

Addressing the

“If There is a GOD, then Why Do Bad Things Happen”

Question



Written by Earl Michael Thomas, as inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT.
NOT FOR SALE

Perhaps one of the most frequently-asked questions concerning GOD is, “If GOD exists then why do “bad things” happen?”

In order to comprehensively address this question, the following points must be established:

- Earthly circumstances should never be the barometer of one’s faith.
- We live in a fallen world, which is under the control of GOD’s enemy.
- Life does not end at natural death.
- Earth is not Heaven.
- Some who suffer in this life will experience relief in eternity.
- It is important that those who are rich in secular knowledge avoid the pitfall of disbelief, concluding that the gospel is scientifically tenuous.
- We must humbly consider the works that GOD has performed (and is performing) both in the lives of those who trust in JESUS CHRIST and who trust in the faith of those who trust in JESUS.

With all due respect, the “if there was a GOD ...” question and associated assertions are often based upon observations made through temporal lenses.

Earthly circumstances should never be the barometer of one's faith.

It is imperative that trauma and excruciation never be spoken of lightly; any commentary on suffering, whether your own (suffering) or that of others, must always be couched in respect and reverence. We must also never allow the tragedies of life to be indicators of GOD's existence; by so doing, our relationship with GOD will be mercurial at best.

By focusing solely on the tribulations of life (e.g. natural disasters, widespread famine, terrorist exploits, bigotry, crime, war, atrocities, disappointments, personal loss, and other tragedies), many conclude that GOD cannot exist, maintaining that "if there was a GOD, this or that would not happen...." Taking this same line of reasoning, one might conversely argue that if Satan exists (and he does), both this and that would (and does) happen.

You might ask, "Why do we experience sorrow then?"

Prior to the fall of Adam, human tragedy was non-existent. Adam's inevitable disobedience made sin a universally-inherited condition upon birth. Sin is an abhorrent and intolerable spiritual disease in the EYES of a HOLY GOD. The effect of sin is not only eternal, but the toll that addictions, drunkenness, excessive indulgences, greed, heresy, injustice, lying, murders, oppression, sexual misconduct, racial prejudices, thefts, treason, violent acts, and the like takes on individuals, families, businesses, institutions, and even governments is well documented. The extent of sin's eternally destructive potential can only be clearly understood when we carefully consider the cost of redemption from the bondage and

eternal consequence of sin (i.e. the shed BLOOD of the only begotten SON of GOD). Also we must not forget that JESUS suffered more than anyone in history; the pain of CHRIST's crucifixion was intensified to unfathomable heights by virtue of the fact that HE possessed the power to prevent HIS OWN open humiliation and physical suffering. HE, instead, submitted HIMSELF to shame and torture, being buoyed by the depth of HIS love for us.

Horrible tragedies surrounded the childhoods of both Moses and JESUS. In fact, these atrocities were directly related to their births. Shortly after the birth of Moses, Pharoah ordered all male Hebrew babies to be thrown into the river. When JESUS was a very young child, King Herod ordered the slaughtering of male children ages two years and under, after being told that the MESSIAH would rise from that generation¹.

Biblical prophecy is yet another powerful testament of the existence of an omniscient CREATOR; much of the turmoil that we witness in today's world was either foretold or addressed by JESUS and HIS apostles. Yet, ironically, the events that unfold in fulfillment of prophecy are often the very occurrences that bring into question the existence of the MOST HIGH for many.

The Old Testament "Book of Job" speaks poignantly to the subject of tragedy. Job was a godly man, who possessed great wealth and was blessed with a beautiful family. GOD the FATHER spoke highly of Job during a heavenly "staff meeting," which was attended by the enemy of our souls. (The word "crashed" better

¹ The degree of eternal punishment administered to Pharoah and King Herod will be commensurate with their heinous acts.

characterizes Satan's presence at this gathering.) Satan responded to Job's accolades by claiming that Job's holy and noble lifestyle was solely due to the fact that GOD had favored Job, blessing Job with wealth, health, and a beautiful family. Satan went on to assert, in the presence of the Angels, that if GOD were to remove the "hedge" of protection² from around Job, that he (Satan) could make Job curse GOD the FATHER "to HIS FACE." GOD the FATHER, knowing Job's heart and eternal destiny, acquiesced and granted Satan's request, under the condition that Job's life be spared.

