

Q. How did evil appear in the Garden of Eden?

A. There are only three possibilities for how evil appeared in the Garden of Eden. Either 1) God had no intention of evil appearing but it crept in accidentally anyway, 2) God knew that evil might appear but he intentionally took a neutral stance and then came up with a plan depending on what Adam and Eve chose, or 3) God intended evil to appear in the Garden because it served His purpose to glorify His Son.

The first possibility makes God to be a bungler who could not stop a major catastrophe from interfering with His design. Such a being could never be trusted to bring about anything He intends, He might wind up losing everyone and saving no one, and He does not fit the definition of God (perfect, all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere at all times, and He is love). So, the first possibility must be rejected.

The second possibility also has very real problems with the definition of God. If God is all-knowing (omniscient) and present everywhere at all times (omnipresent), then He would have to have known ahead the choice that Eve would make, the choice that Adam would make, and the choices that everyone through the history of all humanity would make. But if God knows those choices, indeed knew those choices from eternity, then those choices must be fixed with no possibility of change. If they are fixed, and have been fixed from eternity, then they are not really free choices, and the only Being who could have fixed them is God. Thus the definition of God makes nonsense of possibility number two.

Another problem with possibility two is that it puts man into a position superior to God. It makes God to be the being who reacts to man's choices. Adam and Eve sin, so God reacts to that; all through history, God is reacting to man's choices. This makes man the leader and God the follower. God, in possibility two, does not seem to have a definite plan from eternity that He is working out in history. He is just reacting to man. Again, this is not an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God.

Also, possibility two assumes that God takes a neutral stance and gives people free choice because He loves them and wants them to

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choose good for themselves. But is this love? If God loves everyone, why would He allow them to make a choice that could damn them to hell for eternity? Suppose I have a little boy. He is standing on the edge of a cliff. He might step off and he might not. Am I supposed to sit there and do nothing and say the choice is his? Am I to think that interfering would not be love? That would be crazy! If I love the child, I will interfere and prevent him from falling off the edge of the cliff. If there are people whom God loves, certainly He would make sure they are not damned to hell; if there are people who are damned to hell, God does not love them with an eternal love and never intended that they be saved.

The question of evil is best answered by possibility three. In this possibility, we understand that God purposed the entire creation, from beginning to end, before the world began. God's intent is to glorify Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 17:1). He intended evil to enter the world. He intended Adam and Eve to sin. He intended their posterity to be condemned in sin. He intended to save His people out of their sins through His Son, Jesus Christ, and He intended to damn others to hell for eternity.

We can better understand possibility three by seeing that it fulfills God's plan from eternity. Let's look at it from God's goal and work our way backwards. God's intention is to glorify His Son by giving Him a people. They will be His Son's people by His Son being their Savior. In the course of time, Jesus will make atonement on the Cross for the sins of His people, saving them from their sins, their sinful nature, and the sinful world (because of this, there must be a people who are not saved—the sinful world—from which the Son's people are saved). The Son's people will need a Savior because they will be sinful. They will be sinful by being born in sin because Adam's sin is imputed to them and by having a tendency toward sin that humans have had from Creation. This tendency toward or weakness for sin coupled with the incitement created by law (Romans 5:20; 7:8, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:56) creates a sinful nature or depravity that causes them to commit sin. Thus, all people, including the Son's, will have their own sins because of their depravity and will also even be born in sin that is imputed to them from the first of their race and representative, Adam. Adam will sin as representative of the human race. All of this will happen by God's decree.

To this intent, then, God had evil and sin enter the world. God Himself is not evil and does not sin. By the very fact that He is God, everything He does is right and good. Nevertheless, God says in Isaiah 45:7: "I

form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." He does this for good that He may glorify His Son and His Son may glorify Him and that we whom He has given to His Son may be glorified in them (read all of John 17).

To this end, God created even Satan, who tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Eve then gave the fruit to her husband to eat, and he deliberately sinned against God's command. None of this surprised God. It was according to His plan to save His people through His Son. Yet Satan, Eve, and Adam were all responsible for their sins. God did not commit the sins; He was not and is not the author of their sins or the sins of anyone else.

Possibility three is the only possibility that preserves the definition of God: He is perfect, all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere at all times, and He is love. Some will challenge the last by saying that it is not loving to create some people knowing they will not be saved. But in possibilities one and two, God's love is not perfect because anyone might not be saved. Therefore, He must love no one perfectly. Only in possibility three is God's love perfect. He loves His people and, in perfect love, makes absolutely certain that they are saved. It is like the difference between wheat and chaff. Just as the people who are not God's people in the world (the reprobate) keep the world's system going for the benefit of His people (the elect), so the stalk, leaves, and husks of the wheat plant serve essential purposes to bring the grains of wheat to maturity. The farmer wants only the grains of wheat, but to get them, he cares for the wheat plants as a whole. But once the purpose of this chaff is served, the grains of wheat are harvested and the chaff is burned (see Matthew 3:12). It is also like the difference between pets and livestock intended for slaughter. Both the pets and livestock are diligently cared for, just as God generally cares for everyone (see Matthew 5:45). But, the pets are to be loved and the livestock are to be killed (see 2 Peter 2:12). Some people might try to protest that this is not fair, but the Bible has already answered them:

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So

then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

—Romans 9:11-24

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