

# The Problem of Evil

“...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,  
as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

*Joshua 24:15*

## Consider these points:

- 1) Some **suffering** is brought about by our own free choices. The choice to abuse my body can result in sickness. The choice to choose a certain job or career-path can result in working excessive overtime, or not being as highly compensated, in terms of income.
- 2) Some **evil** done to others can result from our free choices, such as committing child or spousal abuse...
- 3) Others suffer **indirectly** because of our free choice. Alcoholism can lead to one's own poverty, or the poverty of a spouse and any children involved.
- 4) Some physical evil may be a **necessary** condition in order to obtain a greater moral good. God can use pain to get our attention – remember the baby and the hot stove analogy. Many people through time have suffered greatly, and yet chose to believe that God is indeed with them, in the midst of their suffering. By making this choice to believe, God's Word has become very real for each of these people... **Romans 8:28** and **James 1:2-5**

## Middle-Knowledge View:

- a) We can all think of **worlds** where more people accept Christ, or conditions are better (less violence, poverty, suffering, etc.).
- b) Assume God can create thousands of 'worlds' with varying results of good and evil choices in them; but the common thread is that people must all have **free will**. Of all these possible 'worlds', *we would want Him to create the 'one world' in which the most people would freely choose to follow Jesus.*
- c) Deduction: our present world is that 'one world'. Our present world is the best **possible** world, given the condition of mankind able to exercise their 'free will'. It's not the best *conceivable* world, but it's the best *achievable* world...

*(Continued next page)*

*page one*

Lesson 2

# The Problem of Evil

“...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,  
as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

*Joshua 24:15*

## ***How would you respond to this argument?***

- 1) God knows everything.
- 2) God knew evil would occur when He created the world.
- 3) God had other non-evil possibilities. He could have...
  - a) Not created anything.
  - b) Created a world without free creatures.
  - c) Created free creatures that would not sin.
  - d) Created free creatures that would sin, but all would accept Jesus in the end.

*Hence, God could have created a world where evil did not exist.*

## ***Let's consider the following:***

Points 1 and 2 above are correct.

Point 3a: This **wrongly** assumes that **nothing** is better than something. However, this involves a moral judgement, and 'nothing' is, by its very nature, void of morality.

Point 3b: There cannot be a morally-good world if people (creatures) don't have **free will**.

Point 3c: It's hard to call a choice 'free' when there's no **alternative**. Yes, this is a *conceivable* world (we can think about it); but, it's not an *achievable* world (it won't happen in reality).

Point 3d: This assumes that God can manipulate us to choose **well**. Forced love is rape, and God is not a divine rapist. Yes, it is a *conceivable* world, but it's not an *achievable* world.



# The Problem of Evil

“...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,  
as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

## Then why did God create this particular world?

This is not the best conceivable world, but it is the best way to the best achievable world.  
(See point 2 on previous page)

If God is to preserve free will AND overcome evil, then this is how He does that:

*Evil is overcome in that, once those who reject God are separated from those who accept Him, the decisions of all are made permanent. Those who choose God are confirmed in it and sin will cease. Those who desire the good, but are hindered by evil will no longer have their good intentions frustrated. Those who desire evil, but are hindered by good will no longer be nagged by good influences. Each person, whether in heaven or hell, will be there according to their own free choice...*

The ultimate goal of a perfect world with free people will have been achieved, but the way to get there requires that those who abuse their freedom be separated from those who do not.

This means that some people will choose to go to hell. C.S. Lewis has said that “hell is a room that is locked from the inside.” There are people who will say to God ‘Your will be done’. Then God will say to everyone else, ‘your will be done’.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,  
but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not  
condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already  
because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

John 3:17-18

**John 3:36    5:39-40    8:24    12:48    Luke 10:16**

Again, a world in which some people go to hell is not the best conceivable world, however it is the best achievable world if free will is to be maintained.