

THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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DID GOD CREATE EVIL?

The only accurate record of creation informs us that, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). Of the events which occurred during five of the six creative days it was said, "*and it was so*" (vs. 7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30). Of five of those creative days it was also said, "*and God saw...that it was good*" (vs. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). But at the conclusion of those six days it was said with an added word of emphasis, "*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold it was very good*" (v. 31). God made no mistake. He made every being and every thing as it should have been. He did not create sin and evil.

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God did recognize, however, the presence of a force contrary to truth, good, and right. This is clearly evident in the ninth verse of the second chapter, "*And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" In this passage there is not the slightest hint that God created evil, but rather that He recognized a distinction between good and evil. Evil is contrary to the very essence of God. Although God is not limited or restricted in accomplishing that which is proper and right ("*with God all things are possible*" [Luke 19:26]), it would be contrary to His very nature to bring into being such a condition as evil ("*God...cannot lie*" [Titus 1:2], for example).

"*To know good and evil*" (Gen. 3:22) and to have made the wrong choice (Gen. 3:6, 11) resulted in man suffering the consequence of evil. This was unquestionably learned by Cain as recorded in Genesis 4:7, "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*" Cain suffered the consequence of his sin because he did that which was evil, not because God created evil.

But what about Isaiah 45:7 and Amos 3:6? As the Bible is a record of six thousand years of history encompassing numerous languages, social customs, and cultural changes during that long period, some Biblical expressions are understandably in need of explanation. "*The sun stood still*" of Joshua 10:12, for instance, is not scientifically correct, but it is used as we today speak about the sun rising or setting. We know scientifically that the earth revolves around the sun, but even in view of our present day knowledge we continue to use expressions which describe what the sun appears to do.

This same type understanding permits us to comprehend the beautiful thoughts expressed in the two passages in question.

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7).

"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6).

The thought conveyed by the word "create" is that of bringing into being that which did not previously exist. This can and readily does relate to the beginning of material things as we know them and as they are spoken of in Genesis 1 and 2. But this expression also conveys the thought of bringing about a condition which did not previously exist. One might spank a naughty child and be accused by the child of hurting him. While it is true that you did inflict hurt on the child and thus "create" an unpleasant condition, the child brought upon himself the need for discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11). This describes a condition which results from improper conduct and which warrants what seems to the child to be an evil consequence. This is the way in which the word "create" is used in Isaiah 45:7 and Amos 3:6.

A most appropriate example of this type expression is found in 1 Kings 18:17-18. Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, had suffered with Israel a terrible drought which continued for three years and six months. This drought was justly brought about by God because of the sin of Ahab and the people of Israel. When God finally saw fit to bring the calamity to an end, He sent Elijah to appear before Ahab. Upon seeing Elijah, King Ahab, continuing to display his

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old rebellious attitude, said to Elijah, "*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*" Elijah had not troubled Israel, but Ahab had through his sin and rebellion. Ahab blamed the trouble on Elijah, for Elijah had been the spokesman for God. Elijah correctly responded, "*I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.*"

To suffer the just consequence of sin or poor judgement might well result in a condition which we consider evil, for it brings upon us an undesirable and hurtful circumstance. Only in the sense that God might well have allowed it or even brought it about as a punishment, can it be said that God was involved in evil. Even then, God can not correctly be said to have created evil as a force or nature; it is merely that the consequence, even though just, is unpleasant to the one receiving it. I never did meet a boy who enjoyed a spanking. A spanking always appears to be evil to the one receiving it!

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Do you see difficulties in every opportunity or opportunities in every difficulty?

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. According to the book of Esther, what was the name of the queen who displeased King Ahasuerus?
2. When men gave false testimony about Jesus before the Sanhedrin, what answer did He give?
3. In the book of Revelation, after the fourth angel sounded his trumpet how much of the sun and moon and stars were smitten?
4. What book was written to Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia?
5. Which two tribes jointly asked Joshua for more land because they were numerous?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Which one of Jacob's sons did he foretell would have eyes red with wine and teeth white with milk? JUDAH (Gen. 49:12)
2. The Lord said to Jeremiah that He knew him before what stage of his life? BEFORE HE WAS FORMED (Jer. 1:5)
3. In Corinthians God promises to not allow temptation to overtake us. What will he provide? A WAY OF ESCAPE (1 Cor. 10:13)
4. When two disciples were walking to Emmaus in Luke 24, what were they discussing? THE EVENTS OF THE RESURRECTION (Luke 24:13-24)
5. According to Proverbs, you should listen to your father's instruction and do what to your mother's teachings? NOT FORSAKE IT (Prov. 1:8)

IT IS HARD

To forget
 To apologize
 To save money
 To be unselfish
 To avoid mistakes
 To keep out of a rut
 To begin all over again
 To make the best of all things
 To keep your temper at all times
 To think first and act afterwards
 To maintain a high standard
 To keep on keeping on
 To shoulder blame
 To be charitable
 To admit error
 To take advice
 To forgive
 But it pays!

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

In chapter 10 of his account of the gospel, Luke records the visit of Jesus into the house of two sisters. While Martha was busy tending to the guests, Mary *"sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."* This troubled Martha because later she complained about getting no help out of Mary. Jesus simply answered, *"Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

This episode is definitely a lesson concerning priorities. Martha was not wrong in taking care of the guests. Neither was Mary wrong in neglecting to help her sister. Their only difference was their priority. Mary chose "that good part", that being the word of the Lord.

Notice also that it will never be taken away from her which is what makes God's Word "that good part." The conclusion is obvious then. Spiritual matters should always take precedence over material matters! This is the same point Jesus made in Matthew 16:26. *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Perhaps the biggest reason why folks miss church services is because they have placed a higher priority on certain material things over the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Yet the Bible teaches us to *"seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"*(Matt. 6:33). The church and its work must have top priority in the life of a Christian. If the church was precious enough that it was bought with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), then we must act accordingly.

But how many times have we missed services because there was a ball game going on? or a special show on television? or we worked so hard in the garden one day that we were too tired to go to the gospel meeting that night? Where are our priorities when we use excuses like that? Sometimes friends drop in at the house and we feel compelled to entertain them. So, we miss church on that account. But how is this different from the story about Martha and Mary? We can either tend to the guests, like Martha, and later complain to everyone what a great burden we had. Or we can choose "that good part" like Mary, and go to church to hear the Word of God and gain something that will never be taken away from us. It is simply a matter of placing our priorities in the right order. What is at the top of our list the next time the church doors open?

RAY

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Sept. 3-8	Rich Hill Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 17-22	Oak Grove Church near Liberty, KY	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Sept. 30 - Oct. 6	Athens Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

△ △

OTHERS

Lord, let me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That, even when I kneel to pray,
My prayer shall be for Others.

Help me, in all the work I do,
Ever to be sincere and true,
And know that all I'd do for Thee,
Must needs be done for Others.

Let "self" be crucified and slain,
And buried deep, nor rise again;
And may all efforts be in vain,
Unless they be for Others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in heaven begun
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still, of Others.

Yes, Others, Lord, yes, Others.
Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for Others,
That I may live with Thee.

--Selected--