Consequently, Job experienced a string of horrific tragedies, which resulted in the loss of his children, wealth, and health. To add to Job's misery, his "friends" were certain that Job's misfortune was due to hidden sin and voiced their suspicions to Job. Even Job's wife advised Job to "curse GOD and die." Little did either of them know that these events occurred as a result of "action items" that came out of the heavenly staff meeting. While Job complained (to GOD) and maintained his innocence, he did not sin, nor lose faith in GOD. He rather affirmed, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return..." (Job 1:21 *New King James Version* [NKJV]³) and 'though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM" (Job 13:15 NKJV³). At the conclusion of these trials, GOD restored to Job more than what was lost.

JESUS addressed the topic of tragedy by bringing the attention of HIS listeners to the plight of 18 men on whom a tower had fallen.

² Satan was essentially accusing GOD of shielding Job from evil (i.e. from the Devil making the claim).

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While this event was indescribably awful, JESUS told the listeners that these men were not the “worse sinners” in Israel and went on to warn them that if the citizens of Israel did not repent, they would experience a similar end. The ETERNAL CHRIST, understanding the brevity and frailty of this earthly life, used this tragedy to warn us that we will experience a horror of infinitely greater magnitude (Hell), if we choose not to repent of our sins and believe the gospel.

I am familiar with sudden tragedy. My mother died of a brain aneurism in the foyer of a church at the young age of 52, shortly after singing at a friend’s funeral. Three of my cousins were mercilessly mowed down by a crazed driver, while waiting at a stop light; two were adults (both in their thirties) and one was a child. When questioned by the police, the perpetrator, who was not injured in the accident, confessed that he purposely rear-ended the vehicle at high speed because his girlfriend had recently parted ways with him. The two adult victims had recently received JESUS as SAVIOR.

Given that each of the aforementioned cases involved the acute misfortune of GOD-fearing people, anchoring one’s faith solely to what happens “this side of Heaven” (good or bad) is not conducive to an enduring faith.

We live in a fallen world, which is under the control of GOD's enemy.

The world in which we live is controlled by the author of lies and murder, whose grim fate is forthcoming⁴. As mentioned in the previous section, Satan rules as a result of Adam relinquishing worldly authority through disobedience to GOD. Pain and suffering were ushered into this world under the banner of the current "prince of the power of the air," that is, the Devil.

Life does not end at natural death.

We must understand that earth is a temporary dwelling; there is more to life than what we see. If we do not lose faith during the course and aftermath of "the storm," we will regain all that we lost and more; if not in this life, assuredly in the one to come.

We must, therefore, broaden our understanding of life to grasp the fact that life does not end at natural death; it just begins.... Earthly life can be compared to a segment within an algebraic number line or a water droplet in the ocean of eternity or like the earth, itself, suspended in and surrounded by space. When this natural life is over, an immortal one begins.

In fact, the quality (or lack thereof) of our eternal life is being crafted with the implements of our earthly deeds. This does not mean that we can earn Heaven (it is gained only through the BLOOD of JESUS) or Hell (it is inherited at birth, because of Adam's transgression). The extent of eternal punishment or heavenly

⁴ While some of the tribulations that man experiences are self-induced, much of the turmoil that we witness and experience is that of creation toiling under the yoke of an unchained Devil.

reward can be influenced by what we do or do not do on earth. JESUS indicated that there are varying degrees of eternal punishment, referring to the sins of the religious Pharisees, whom he called “hypocrites,” as being worthy of the “greater condemnation.”

JESUS also said, “Store up treasures in Heaven,” and “Where your treasures are, there will your heart be also.” JESUS, further, taught that the poor will always be with us on earth and that we can (and should) share our substance with those less fortunate. For those who have been assured of eternal life through faith in JESUS, giving to the poor is one way of filling heavenly coffers or investing in an incorruptible stock market. Consequently, there will be those in Heaven who possess more riches than other heavenly inhabitants.

