

PRETENDER TO THE THRONE

See With New Eyes, Session 4

BY CREATING A UNIVERSE in which love could exist, God necessarily created us as genuinely free creatures capable of loving others, or not.

THE BIGGEST QUESTION

Every one of us encounters evil and pain, and every one of us eventually asks the big question, "If God exists and if God is good, why is there evil and suffering in the world?"

The Epicurean Riddle: Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is powerless. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?

FIVE POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Everybody believes something about the fundamental nature of reality. While there are hundreds of religions and philosophies, all of them boil down to only five basic worldviews, and therefore only five basic explanations for the presence of evil and suffering in our world.

1. Materialism/Atheism: We live in a purely material universe. There is no such thing as evil, because natural process is all there is. Suffering is intrinsic and necessary to the evolution of life and possesses no moral quality.

2. Pantheism: All is God and God it is all. Nature itself, including human beings, constitutes the whole of reality. There is no third person deity that exists in relation to the world. Evil and suffering are inherent to reality and therefore both are good and necessary in a utilitarian sense.

3. Deterministic Theism/Classical Theism: A Supreme Being governs the world whose chief attribute is power and whose essential mode of operation is control. Therefore, God predetermines all outcomes. Evil and suffering are the will of God for His sovereign purpose.

4. Appeasement Theism: A Supreme Being governs the world, whose chief attribute is wrath and whose essential mode of operation is punishment. Suffering is imposed by God to placate/satisfy/appease His wrath.

5. Benevolent Theism/Warfare Theism: God is love and therefore God created human beings with free will so that love might be possible as their freely chosen reality. Suffering is the result of evil, and evil has its origin in the misuse of free will. Evil and suffering are, therefore, in complete opposition to God's good character and will.

~NOTES~

LOVE → FREEDOM → RISK

BORN TO A BATTLEFIELD

According to the biblical narrative, our world is a warzone. We are born to a battlefield. A cosmic conflict between good and evil is underway right here on this planet we call home, and in our hearts, as well.

The following scriptures paint forest a character profile of the one who is the originator and instigator of evil: Revelation 12:4-12 / Isaiah 14:12-20 / Ezekiel 28:11-19 / 2 Corinthians 4:4 / John 12:31 / Ephesians 2:2 / 1 John 5:19 / 1 John 5:19 / 1 Peter 5:8-9 / Matthew 13:39

1. DOMINION

1 John 4:8—God is love.

Genesis 1:26—Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over...all the earth.”

Psalms 115:16, NRSV—The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth He has given to human beings.

2. ABDICATION

Job 1:6-8, Summary—Here we encounter Satan’s claim to have dominion over the earth and God’s counterclaim, which is based on the fact that there is a human being who is not under Satan’s dominion.

Luke 4:6 All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

3. WAR

Genesis 3:15, NIV—I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^{1a} and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

1 John 3:8—For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Luke 11:21-22—²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. ²² But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

John 12:31-32—³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

Colossians 2:15, NIV—Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.