

## Why Is There So Much Evil in the World?

1. One of the strangest realizations, the most jolting revelations I ever received exploded in my mind one day when a man I love challenged me to explain why God allows so much evil, so much darkness in our world. By revelation, I knew the answer immediately, but it took time to sort it out in the Scripture.

For years and years, I had been taught that the first thing God created was light. Gen. 1:3, the third verse of the Bible, says *“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”* I had always assumed and was always taught that those words “Let there be light” defined God’s first creative act. No, no. That was wrong.

Watch carefully. Gen. 1:1-2 say, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”* So what does that tell us? Before God said, “Let there be light,” He had already created heaven, the spirit-realm, a place populated by Himself and angels. Presumably, before God made Adam, Lucifer, the light-bearer of God, had already rebelled there joined by 1/3 of God’s own angels. So God says, “In the beginning, God created the heaven” — His home, His Kingdom — “and the earth” which means He created a physical realm as well. That’s the earth — but not as we know it. Earth, at first, wasn’t an attractive place. The Bible says it was without form, literally meaning “a confused, empty place of chaos.” It was “void,” meaning “a wasteland, under God’s judgment,” and finally it existed in total darkness.

So why did God create this place, this planet earth in this form and why first? Well, there’s only one reason that God presents to us. Listen to Rev. 12:7-9, *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”* And then, just in case we are tempted to see these words are allegorical and not referring to some historical event, in Luke 10 Jesus sends out 72 disciples to serve as heralds, men to announce among the towns and cities of Israel that He was coming to teach among them. When those 72 disciples return, they are overjoyed because, they say, “Even demons are subject to us in your name!” Hearing those words, Jesus tells them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.”

And so why did God create this place, this first planet, this confused, empty place of judgment? And when Satan was cast out, why does Revelation tell us that “he was thrown down on the earth,” an event Jesus Himself said that He watched.

And why, when Adam was created, was Satan apparently already here and familiar to this place? I can't help but conclude that God created Earth first because He needed a holding cell, He needed a maximum security prison in which to confine Lucifer and all of his minions. That's the meaning of Gen. 1:1, *"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."* That's what Genesis presents: God first created Planet Earth as a holding place, a prison for Lucifer and all those angels who rebelled against God before Adam was created.

2. Once that thought settles in, then another question rises up — if this line of reasoning is correct, then why in the world would God put Adam and Eve on this planet? Why would He do that? If Debbie came to me and said, "Dave, I'm pregnant!" nobody would ever expect me, when I got up off of the ground, to say "Debbie, that's great! Let's move to Leavenworth Prison and raise up our kids there!" But, more or less, that's the scenario Genesis presents to us. That's the most reasonable, literal interpretation of the very first sentences in the Bible, upheld by both cross-references and experience. God doesn't say He created light first; it says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The rest follows from there.
3. The question still remains, why? Why would God do that? Why would God create Adam, and in Adam create us, in a planet already occupied by the essence of evil? And the answer goes back to yesterday's devotion. The answer is because His ultimate purpose is to conform each one of us to His image and to His likeness. He is a God who opposes evil. He is a God who values righteousness. He is a God of love and goodness. And all of those things only become real to us in the presence of their opposites. Generosity only flourishes in the face of need. Kindness only flourishes in the face of cruelty. Hope becomes hope in the face of despair. Goodness becomes goodness in the face of evil. God put us here to conform us to His image, to raise up children who would stand with Him in goodness and righteousness, and this is His means of making that happen.
4. So when people ask, "If God is so good, then why is there so much suffering in the world?" my answer is, "Pain and suffering are here for us, for believers, for the church, for children of God — that we might respond as Christ modeled for us, that we might become conformed to His image, that we might become true children of God — not just in word but in action.
5. Father, you whispered to me yesterday morning, "Dave, it's all about purpose, place, person, position and power." Today, Father, I am addressing place — why you created us here, why we were born into this world, why you made Earth home for us. Open our eyes, Lord, to the truth of your word. Open our eyes to this truth.