Daniel 12:3 reads, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (NKJV⁵). Given this revelation, there will be citizens of Heaven who shine brighter than other heavenly citizens. Conversely, if individuals who commit egregious crimes do not repent while yet on earth (e.g. fornicators; politicians who violate the trust of their constituents; even so-called pastors and priests who are found guilty of infidelity or other unspeakable acts), they will all inherit varying degrees of unending punishment in Hell.

We must understand that we do not “pass away,” but we “pass on” to the next life, and we must govern ourselves on earth accordingly.

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By expanding our thinking to encompass eternity, our perspective of and involvement in earthly affairs will change.

Earth is not Heaven

Our current dwelling place is not free of sorrow, because earth is not Heaven. Those who trust in JESUS will surely live forever in glory, but must, in the interim, walk “through the valley of the shadow of death.” CHRIST, through HIS resurrection, conquered death, granting eternal life to those who believe in HIM. In addition, Christians, whose saved loved ones have passed on, will experience the inexpressible joy of seeing their loved ones again. This hope alone should serve as an incentive to accept CHRIST as SAVIOR and to encourage your loved ones to do likewise.

The Apostle Paul said, in the letter to the Galatians, Chapter 4: verses 13 & 14, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (NKJV⁶). Paul was not intimating that we should not grieve over lost loved ones, but that we should not hopelessly pine away because of the loss.

Some who suffer in this life will experience relief in eternity.

Many individuals point to those born into poverty as “proof” either that GOD does not exist or that HE is unfair. Whether the “disadvantage” is financial, geographical, intellectual, and/or

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physical, those whose plight on earth seems to be laden with inescapable misfortune and/or are victims of injustice may very well be recipients of GOD's highest blessings in Heaven. In the New Testament Book of Luke, JESUS shares the account of Lazarus, the poor beggar, with whom a man of wealth refused to share crumbs. Lazarus died and was comforted, while the rich man was tormented after death. In Matthew 5:4, JESUS also states that, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted⁷." The book of Psalms 9: 17-19 (NKJV⁷) reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

It is important that those who are rich in secular knowledge avoid the pitfall of disbelief

Intelligence and earthly knowledge are perhaps the most subtle enemies of faith. Frighteningly, it was DIVINE strategy that crafted the message of the cross of CHRIST to be ultra-simplistic and intellectually unpalatable. When addressing the masses concerning judgment in Matthew 11: 25, JESUS said, "I thank YOU, FATHER, LORD of Heaven and earth, that YOU have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, FATHER, for so it seemed good in YOUR sight⁷." In the first letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul warns that GOD chose the "foolish things" to confound the "wise." Therefore, as gold is mined from the bowels of the earth, CHRIST's truths must be sought after, no matter where the search leads. In the old

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testament⁸, Naaman, a leprous Syrian army commander, was told by his servant that a Jewish prophet named Elisha could pray for the commander's healing and that GOD would honor Elisha's prayer. When Naaman met Elisha, the prophet instructed the commander to wash in the Jordan River seven times. Being prideful, Naaman was unimpressed, insulted, and angered; he wanted to see the spectacular or, at least, be asked to wash in Syrian waters. Naaman's servant implored the commander to humbly obey the prophet. Upon doing so, the leprosy was instantly healed.

Many of the Israelites were awaiting the majestic entrance of the MESSIAH. When JESUS triumphantly entered the City of Jerusalem as MESSIAH, however, HE was not transported by royal litter or chariot; HE, instead, rode into the city on a donkey. While HIS outward display was minus pomp and pageantry, the miraculous works that CHRIST performed, which were all fueled by love and compassion, spoke resoundingly of HIS heavenly origin and that HE was indeed the SON of GOD.

