Some Thoughts on





TITLE & AUTHOR

Some Thoughts on Evil
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Preface

Why is there evil? Does God cause evil? Does God allow evil? Why would God allow evil? What is evil?

My goal in this research and study is not to become educated in "the deep things of Satan"[1]; but rather to more fully understand the panorama of truth contained in Scripture. As some, like Michael Heiser, have pointed out: We need to recover the supernatural worldview of the Bible.[2] We all acknowledge that there is an evil contingent in the spiritual realm; but are hesitant to give too much attention to it, preferring to maintain a truly Christ-Centered faith. To say that I am a staunch advocate for Christ-Centeredness is an understatement. And, I have also seen much too often the spiritual dissipation that results when Christians "major on the minors" and become almost literally obsessed with the realities and activities of the forces of darkness. Never-the-less, like others, I have found that the unveiling of truths contained in Scripture regarding evil and the spiritual forces of evil, have served to increase my personal perception of God and His spiritual domain. It has also served to deepen my

[1] Revelation 2:24

[2] The sub-title of Michael Heiser's book, "The Unseen Realm".

understanding of His will, and His plan of redemption in and by and through Christ.

Through this further study of Scripture, the referencing of certain familiar New Testament scriptures with somewhat more obscure Old Testament scriptures has given me an increased understanding of what the writers of the scriptures were actually communicating to their ancient and first century audiences. Not only is it exciting to discover these things, but I also believe God intends to give more wide-spread understanding of these things to His people "upon whom the ends of the ages are come".[3]

[3] 1 Corinthians 10:11; Cf. Romans 15:4

Why Did God Allow Evil?

"8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden;
and there He placed the man whom He had formed. **9** Out of
the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is
pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also
in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of
good and evil.
15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the
garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any
tree of the garden you may eat freely; **17** but from the tree of
the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the
day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17)

Why did God even allow evil? Why did He create the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil? Why did He allow the temptation, knowing it would result in the Fall – followed by evil, sickness and death?

"Then the LORD God said, "Behold**, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.** Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" (Genesis 3:22)

By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Humanity became "like" God – but not *"just like"*

God. There is more to being God than just knowing good and evil. There are other inherent attributes which differentiate God from humans in the knowing of good and evil – for example, inherent goodness - ("There is only one Who is good." – Luke 18:19). Attributes like inherent goodness enable God, so to speak, to handle such knowledge of evil. But, independent of God, we cannot. It's one thing to say that humankind has taken access to the knowledge of good and evil – it's quite another thing to say that we have the ability to perfectly understand and utilize such knowledge – I think it is painfully obvious that we do not. **While choosing to create us in His image, He also needed to convince humans – without violating free will – that He is singular (that separateness which is the essence of holiness); and that His creations can be "like" Him, but not *"just like"* Him.** This is exactly what Lucifer, who desired to be *"just like"* God, failed to understand.[4] **I propose that the knowledge of good and evil, the temptation, the Fall, and the subsequent human condition convince us of this.**

God's attributes – like goodness – are inherent and absolutely perfect. Those attributes in humans are inherent in the sense that we are created in His image, and were created to be reflective of His perfection, but

[4] Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:1-10

not the perfection itself. However, because of the Fall, these attributes in us are "tarnished". **God intended this human life to be for the restoration and "perfecting" (in the sense of maturing) of those attributes (growing in holiness and Christlikeness). Not being inherently perfect as God is, these attributes must be "grown" or developed through human life – they are not "perfect" at birth nor at rebirth. This growth is the purpose of human life.**

Of course, with the Fall and the darkening of the human mind, one must firstly "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8; 1 Peter 2:3) and then desire that goodness and the development of that goodness within oneself. In other words, one must desire godliness above and beyond all the various dimensions of mere human existence. Which comes first? Do we first need to desire it in order to "taste the goodness of the Lord"? Or does "tasting the goodness of the Lord" create that desire? In any case, this process apparently doesn't take place in all human beings. Why in some and not in others? That question brings us once again to the mystery of the interaction between the sovereignty of God and the freedom of the human will.

God's Sovereignty & Human Freedom

Luis de Molina (1535-1600) was a Spanish theologian. One of his main theological contributions is an idea which is labeled "Middle Knowledge".[5] We could explain the idea in terms of linguistic moods:

Realis moods are a category of grammatical moods that indicate that something is actually the case or actually not the case – factual statements and positive beliefs. The most common Realis mood is the Indicative mood. For example, *"I eat every day."* Or *"I will eat tomorrow."*

The Conditional mood is used for speaking of an event whose realization is dependent upon another condition – a possibility. It is combined with an additional phrase, said to be in the Subjunctive mood, which speaks of that possibility – the hypothetical event or situation. *"**If** I have food, **then** I will eat tomorrow."*

The Indicative mood is the mood of *reality.* **God knows all realities.** The Conditional-Subjunctive moods – the "if … then" construction – depicts *a reality which is possible.* **God also knows all possible realities.** In other

[5] The phrase, Scientia media, was coined by Molina; but the idea is also found in the writings of his older contemporary, Pedro da Fonseca, a Portuguese theologian.

words, He knows all the possibilities, as well as, the possibilities which will become realities. The omniscient God knows all that **will** happen, but also knows all that **would** happen, because **He has foreknowledge of how humans will employ their free-will in response to His grace in all given circumstances and situations. All His decrees are based upon this dual aspect of His foreknowledge**.

