

How Does God and Satan Work on the Earth

A friend of mine had been reading my book, “*Why? A Biblical Explanation for Evil*”. Certain statements I made in the book prompted him to ask me some very important questions. On page 102 of the book I wrote, “Though Satan’s time is short, God must honor the covenant He made with man (Rev. 12:9-11).” My friend asked, “Can you tell me more about your understanding about that or direct me to anywhere you have written about it? I could not see the connection with Rev 12:9-11. Where are the details of such a covenant?”

Furthermore he wanted to know if I had any verses that supported the fact that, “God searches for someone *on the earth* to display His strength on their behalf. By covenant right, God cannot just do anything that He wants on the earth.” (p. 105) Finally, his last question is worth quoting verbatim:

Then you wrote: “Man became responsible for inviting God into the earth to intervene on his behalf.” The question I have is: since at the fall, mankind basically handed that dominion over to Satan why isn’t it Satan who invites or bars God from intervening? I know Satan would rather not have God involved and objects when God does act (eg blessing Job). So why does man still have the option of praying to ask God to act or not? Does man continue to have some degree of dominion? Perhaps man has dominion just over himself but not over the earth?

I believe that these are important questions to address if we are to fully understand the problem of evil and why (as some claim) that God doesn’t seem to be doing anything about it. It is essential to tackle the difficulties that my friend presents in order to understand why God can be good, loving, kind and powerful yet does not stop evil (via Satan) from reigning in this world.

God’s Covenant with Mankind

When God created man He made some *unconditional* statements to him:

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and **God said unto them**, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And **God said**, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.*
(Gen. 1:27-30)

A covenant is a *binding* agreement between two or more people. Once God *said* these things to Adam He was bound to them and there was no taking them back. Anything that God says is binding on Him due to His inability to lie or go back on His Word (Ps. 89:33-35; Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 6:17-18). He cannot even change His mind concerning unconditional statements (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Rom. 11:29; 2 Cor. 1:19-20). God is very serious about His fidelity to His Word and in order to prove His trustworthiness He has placed His Word above His very name. The Psalmist says:

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name (Psalm 138:2).

If God places His Word above His very name then we can have confidence in His commitment to it. After all, God's Name represents His person and character. He regards His Name as *holy* (Lev. 22:2, 32; 1 Chron. 16:10, 35; Psalm 99:3; 111:9). For Him to place His Word above His Name means that He has a serious regard for it. God cannot have a different and separate "will" than that of His Word since He places this above His very Name which represents His character.

God cannot "sovereignly" do things that contradict His Word because doing them would call His character and integrity into question. We can fully trust His Word as a clear revelation of His will. Otherwise, we couldn't, "*praise thy name.... for thy truth*"

Whenever God states a word or gives a promise then this is *binding* on Him, thus it is a *covenant*. A good example is found in 2 Samuel 7. God gave the prophet Nathan a dream concerning His wonderful plans for King David and his descendants. Nowhere in 2 Samuel 7 does God (or Nathan) use the word "covenant." Yet, later revelation tells us that God considers his promises to David as having made a covenant (2 Chron. 7:18; 13:5; 21:7; Psalm 89:1-4, 33-36; Jer. 33:21). Once God who is unable to lie *said* these things to David they became binding upon Him, thus it is considered to be a covenant.

Therefore, when we read, "*The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men*" (Psalm 115:16), this was binding on God. Later, man abdicated his authority over the earth to Satan (Luke 4:5-6). God has the omnipotent power to take back the authority over the earth by force if He so chooses, but to do this would be at the expense of His integrity.

Therefore, the only way for Him to get back all authority on the earth is to become a man Himself. In order to restore that authority to His beloved man, He would have to allow Satan to illegally kill Him, which Satan blindly did in his blood lust. But by doing so Satan lost his *legal* rights to have permanent authority. He no longer has a legal right over any man because the blood of Jesus has potentially redeemed all men. Mankind now has a right to come from under Satan's reign.

But Satan does not back down easily. He continues to assert his claim over the earth and over men by making continued accusations against them. This is where Rev. 12:9-11 fits in. The blood of Jesus frees man from Satan's accusations. Furthermore, the blood of Jesus guarantees us that Satan's time is short and that he will only be able to continue these activities but for so long before he is permanently removed from the scene forever.

God Searching for Men to Work Through

The whole Bible from the time of Adam's fall is a revelation of God seeking a man that He can work through in order to save the people of the earth. When the destruction by water came in Noah's day God had to work through Noah to build an ark to save his family and most species of earth's animals. Had Noah disobeyed then mankind would no longer exist.

Later, God found Abraham and, through him, He would extend His blessings on the earth to the rest of the nations. He told Abram:

*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and **in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.***
(Gen. 12:2-3)

There could be no blessing on the earth apart from God finding a yielded person on the earth that He is able to work through. Since Abraham yielded to God, he and his descendants (Israel) became God's channel of blessing for the earth.