We must humbly consider the works that GOD has performed (and is performing)

Miracles are performed to show that CHRIST is above HIS creation and has power that defies natural law. (JESUS walked on the water, but did not create water to be walked on). Even today, the providential HAND of GOD is clearly evident in the daily lives of many who trust in JESUS. Testimonies of healings, timely financial blessings and employment, accident avoidance, miraculous survival, answered prayer, supernatural intervention, and even

⁸ II Kings 5, beginning at the first verse.

DIVINE chastisement abound, and these all serve to mellow the faith of Christians around the world. The following are accounts of which I have firsthand knowledge⁹:

- A young Christian man, with four children, was working odd jobs while attending school. He was literally down to his last dollar, and there was little food in the house. He remembered that his local grocery store sold a one-pound bag of rice for ninety-nine cents. When he arrived at the store, however, the price of the bag of rice had gone up to \$1.01. Understandably dejected, the young man left the store. On the way back to his car, he found a twenty-dollar bill on the ground of the parking lot. His emotions instantly went from despair-to-elation. Yet being a man of conscious, he informed the store manager of the discovery and left his name and phone number, in the event that the original owner of the money reported it lost.
- A young Christian husband, new to the west coast, had taken a job as a salesman. He, his wife, and toddler had been living with his older brother, but felt that it was time to seek his own dwelling. Upon driving around the northern California Bay Area, he and his wife (who was pregnant with their second child) did not “feel comfortable” with the atmospheres of cities that they toured, and most rentals were at the height of their budget (i.e. 400.00... in 1981). Upon visiting Martinez, CA, during a prenatal medical exam, both the young man and his wife concluded, “this is

⁹ The stories leading up to the encounters, which were truncated for purposes of brevity, are equally as amazing.

the place.” They liked the simple, down-to-earth, small-town feel of the city. Not too long thereafter, an installation technician was hired by the retail store where the young Christian man worked. Through casual conversation, the new employee learned about the young Christian man’s search for a place to stay. The new employee was also a Christian and mentioned that he had a friend who managed an apartment in Martinez. The young Christian couple applied and became residents of the apartment that they had driven past during their hospital visit. Moreover, because of their relatively low income, they only had to pay 260.00 per month rent.¹⁰

- A Christian violinist had her home broken into and lost several valuable belongings, not the least of which was her violin. A husband and wife, who attended the same church as the violinist, vowed to replace the violin, but forgot about their commitment. Sometime later, while taking a walk, the couple passed a thrift store. They saw a violin in the store window and were both reminded of their promise to replace the one that was stolen from their friend. They purchased the instrument from the store and brought it to church the following Sunday. Upon receiving the instrument, the violinist was extremely jubilant.... Her extreme joy was not solely due to the gift that she had just received; *the replacement violin was actually the stolen*

¹⁰ The apartment complex and the residents turned out to be perfect for raising a young family. Other young Christian couples lived there, providing for indelible fond memories for the children.

violin! (She confirmed ownership by removing from the case a hand-crafted cleaning device that she had made).

- A professional musician contracted a urinary tract disease, which was related to his lifestyle. The disease was very painful, and medical treatment proved inconclusive. The musician gave his life to CHRIST and was ultimately baptized at an Apostolic Christian Church. The afternoon following the baptismal service, the pain was gone completely, and the disease never returned.
- A hazardous waste worker, who was a Christian, fell head first (and backward) from a large semi-truck while attempting to attach a rubber bungee cord to a hook welded to the truck trailer. The worker fell directly into the arms of the driver of the truck. The driver, not being of robust stature, surprisingly did not stumble, and the hazardous waste worker described the impact of the fall as being similar to falling into a *bed of feathers*. Subsequent to the event, while attending a church service, the worker was approached by an elder of the church. The elder, who was not completely familiar with the hazardous waste worker's occupation, asked him, "Do you put out chemical fires? The other day, the LORD impressed upon my heart to pray for you." A blind, head-first fall from a semi-truck could have resulted in serious injury to the truck driver; the worker breaking his neck; or the worker losing his life. Neither the driver nor the hazardous waste worker was harmed.... Thank GOD for prayer!