God's will – His plan of redemption[6] – included the nation of Israel being birthed through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so that further down the line, the Messiah would come forth as Abraham's Seed.[7] It happened that the sons of Jacob, by an act of their free will, sold their brother, Joseph, into bondage in Egypt. What their will meant for evil, God's will meant for good. (Genesis 50:20) So, **it is important to note that God's good and perfect will is not usurped by human free will, even if it is meant for evil**. In scripture, Egypt represents the fallen world system. But there, God allowed Joseph to be promoted to a place of favor and esteem in this world system. Because of this, he was able to bring Jacob's household into the land of Goshen during a

[6] Which was established "before the foundation of the world". Cf. Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20.

[7] This was just one step in His plan of redemption. In human history, this plan of redemption took many steps between the making of a covenant with Abraham to the birth, death and resurrection of the Messiah.

world-wide famine, and there Israel was preserved, prospered and increased in number.

God's sovereign will – in His plan of redemption – also included Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. Later, it happened that there was a different Pharaoh with a different attitude towards Israel and the God of Israel. The scriptures speak repeatedly of Pharaoh's hardened heart. It is admittedly difficult to determine if his heart was hard as a result of his free will, or as a result of God's doing – or, in a sense, both. Some verses say that "Pharaoh hardened his heart". (Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7; 1 Samuel 6:6) And other verses say that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart". (Exodus 9:12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8) We'll touch on this again shortly.

"In Charge of Production"

Some words in a passage from Isaiah can help us to understand **God allowing evil for His good purpose**. In the Septuagint[8], Isaiah 45:7 reads:

"I am the One who prepared the light and made the darkness, the One who makes peace and who creates disasters; I am the Lord God who makes all these things."

In this passage, the English words "made the darkness" and "creates disasters" appear to be "problematic" for the theology of some people. Some translations actually say: "creating darkness and *evil*".[9] The Greek word is *kakos*[10], meaning *intrinsically worthless*. Objectively, it means *"harmful"*, or *"injurious"*, or just plain *"bad"*.[11] But the idea here is *not* that God "creates this out of nothing". The Greek word translated "creating" is *ktidzo*,[12] meaning, as the Strong's Concordance puts it: *"through the idea of the proprietorship of the manufacturer"*, in other words, God is not making harmful, injurious things with His hands. In a manner of speaking, **He is "in charge of the production"** of those things. Reading

[8] Lexham English Septuagint
[9] KJV, ASV, and also the Lexham English Bible.
[10] Strong's # 2556
[11] The Apostolic Bible Polyglot reads "bad things".
[12] Strong's # 2936

the passage in the Apostolic Bible Polyglot, we see that the **other verbs in this sentence** also give the same sense:

"I am the one carefully preparing light, and I **made** darkness; the one **making** peace, and the one creating[13] bad things. I am the LORD God, the one **doing** all these things."

A verb used three times in the sentence is the Greek word, *poieo,*[14] where the Lord says that He "made darkness" and that God is the One "making peace" and "doing all these things". As I said, the meaning is *not* that God created these things out of nothing. Rather, it means to make, manufacture, construct.[15] These words imply the usage of pre-existing raw materials. James Strong also says the Greek word, *poieo*[16], communicates *causation*. In other words, **the Lord *caused* all these things to happen by either *managing* or *allowing* things to take effect**.

[13] Greek: ktidzo, Strong's # 2936, meaning, as the Strong's Concordance puts it: "through the idea of the proprietorship of the manufacturer",
[14] Strong's # 4160
[15] Strong's Concordance
[16] Strong's # G4160

The other verb, translated "carefully preparing", is the Greek word *kataskeua*.[17] James Strong says it means ***"preparing by external equipment or implements."*** There is a verse a little further on in Isaiah which gives us the understanding:

"Behold, I Myself have created **the smith who blows the fire of coal**s And brings out **a weapon for its work**; And I have created **the destroyer to ruin."** Isaiah 54:16

It is the "smith" and the "destroyer" who are doing the ruinous things – it is not by the Lord's hand; but it is for His purposes.

We also see this clearly in the Book of Job. Satan says to the Lord:

"'But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.' Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has **is in your power**, only do not put forth your hand on him.'" Job 1:11-12

Essentially, the Lord said to Satan: *"I don't do evil. I created you to do that dirty work."* So, in this way, "God

[17] Strong's # G4632

causes all things[18] to work together for good… according to His purpose." Romans 8:28[19]

[18] "All things", including all the "bad" things listed in Romans 8:31-39.

[19] Hopefully, what has been presented in this section may help to understand the mystery of the will of God in other scripture passages which seem to indicate that evil takes place at the hand of God rather than God allowing evil and "causing all things to work together for good according to His purpose". For example, Leviticus 26:25; Numbers 14:12; Deuteronomy 28:21; Jeremiah 24:10, 42:17; Lamentations 3:38; Ezekiel 14:19; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Revelation 2:23.

The Mystery of God's Will

This is an interesting study[20] regarding the various aspects of the will of God – that is, God's good and perfect will has various aspects[21]:

God's Decretive (Decreed) Will - His covenant purposes and promises given in scripture.
God's Perceptive Will – His precepts (principles and commands) given in scripture.
God's Preferential Will – that which pleases God and gives Him pleasure.
God's Permissive Will – that which God allows, even if it is evil.