As we continue to look at Bible history we find that God needed to work through Moses to rescue Israel from Egypt. Not one plague came upon Egypt nor did one plague cease apart from Moses using the authority that God instructed him to use. In Judges, whenever the people sinned and suffered the consequences God had to raise up a judge to work through in order to rescue His people from it. Later, we find God working through kings and prophets. In the New Testament there is no spreading of the gospel and no miraculous intervention of miracles, healing and deliverances apart from men who were yielded to God.

Because God cannot go back on His Word to Adam He is ever looking and searching for those who will yield themselves to Him so that He can work through them on the earth. When Israel demanded a king against God's will, God, being the ever loving God that He is, chose someone at the time who had the best qualities, which was Saul. However, Saul allowed his position to make him become arrogant and disobedient. Therefore God, speaking through the prophet Samuel, told him, "*But now, your authority will not go on: the Lord, **searching for a man** who is pleasing to him in every way, has given him the place of ruler over his people, because you have not done what the Lord gave you orders to do.*" (1 Sam. 13:14; Bible in Basic English).

The Psalmist wrote, "*The Lord **looked down** from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God*" (Psalm 14:2) God is always having to

look and search for yielded vessels that He can work through in order to accomplish His plans and purposes on the earth. He told Asa:

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. (2 Chron. 16:9)

Because of God's word to Adam, He cannot intervene in the affairs of the earth apart from finding someone who has a heart for Him. Jesus Himself told us, "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: **for the Father seeketh such to worship him***" (John 4:23). Father God is actually *seeking* sincere worshippers. He needs yielded vessels on the earth in order to accomplish His goals for mankind. Ezekiel offers the most profound, but also, somewhat complicated statement concerning this:

*And **I sought for a man** among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD (Eze. 22:30, 31)*

God sought for a man to stand in the gap? Why? So that He would not have to destroy the land. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze. 33:11). However, God cannot intervene to stop disaster apart from someone inviting Him.

We see from this passage that God needs someone to pray in order to stop His judgments. On the other hand, if no one prays then He seems to be able to judge without anyone's consent. This appears contradicting at first but if we understand God's method of bringing judgment it removes the seeming contradiction.

Verse 31 says, "*Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath.*" Here God takes personal responsibility for the impending disaster. However, one must learn to interpret Scripture with Scripture in order to understand the *method* by which God will do this. Ezekiel himself describes this method only one chapter earlier:

*And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and **deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy** (Ezekiel 21:31)*

In His wrath God will not *personally* do the destroying but He will "deliver" His people over to evil destroyers. The word "recompensed" in Ezekiel 22:31 and the word "deliver" in

Ezekiel 21:31 are both translated from the Hebrew word “*nathan*” which means to *allow* or *permit*. God’s method of “destroying” is to remove His protection and allow the forces of evil to have their way (Hosea 11:8-9). He has no choice but to *allow* this apart from our praying.

Sin is forfeiting God’s protection. God wants to protect but men continue to rebel against Him. He looks for a man who will invite Him in to stop the impending judgment but He is unable to find anyone so He is left with no choice but to allow this destruction to come.

How God Works in the Earth

The Psalmist wrote, “*For thou hast made him but little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor. **Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet**” (Psalm 8:5, 6; American Standard Version). According to an older version of the Webster's dictionary, the word “dominion” is defined as, “Sovereign or supreme authority; the power of governing and controlling.”¹ William Wilson says that Hebrew meaning of the word dominion is “authority as lord and proprietor.”²*

God gave man dominion – sovereignty, authority, supremacy, lordship, and proprietorship – over the works of His hands. This is why I say without hesitation that we must be careful when using certain Christian catch phrases like “God is in control.” The church has simply “left it in the hands of God” while God is trying to tell us that, due to covenant reasons, He is unable to demonstrate His omnipotence apart from our cooperation. God has delegated authority to us and, in most cases, He will not usurp that authority He has given even though He has the raw power to do so.

God is not a covenant breaker (Psalm 89:33-35). When He delegated authority over the earth he placed its destiny in our hands. Furthermore, He has made us free moral agents which means that He will not force us to cooperate with Him. The covenant keeping integrity of God coupled with the free-will of the humans God has created gave Him limitations that he would not have had if He had not chosen to do it this way. Andrew Murray writes:

In creating man with free will and making him a partner in the rule of the earth, God limited Himself. He made Himself dependent on what man would do. Man by His prayer would hold the measure of what God could do in blessing.³

We must recognize that when God *gave* the earth to the children of men, regardless of whatever capacity in which he gave it to them, He was limiting Himself and sharing His sovereignty over the thing that was given. What we do on earth determines what God will do in Heaven (Matt. 18:18-19). Our failure to invite Him in can have devastating effects (2 Chron. 16:12, 13; Jer. 10:21; James 4:2). A profound statement is made concerning Jesus in the gospel of Mark:

¹Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary of American English, E-Sword edition.

²Wilson, William **Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies** (MacLean, VA: Mac Donal Publishing Co.), p. 132

³Murray, Andrew **God's Best Secrets** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1993), p. 71

And he was unable to do any work of power there, but only to put his hands on one or two persons who were ill, and make them well. And he was greatly surprised because they had no faith. And he went about the country places teaching. (Mark 6:5-6; Bible in Basic English)

He was *unable* to do any mighty work. It did not say that He *wouldn't* do it. It says that He was *unable* to do it. Our omnipotent God obviously has the sheer raw power to force His will on our lives if He so desired. However, His love and integrity prevents Him from doing so. This is why He cannot work on the earth apart from a yielded vessel.

