*, p. 1833
12. Walter Howey, *The Faith of Great Scientists* (New York: Hearst Publishing Co., 1950)
13. *Ibid.*, p.33

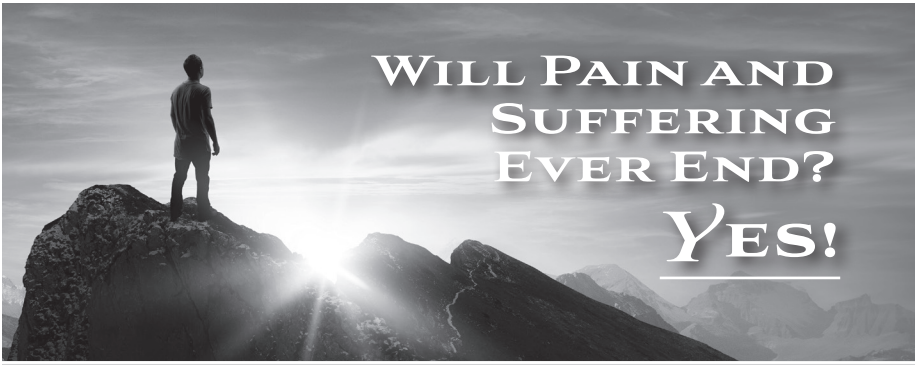


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WILL PAIN AND SUFFERING EVER END? YES!

- **Does GOD care about the suffering of His Creation?**

Yes. God has a plan to bless ALL PEOPLE and to bring an end to all suffering, pain and evil. *Revelation 21:4*

- **Will there be any benefit from our hard experiences with suffering and pain?**

Yes. These experiences will help us learn to make the best choice in the future. *Ecclesiastes 3:10*

- **Will there ever be World Peace?**

Yes. Peace will prevail on the earth. All wars shall cease. *Isaiah 2:4; Psalm 46:9*

- **Will the Earth we live on continue to be inhabited?**

Yes. The earth will be restored to its intended condition of health and vitality. *Isaiah 45:18; 35:1-10*

- **Will Death ever cease?**

Yes. The hope of the resurrection means all shall live again. Death itself will be destroyed. *John 5:25; 1 Corinthians 15:26*

- **Will crime and violence ever be stopped?**

Yes. No one will be able to hurt anyone else. *Psalm 37:9-11; Isaiah 65:25*

- **Will we ever know freedom from fear?**

Yes. All causes for fear, anxiety and distress will eventually be eliminated. *Isaiah 25:7-9*

You are Part of God's Plan. The Best is yet to Come ...