His Decreed Will often allows His Permissive will in which He permits humans to violate His Preferential Will (what gives Him pleasure) and His Prescriptive Will (His Word). God's Permissive will is never outside His Decreed Will. God *permits* those things which will lead to the accomplishment of His Decreed Will. This is what we see with the issue of Pharaoh's hard heart.

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[20] Based on Bob Deffinbaugh's study on Bible.org https://bible.org/question/can-you-help-me-understand-gods-perfect-will-versus-his-permissive-will

[21] Not included in this list of aspects of God's will for His people are aspects which have to do with each of us as individuals: God's Directive Will – His personal guidance for an individual; and God's Discerned Will – that which we learn to perceive as God's guidance for our personal lives.

Pharaoh hardened his own heart. God had foreknowledge of this. God "hardened Pharaoh's heart" by *permitting* Pharaoh to do so, and not usurping his free will, because in the end, it would accomplish what God had Decreed for His people.

Another instance of this involves what would be in the mind of God's people rather than the heart of Pharaoh:

"Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "**The people might change their minds** when they see war and return to Egypt." (Exodus 13:17)

As was stated, God's sovereign will – in His plan of redemption – also included Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. He would definitely accomplish this within the framework of the free will of the people of Israel. He foreknew that if they journeyed through the land of the Philistines, the Philistines might attack Israel. And, if that took place, Israel *might* choose to just go back to Egypt. So, foreknowing those *possibilities and human choices*, in this case, He decided to bring Israel out of Egypt using a different route.

Another instance of this involves "the rulers of this age":

"God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for **if they had understood it, they would not have** crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth at the hands of the Jewish and Roman rulers was God's sovereign will as an essential step in His plan of redemption.[22] God chose the way of the cross, which was a wisdom beyond the understanding of these rulers.[23] *If*, "per chance", they did understand it, *then* they would not have crucified the Messiah. But the rulers *did choose* to crucify Jesus. Thus, God's will was accomplished within the context of humans exercising free will.[24] His Decretive Will is always accomplished even if evil takes place in the context of His Permissive Will.

There is another scripture narrative which I believe helps us to understand and embrace the mystery of God Will. It is a story of David and Saul, and it involves the ephod, which is a symbolic representation of the good and perfect Will of God:

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[22] Luke 22:22, 24:7; Acts 2:23-24, 3:18; 1 Peter 1:20-21

[23] 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

[24] Possibly, Jeremiah 23:21-22 and Matthew 21-24 can be understood in the same way.

”6Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. 7When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars.” 8So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. 9Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” 10Then David said, “O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. 11Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the Lord said, “He will come down.” 12Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the Lord said, “They will surrender you.” 13Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. 14David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.” (1 Samuel 23:6-18)

Abiathar was a priest who escaped Saul’s slaughter of Ahimelich’s household.[25] High priests put on an ephod

[25] 1 Samuel 22:20

containing the urim and thummin, which were gemstones used as an oracle to consult the will of God.[26] David consulted the ephod as to what Saul and the people of Keilah *might do*. In His foreknowledge, God knew, not only His good and perfect will to preserve David in the lineage of the Messiah, but He also knew the evil that *would happen* as a result of the free will of Saul and the people of Keilah. Again, **God knows all possible realities – that is, He knows all the possibilities, as well as the possibilities which will become realities**. **The omniscient God knows all that *will* happen, but also knows all that *would* happen, because He has foreknowledge of how humans will employ their free-will in response to His grace in all given circumstances and situations**. His Decretive Will is always accomplished even if evil takes place in the context of His Permissive Will.

Hopefully, the discussion above helps us to understand why there was a Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and why God *allowed* the temptation, which in His foreknowledge, He knew would result in the Fall of Humanity, bringing about evil in the world. But "the darkness did not overpower the Light"[27] - that is, Evil did not and will not overpower the good and perfect Will

[26] Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21
[27] John 1:5

of God. In fact, God uses evil in the accomplishment of His Will – not as a "fail-safe" plan, but as a *perfect plan* – that is, "according to His own will "(Hebrews 2:4), "according to the counsel and kind intention of His will" (Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11) – because "God ***causes*** all things to work together for *good* to those who love God, to those who are called *according to His purpose*." (Romans 8:28) Now, if we can accept the mystery of God's will *allowing* evil, let's continue on with a discussion of **Evil itself, and its nature – "Death".**

Death

I have been studying Scripture more than 50 years. I believe the Lord's primary purpose for giving us His written words was that they would serve as a vehicle by which the Holy Spirit can enable us to understand and know God.[28] And that has been my primary goal in my studies. But, in recent years, one particular perspective which has been increasingly emerging as I study - though I was not particularly seeking it - is this: The ancients understood "Death" much more than we moderns. I am not only referring to the death of our physical bodies, but more so, **"Death" as a state of being – a condition which pervades the world and every human being coming into the world.** I have found this "Death" referenced in the New Testament scriptures, but at the same time, I've seen a kind of "silent assumption" on the part of the writers of Scripture indicating that their readers were already quite familiar with this state of "Death" and its consequences in the world, including its origins, so that in any given mention, much is not explained. But, taking the Scripture as a whole – Old Testament and the New – if one has "eyes to see", not only is this "Death" made clear, but also revealed in contrast is the

[28] Jeremiah 9:24

"newness of life" given by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" through the New Covenant. I've begun to sense the deep longing the Old Covenant people had as they awaited the arrival of the Messiah, who would redeem, not only Humanity, but the whole of creation from futility. And the ancients seemed to understand more fully **the "why"** and also **the extent** of this "Death" and futility. It, of course, had to do with The Fall. But, unlike us moderns, the ancients were more aware of the nature of the Fall, and more aware of the realities of there being more than one Fall.