If God violated His word to Adam by intervening apart from man's invitation then Satan will have something by which to accuse God since he is always looking for a way to make God look unfair in the eyes of others (Job 1:8-10; Gen. 3:1-5). In order for God to be trusted by men and angels He cannot go back on His Word or break covenant. Satan may rule by force and violence. He may attempt to get his way by force. Satan wants to convince men and unfallen angels that his methods are the most effective. For God to do anything outside of His love and integrity would be to prove Satan right and Himself wrong. From a power aspect, He could destroy Satan easily in order to have His own way but then He must eternally live with the consequences of having brought doubt into the minds of the rest of His creatures concerning His integrity, righteousness, love, and holiness. To maintain His integrity in the eyes of the watching universe God must work in the earth through yielded vessels.

How Satan Works in the Earth

On the flip side of this equation, Satan is also unable to do any work on the earth apart from men yielding themselves to him. Unlike God, Satan seems to have the majority of the earth's population under his control and they are more than willing to do his bidding. The thing that makes him the "god" of this world is how he has deceived the majority of men in order to control them:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Cor. 4:4)

Satan is "god of this world" because he is able to blind men and deceive them into doing his will. 1 John 5:19 says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies **under the sway of the wicked one**" (New King James Version). Satan has authority and control over the earth because he has deceived the majority of men who God has made stewards over it. In Rev. 12:9 we read:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan gained this power and authority over the earth through deception (Gen. 3:1-7, 13; Luke 4:5-6; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14) and he maintains this power through deception.

Like God, Satan cannot work on the earth except through willing vessels (Gen. 4:7; Luke 22:2-6; John 8:44; Acts 13:7-12; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 2:2; 2 Thess. 2:8-9; 1 John 3:8-12; Rev. 2:9, 13; 3:9; 16:13-14; 20:7-10). Unlike God, Satan seems to have an almost endless supply of willing vessels ready to do their master's will. While some, specifically those who proudly deem themselves as "Satan worshippers" knowingly do his will, the majority of men are deceived into believing that they are serving God (Islamic terrorists being one of many examples) or their communities (abortion doctors being among several examples). If some had their eyes open to know that their actions were furthering Satan's agenda they might have second thoughts.

Despite some false teachings in Evangelical circles that claim that man is so totally depraved that he cannot choose apart from an "irresistible grace" that violates the freedom of his will, God has allowed men the ability to choose between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness:

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:18)

Men have the ability to choose between God's kingdom of light, life and love and Satan's kingdom of darkness, depression and destruction. Sadly we are told, "...and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19b). The reason why Satan continues to exercise such dominion over the earth is because men love his ways more than God's.

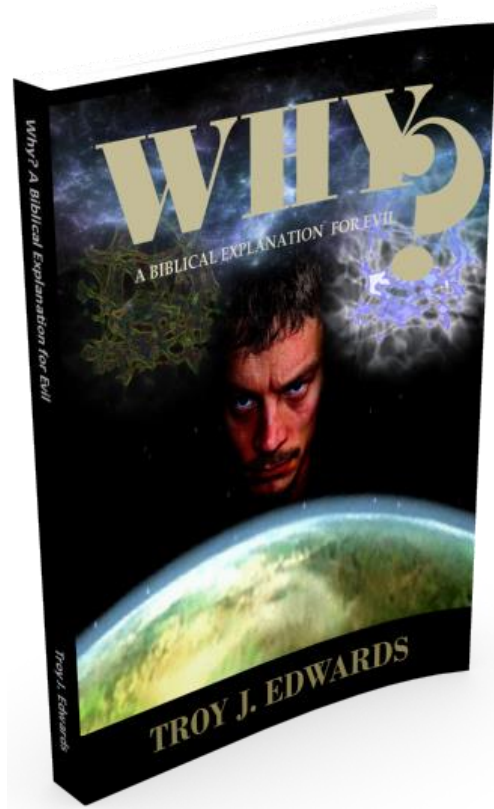
The day will come when God puts a permanent end to Satan's rule (Rev. 20:10). However, for the end of Satan's reign to be complete, God must also forever ban from His presence and from the universe those who followed after Satan (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15). Satan's time is short. The end of evil will come, but sadly, this ending of evil means the eternal damnation of the majority of the world. This is not something God desires which is why the end has been so long delayed (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:8-9; Eze. 33:11).

In conclusion, evil reigns and Satan reigns on the earth because men, using their God-given free-will, choose to do Satan's bidding rather than God's. If men would do God's will rather than Satan's then evil would be gone. Since the majority of men love darkness and since God has covenanted with man to allow his freedom to choose the bad as well as the good without force or coercion on His part then evil reigns until the coming of Christ. Be blessed.

Need more answers to the age-old "problem of evil"? Then Get our book:

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