What Was the Nature of the "Fall"?

Conventionally, the "Fall" is understood in terms of Adam and Eve's sin – their disobedience resulting in a state of sin into which all are born, consequently, needing God's forgiveness and justification through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. While this is an accurate perspective on the Fall, it really doesn't offer us much insight into the nature of the Fall, in terms of *what Humanity was a falling away from.*

We will look into some scripture passages where we will glean certain images which paint a picture something like this: In heaven there is a sacred space around God's throne.[29] This is God's dwelling place, in which He is surrounded by spirit beings. On earth, God created a "garden" which He intended to be a complimentary sacred space on the earth He created – that is, a complimentary dwelling place of God in which He would carry on relationship with Humanity. We see God's desire to commune with Humanity throughout Scripture: in the Garden of Eden containing the Tree of Life[30]; throughout the Old Testament – with the nation of Israel, by God's presence visiting in the Shekinah (Hebrew: "that which dwells") in the

[29] Psalm 82:1; Isaiah 6:1-2; Revelation 4:1-11

[30] Genesis 2:8-9, Cf. 3:8

tabernacle[31] and in the temple[32]; throughout the Gospels – with the Father dwelling in Jesus of Nazareth[33]; throughout the New Testament – with the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Body of Christ[34], and in the Book of Revelation – in the new heaven and earth, with the restored Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem.[35]

Some angels fell and were driven out of the sacred space.[36] Humanity also fell and was also driven out of this sacred space.[37] Some fallen spirit beings and humans even tried building an alternative sacred space which God destroyed.[38] God's requirement was that any sacred space in His name must be a place which He designated.[39] He designated Moses' tabernacle, David's tabernacle, Solomon's temple, the restored temple in Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth, and "the Church which is His body".[40] But these were all temporary sacred spaces for the Lord to dwell in during human history. **The**

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[31] Exodus 40:34-38
[32] 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, 7:1-2
[33] John 14:10-11
[34] 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; 1 Peter 2:5
[35] Revelation 21:2-3, 22:2
[36] Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:16-17; Daniel 8:10; Revelation 12:9
[37] Genesis 3:23-24
[38] Genesis 11:1-9
[39] Exodus 20:24; Deuteronomy 12:5, 11; 2 Chronicles 7:12; Ezekiel 37:26-28, 43:7; Cf. Psalm 78:68
[40] Ephesians 1:23; Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:15-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16

nature of the Fall was being evicted from the sacred space around God's throne.

God has designated an eternal sacred space – the New Jerusalem with the restored Tree of Life - in which there is "no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple".[41] This is "the Garden of the Lord" – Eden restored.[42]

[41] Revelation 21:22

[42] Genesis 2:8, 13:10; Cf. Genesis 3:8

There Was More than One "Fall"

The Fall of Lucifer

In Matthew 16:23, Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan". He was speaking to Satan, who was "behind" Peter. In the same way, Isaiah is speaking of Satan, who is "behind" the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:4-23. And, Ezekiel is speaking of Satan, who is "behind" the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:1-19. The satans - namely, the adversaries - "behind" these earthly kings were *elohim*, that is, they were *angelic beings who had been created by God and had rebelled against God*.

"12 How you have fallen from heaven, O Star of the Morning, Son of the Dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! 13 But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" (Isaiah 14:12-14)

This angelic being was called the "Star of the Morning", the "Son of Dawn". It desired to "sit on the mount of the assembly". This "assembly" was the *Divine Assembly*, or *Divine Counsel* (which I will discuss shortly in a little more detail). This angelic being said, "I will raise my

throne above the stars of God." It is possible that this could be interpreted as: *"I will raise my throne (rule) above the sons of God."* (which were other elohim, angelic beings). It wanted to make itself "like the Most High". This angelic being was a seraph – a *"covering angel"*[43], also referred to in Scripture as a *"watcher"*[44]. These beings, along with other angelic beings are *elohim*, "sons of God", also referred to as "holy ones".

"[12] You had the seal of perfection[45], full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. [13] **"You were in Eden, the garden of God; e**very precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald and the gold. The workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. [14] **You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God;** you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. [15] You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until **unrighteousness was found in you**. [16] "By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore, **I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God**. And I have destroyed you, O **covering cherub**, from the midst of the stones of fire. [17] "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I

[43] Isaiah 6:2, 6; Ezekiel 28:14, 16; 1 Kings 22:19

[44] Daniel 4:13, 17

[45] Lit. the one sealing a pattern.

cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you." (Ezekiel 28:12-17)

This is the same "covering angel" or "watcher"; but Ezekiel gives additional information: This being was "in Eden, the Garden of God … on the Mountain of God". When "unrighteousness" – namely, pride was found in him, he was cast down.

"3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, **a great red dragon** having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. **4** And his tail swept away **a third of the stars of heaven** and threw them to the earth…. **7** And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with **the Dragon**. **The Dragon and his angels** waged war, **8** and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. **9** And **the Great Dragon** was thrown down, **the Serpent of Old who is called the Devil and Satan,** who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him…. **10** **the Accuser of our brethren** has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night." (Revelation 12:3-4, 7-10)

Because of its fallen nature, this same being has also been identified by different names – "the serpent of old", "the great dragon", "the Devil and Satan",[46] "the accuser of the brethren".

[46] John 8:44

The Fall of the Divine Council

We just read in Revelation 12 that "the Dragon's tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth". These were "the Dragon and his angels". These angels are the elohim, previously mentioned – the spirit (angelic) beings created by God – also called "sons of God".[47] In Psalm 82:1-8, these "gods" (elohim) are referred to as "rulers"[48] (v. 5) and "sons of the Most High" (v.6). And in Jude 1:6, they are referred to *"the angels who did not keep their own domain*, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day".[49]

Genesis 6:1-4 records the controversial narrative regarding how "the sons of God came into the daughters of men" (v. 4) and gave birth to "Nephilim" who are described as "giants", "the ones of old", "men of renown".[50] Genesis 6:4 reads:

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, *and also afterward,* when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were *the*

[47] Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 29:1; 89:6
[48] Cf. Ephesians 6:12
[49] Cf. 2 Peter 2:4
[50] There is another theory: The fallen angels, having knowledge of human genetics, indwelt certain men and women who would have the right traits to produce a race of giants and induced them to cohabit with each other.

mighty men who were of old, men of renown." Therefore, the Nephilim were on the earth *before* the flood and *after* the flood. How? (They did not survive the flood.) *They were there after the flood the same way they were there before the flood:*

Later in Hebrew history, when Israel entered into the Promised Land, the Nephilim (giants) were living in the land of Canaan[51] among the Rephaites, the Ammorites, the Anakites, and the Philistines.[52] The Rephaites and the Anakites (along with the Nephilim) worshipped Baal (Hadad) and Asherah (Astarte). The Ammorites worshipped Molech (Moloch, Milcom). Along with Dagon (the Philistines' god), Tammuz (Syria's god), Chemosh (Moab's god), and Mekart (Tyre's god), these gods are the elohim mentioned throughout the Old Testament scriptures.[53]

In order to preserve the nation of Israel – namely, the "woman" who would bring forth the Messiah ("the Man Child") in God's plan of redemption[54] - God instructed Israel to "completely destroy" these nations, so as to prevent any further marriage and co-habitation with

[51] Numbers 13:33 and Deuteronomy 2:20-21; 3:11
[52] These giants (mighty ones) are possibly also mentioned as being in Sheol. (Ezekiel 32:17-32; Cf. Jude 1:6)
[53] www.BibleSources.AmericanBible.org/resources/canaanite-gods-and-goddesses
[54] Revelation 12

the giants and their gods.[55] Because of God's command to "completely destroy" these nations – men, women and children - many see God as a "Moral Monster", an accusation which is refuted by Paul Copan, William Lane Craig, and others.[56]

The Fall of Humanity

The Fall of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3 is very well known, and therefore, doesn't warrant repeating here, except to point out the cause of the Fall: Humanity had made the choice to live independently of God, deciding for themselves what they deemed to be good and evil. And the consequence: "The Lord God sent them out from the Garden of Eden" and "stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life" (v. 24). So, at the end of this age, "To him who overcomes, (God) will

[55] Deuteronomy 2:34, 3:6, 20:16-18. Also: Judges 2:1-3; 1 Samuel 15:2-3; 1 Kings 11:5, 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3-4

[56] There is another perspective which, while endeavoring to be Christ-centered, is hermeneutically erroneous: Greg Boyd in his book, "Cross Vision: How the Crucifixion of Jesus Makes Sense of Old Testament Violence", interprets these Old Testament passages as depicting acts of violence as being committed by sinful Israel, but not actually instructed by God; but were "blamed" on God by the writers of the Hebrew scriptures, to which God takes their blame upon Himself and forgives it on the Cross of Christ. In order for this theory to make sense, Boyd has to present a "unique" but spurious definition of "inspiration", in which he depicts both God and sinful human writers doing the "breathing" of the scriptures.

grant to eat of the tree of life[57] which is in the Paradise of God"[58]. But the immediate consequences of the Fall were:

- Cain's murder of his brother Abel[59]
- "the wickedness of man was great on the earth"
- "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."[60]
- The Noahic Flood
- The Shinar settlement – "a city and a power whose top reached into heaven".[61]

The Fall of Babel[62]

"**1** Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. **2** It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3** They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.' And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. **4** They said, 'Come, **let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven,** and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.' **5 The LORD came down** to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. **6** The LORD said, 'Behold, they

[57] Revelation 2:7, Cf. 22:1-2, 7
[58] Luke 23:43
[59] Genesis 4
[60] Genesis 6:5
[61] Genesis 11:4
[62] The World System

are one people, and they all have the same language. And **this is what they began to do**, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. **7** Come, **let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city**.**9** Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:1-9

The Tower of Babel was, in all probability, an ancient ziggurat—a large, stepped structure typically built next to temples. They were not made for people, but for gods to come down from heaven[63] and supply the needs of the people. **These builders tried to establish the sacred space which they had lost in the Garden of Eden. But this would have been a sacred place dedicated to the elohim**. The Lord destroyed the "easy access" for the elohim. However, these people ended up worshipping these gods never-the-less, for Scripture tells us that God turned the nations over to these elohim:

"7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, your

[63] This is exactly what the Most High God does in Gen 11:5.

elders, and they will tell you. 8 When the Most High **gave the nations their inheritance**, when He **separated the sons of man**, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of **the sons of Israel**. 9 **For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance**." Deuteronomy 32:7-9

The descendants of these people occupied Canaan and worshipped these same gods, which were later called the "Baals of Canaan". These were the people and the gods which Israel was to overthrow when they possessed the Promised Land.

The words in Deuteronomy 32:7, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you" indicate that what the next two verses communicate was passed on orally from generation to generation and was therefore common knowledge to the Jews. That includes the Jews of the first century who recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah – namely, the apostles who wrote the New Testament and their Jewish audience. In other words, **the information communicated in verses 8 and 9 was part of Jewish oral tradition depicting something which is "mentioned", but apparently not needed to be elaborated upon, by the writers of the New Testament scriptures**:

"8 When the Most High **gave the nations their inheritance**, when He **separated the sons of man**, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of **the sons of Israel**. 9 **For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance**." Deuteronomy 32:8-9

In these two verses, we see two inheritances: the inheritance of the nations, and the inheritance of the Lord. The Lord's inheritance was His people – Jacob (Israel). We are told that the nations also had an inheritance, but that inheritance doesn't seem to be specified. Let's read verses 8 and 9 in the *Apostolic Bible Polyglot*[64] which uses a Greek translation of the Old Testament:

"When the Most High **divided the nations into parts**, as He **disseminated the sons of Adam**, He set the borders of nations **according to the number of the angels of God**; and **His people, Jacob, became a portion for the Lord."**

This translation communicates that God's people, Jacob (Israel), became the Lord's portion (inheritance). It also says that when the Lord "disseminated the sons of Adam", He "divided the *nations*". The Greek word translated "nations" is *ethnos*[65], which in Scripture always refers to

[64] A translation by Charles Vander Pool which uses a Greek translation of the Old Testament keying the Greek words to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.
[65] Strong's # G1484

people groups which were *not Israel* – that is, pagan, heathen, gentile nations – that is, the nations which later occupied Canaan at the time Israel was to possess the Promised Land. And this translation also indicates that the Lord did this **"according to the numbers of *the angels of God*"**. The Greek word translated "angels" is *aggelos*[66], which refers to the spirit beings created by God – the elohim we have been discussing. **God gave those "gods" as an inheritance to the other nations which worshipped these gods. In other words, God turn those nations over to the rule and oppression of their false gods**. Again, these nations and their gods were the same that Israel was to overthrow when they were to possess the Promised Land. Hopefully it is clear that God instructed Israel to "completely destroy" these nations so as to prevent any further marriage and co-habitation with the giants and their gods[67] in order to preserve the nation of Israel – the "woman" who would bring forth the Messiah ("the Man Child) in God's plan of redemption.[68]

Genesis 12 is the beginning of the story of Abraham, through whom God would bring forth "His portion,

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[66] "Angels" – Greek: aggelos (Strong's # G32), of "God" – Greek: theos (Strong's # G2316).
[67] Deuteronomy 2:34, 3:6, 20:16-18. Also: Judges 2:1-3; 1 Samuel 15:2-3; 1 Kings 11:5, 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3-4
[68] Revelation 12

Jacob" – that is, His inheritance, Israel, and the Christ who would accomplish God's ultimate plan for re-establishing His sacred space in which He would eternally dwell with Humanity.[69]

But, getting back to the *Babel* of Genesis 11: This is the origin of *Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth*[70] – which is, what I will refer to as "the world system".[71] The following quote describes this "world system" and the evil which we see **finally** overthrown[72]:

"(The world system is) an ordered system governed from behind the scenes by Satan. This system encompasses politics, education, literature, science, art, law, commerce, music -- anything involved in the progress of mankind.... No matter how good the initial intentions, all organizations created by mankind eventually turn away from Godly power to worldliness. When the influence of Divine Life is removed, organizations gravitate towards materialism, humanism, worldliness, and Satan."[73]

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[69] Cf. Revelation 21-22

[70] Revelation 17:5

[71] For a more in-depth discussion of the "world system", see my essays: "The Spirit of the World": eBook. Paperback.

[72] Cf. Revelation 17-19

[73] This quote is from a book summary (not an excerpt) of "Love Not the World" by Watchman Nee offered by a Davin Dahlgren. This book, as with his many other books, is actually published from the notes taken by his students during Watchman Nee's talks (1920-1972).

What is Evil?

In this section, I'd like to return to the scripture references we started with:

"8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. **9** Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; **17** but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17)

"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" (Genesis 3:22)

In the beginning of this article, we discussed the following questions: *"Why did God even allow evil?" "Why did He create the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil?" "Why did He allow the temptation, knowing it would result in the Fall – followed by evil, sickness and death?"*

In this section, I'd like to continue addressing those questions, but in a way which is probably more speculative. Please follow the line of thought until the end, as this will begin with some statements which are understandably difficult to accept on first hearing. I hope to present a logical argument which I believe has helped me know and understand God more fully, and has given me somewhat more satisfying answers to these questions about evil. I do believe God is "logical", as He said, "Come now, and let us *reason* together."[74] Yet, just as His thoughts and ways are higher than ours, so too, His logic is higher than ours.[75] We are dealing here with a mystery of God. A mystery is something we cannot understand *on our own by looking at nature*. (It is beyond science.) Yet, a mystery isn't something we cannot understand. A mystery is something we need God to reveal to us – through His Spirit and His written words. I will leave it to the reader to decide if what I have to offer is, in fact, true to the Spirit and word of God.

So, let us ask another question: *"What is evil?"* Evil is anything and everything God is *not.* Evil is anything and everything *apart from (separated from) God* –

[74] Isaiah 1:18

[75] Isaiah 55:8-9

specifically, **without God's "keeping" power**.[76] Hang on to that thought.

God is the Source of life. Death is separation from life. Therefore death , spiritually speaking, is separation from God. Evil, like "death" is a state of existence – that is, a state of being separated from (apart from) God. Evil is *not s*omething God creates. Evil isn't even something which spirit beings or human beings create. Evil is the state the creation finds itself *in*, and finds *within* itself, **when the "keeping" power of the Creator is removed.** And I would suggest that the removal of the **"keeping" power of God** is initiated by an act of the human will – namely, the choice to live **independent of God**. This is what took place in the Fall of Humanity (as well as the Fall of Lucifer and the elohim).

The Fall of Humanity didn't really create sin and death; it allowed Humanity to **know** sin and death through experiential knowledge. **Humanity needed the knowledge of good and evil in order to more fully know and understand God.**[77] This is *why* there was the

[76] Jude 1:24 "Now to Him who is able to **keep you** from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy." Cf. Romans 16:25-27.

[77] That is, Humanity would know God also through contradistinction – by recognizing what God is not.

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden. And this is *why* God allowed the temptation, knowing Humanity would fail in the temptation.

We know and understand light in contrast to darkness. Just as we can only know and understand aspects of God's self-denying, self-dying love through the fellowship (participation in) the sufferings of Christ. Likewise, **there are aspects of His goodness we can only know and understand in contrast to evil.**

So, Humanity needed to *"eat the fruit"* of the Tree of the *Knowledge* of Good and Evil. The *fruit* of that tree is *the natural outcome of the seed* of that tree. The *knowledge* acquired was the ability to discern the difference between good (God) and **evil (everything without God).**

Humanity needed to know – through experiential knowledge – we are *"like"* God, but not *"just like"* God, because we are *not* God. Through faith in Christ, we can be children of God, but not just like "the only begotten".[78] Yet, God told Humanity, "the day you eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge and Good and Evil, you will surely die". When Humanity ate from the tree, *God let go* – **He released His keeping power.** Humanity

[78] See the Addendum: More concerning "The Sons of God".

experienced Evil, and they **died** – that is, they were separated from the Creator of life. Again, this was initiated by an act of the human will.

Who Is Doing What?

So, in order to demonstrate all this, God allowed Humanity to fail in the temptation and eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Prior to this event with Humanity, God *allowed the will* of Lucifer, **let go His keeping power** and *evil was found in* Lucifer.[79] God also **let go of His keeping power** and *allowed the will* of the sons of God to do evil with the daughters of Adam.[80] And, God *allowed* Humanity to continue in evil[81], before sending the flood; and *allowed* them to "build a city and a tower whose top reached into heaven"[82], before putting an end to their "making themselves a name."[83] God created **none** of this Evil – He *allowed* it to be chosen.

Regarding the classic case of Pharaoh: Did God "harden Pharaoh's heart"? Or did Pharaoh harden his own heart? Or did God allow Pharaoh to harden his own heart, **by letting go of His keeping power**? The reality is that **God *allowed* Pharaoh not to change the evil that**

[79] Ezekiel 28:15, Greek Old Testament: adikema, Strong's # G92 – "evil doing".
[80] Genesis 6:4
[81] Genesis 6:5-6, 11-12
[82] Genesis 11:4
[83] Genesis 11:5-9; Cf. Deuteronomy 1:28, 9:1

already resident in him. As I said before, in the Book of Exodus, there are verses which say that *Pharaoh hardened his heart*.[84] And there are verses which say that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart".[85] Again, the understanding is that *God allowed Pharaoh's heart to remain hardened* – and *He allowed it for a reason* – that is, to **supernaturally** deliver Israel from Egypt, and in the process, to overpower and shame the gods of Egypt.[86]

We see other examples where God allowed kings' hearts to remain hardened for a specific reason – that they would make war against the Spirit of God and **as a consequence** be destroyed. This took place specifically in Canaan - not only that Israel might possess the Promised Land, but also that God could *demonstrate His supremacy over the Baals:*

"But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, **in order to deliver him into your hand**, as he is today." Deuteronomy 2:30

"18 Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. 19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took

[84] Exodus 7:13, 14, 22, 8:19, 9:35, 11:9
[85] Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:20, 27, 11:10, 14:4
[86] Cf. Exodus 7:8-13, and the ten plagues in chapters 7-11

them all in battle. 20 For it was of the Lord to harden[87] their hearts, to meet Israel in battle **in order that he might utterly destroy them**, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the Lord had commanded Moses." Joshua 11:18-20

Again, when Israel inhabited the Promised Land, God called for the utter destruction of the inhabitants to discourage inter-marriage with the pagan nations and worship of the Baals of Canaan, because Israel was to be the "woman" who would bring forth the Man Child[88] who would be the Messiah and accomplish God's plan of redemption – not only of Humanity, but also of the whole of creation – for the creation had been "subjected to futility and slavery to corruption".[89]

[87] Greek Old Testament: katischuo, Strong's # G2729, "to make strong"
[88] Revelation 12
[89] Romans 8:20-23

Intrinsic Goodness
versus
Utilitarian Goodness

While the creation reveals the knowledge and glory of God[90], **without the keeping power** of the Creator – that is, *independent of God*, the Creation is **not inherently good**. The "it was good" in Genesis 1[91] was *a utilitarian goodness* rather than *an intrinsic goodness*. James Strong makes a distinction between the word *agathos*,[92] which means *intrinsically good* and the word *kalos*, which means *"valuable"* or *"beautiful"*.[93] The "it was good" in Genesis 1 indicates *a utilitarian goodness*, meaning *"it was valuable"*. It is the same word used in Genesis 3:6 in reference to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and was a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise…." – that is, its fruit had *a utilitarian goodness* – **but not an intrinsic goodness**. In much the same way, Humanity was created in the "image" of God[94] and in the "likeness" of God[95]; but the apostle Paul speaking of himself, said "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that

[90] Psalm 19:1-2
[91] Verses 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31
[92] Strong's # G18
[93] Strong's # G2570
[94] Greek Old Testament: eikon, Strong's # G1504, "representation".
[95] Greek Old Testament: homoiosis, Strong's # G3669, "resemblance"

is, in my flesh"[96] – that is, nothing *agathos*[97], **nothing intrinsically good.**

I am *not* making a case for Gnosticism here, which would proport that the spiritual is good and that the material is evil. I am *not* saying that the material creation is evil. In a manner of speaking, it is "neutral". With the **keeping power** of God, it is good; but **willfully independent** of God, it tends toward evil.

This is the "death" we have been set free from by Christ Jesus our Lord!

"9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. **10** If Christ is in you, **though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness**." Romans 8:9-10; Cf. 7:24-25

"He who has the Son, has the life"! 1 John 5:12

[96] Romans 7:18
[97] Strong's # G18

Out of Death into Life

God's plan of Redemption was nothing less than making it possible for Humanity to **pass out of death into life.**

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but **has passed out of death into life**." John 5:24 Cf. 1 John 3:14

Whereas death reigned in all of Humanity because of the Fall of the First Man, Adam, God's plan of redemption was to reverse the Falls and, through the free gifts of the grace and righteousness of God, make it possible for Humanity to "reign in life through the One Jesus Christ".[98]

Father God sent the God-Man – that is, Christ Jesus – the Last Adam who, upon His resurrection from the dead, became a living-giving Spirit.[99] And "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death."[100]

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[98] Romans 5:12-21
[99] 1 Corinthians 15:45; Cf. John 5:21, 6:57
[100] Romans 8:2

And, like the Man, Jesus the Christ, there now is a New Humanity with the Spirit of God in them.[101]

When we repent[102] - that is, have a change in our perspective, heart and mind which bears fruit in our life, **God allows us to *see* our utter dependence upon His keeping power**. And, because of **the indwelling Spirit, the keeping power of God** is now resident in the New Creation. Therefore, *we are never apart from or separated from God*[103] – **no longer in the state of Death or Evil.**

[101] 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatian 6:15
[102] Greek: metanoeo, Strong's # G3340
[103] Read Romans 8.

Addendum

More concerning "the sons of God"

The elohim are referred to as "the sons of God". But John 3:16 tells us that Jesus is God's **"only begotten Son"** – that is, He is of a different "kind[104], with God's seed in Him[105]. And that Seed is unique. It is the Seed of a different creation – a New Creation. When we were outside of Christ, we were "a little lower than the angels"[106]. But Christ, who for "a little while was lower than the angels" (during His years on earth), is now, after His resurrection and glorification, "better than" the angels.[107] When, through faith, we are baptized *into Christ*, we are *in that unique Seed – in the "only begotten Son"*.[108] We are *in His "kind"*. So, when Christ "brings the many sons[109] into glory"[110], we will also no longer be lower than the elohim. In fact, Scripture says we will judge the angels (elohim) in the kingdom.[111]

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[104] Greek: genos, Strong's # G1085
[105] Genesis 1:11
[106] Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7
[107] Hebrews 1:4
[108] Galatians 3:16
[109] When we are in Christ, we are "sons in the Son".
[110] Hebrews 2:10
[111] Psalm 8:4-5; Hebrews 2:5-11; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Cf. Daniel 7:22

Bill & Frances Furioso

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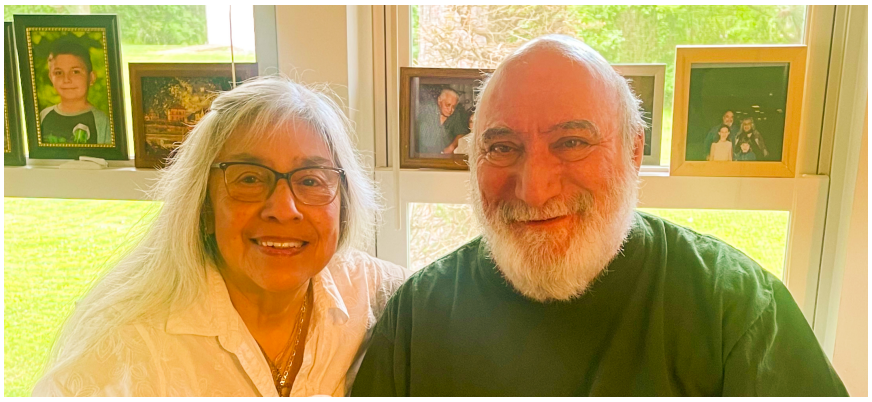

Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

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Some Thoughts on Evil
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