- An environmental health and safety (EH&S) instructor, who taught primarily on the west coast, received a one-day assignment in Chicago. The EH&S instructor was also a Christian. The instructor flew to Chicago one day before the event and called his best friend who lived in Detroit; it had been approximately nine years since the instructor saw his friend. The purpose of the phone call was simply to let the friend know of the proximity of the teaching engagement; it was unlikely that there would be time for them to meet. The EH&S instructor could not immediately reach his friend by phone, and, thus, left a voicemail message. Upon hearing back from his best friend, the instructor learned, to his delight, that his best friend was also in Chicago. His friend was slated to attend a church conference, occurring the following day. The two met, took photos, laughed, reminisced, and considered the encounter a rich blessing (i.e. arranged by GOD). The odds of this occurring are literally “out of this world”!!!
- A young Christian lady had a dream about a hospitalized, terminally ill patient. The young lady noted the name of the hospital, the name of the patient, and the room number (#123), as recalled from her dream. She told her Dad about the dream. Her Dad, being a pastor, instructed the young lady to visit the hospital. The young lady called the hospital and was told by the receptionist that, indeed, a patient by the name given was at the hospital, but in Room# 321. (In the dream, the young lady was inside the room, and upon looking out, saw the number in reverse). Upon visiting the hospital, she saw another young lady (the patient’s

daughter) sitting at the end of the bed, and the patient was in a coma. The daughter inquired as to the nature of the young lady's visit, and after overcoming a bit of fear, the young lady shared the dream with the daughter. The daughter informed the young lady that the family had just left to say their final goodbyes to a GOD-fearing lady who was known for her benevolence to the poor. The young lady said a short prayer and was asked for her phone number (by the daughter) before leaving the hospital. Shortly after the visit, the young lady received a phone call from the pastor of patient's church, inviting the young lady to his church. The invitation was extended because the patient came out of the coma after the prayer and was released from the hospital, being declared healed of her illness. (The former patient was also coming to church that Sunday.)

- Yet another young Christian lady had recently moved to Atlanta, GA from San Antonio, TX with her husband and two children. The family found a church wherein they discerned the HOLY SPIRIT was moving. A short time thereafter, the young lady felt impressed of the LORD to ask if she could start a women's prayer group, but was somewhat trepidatious, being fairly new to the congregation. The young lady drew courage from within and posed the idea to the church representative in charge of such events. Upon hearing the idea, the representative was ecstatic, stating that the church had been waiting for someone to come forward to spearhead a women's prayer group. The group started out with approximately 50 women. One night, there were several women in line for

prayer. A lady, in particular, came forward for whom the HOLY SPIRIT gave the young Christian (who started the group) the following word of knowledge: "If you forgive your son, the LORD said that HE will heal you." Upon hearing this prophetic proclamation, the entire synergy of the meeting changed. The prayer requestor began shaking her head from side to side, shouting, "No! No! No!" She began shouting so loud that she had to be taken to a "breakout" room. In the breakout room, fervent prayer continued for this lady until her "nos" turned into "yesses"-of-submission. The young lady who started the prayer group then saw a vision of vines that were wrapped around and within the prayer requester's lower torso. In the vision, she then saw the HAND of GOD reaching down and yanking them out. A short time following the prayer meeting, the young Christian lady, who started the prayer group, felt a tap on her shoulder. It was the woman for whom she and her Sisters-in-CHRIST had prayed. The woman had been in her fourth stage of cancer, yet was medically determined to be completely healed. The woman asked the young lady, "How did you know about my son?" To which the young lady replied, "I did not know about your son." The woman then divulged that she was a famous New York writer, who had won awards for her literary work. She had purchased a very expensive item for her son with her earnings. However, when her son learned of her terminal illness, he put her out of the house, saying, "I cannot bear seeing you in this state." Needless to say, the woman was filled with bitterness as a consequence, but released the venom of unforgiveness through revelation and fervent prayer. (This ultimately led to her healing, consistent with the prophetic proclamation.) Subsequently to this event, the women's prayer group grew from 50 to 700 participants.

- A young man from a fairly affluent family drove his vehicle over the edge of a cliff and was paralyzed from the waist down. The young man WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN. He knew a Christian minister, however, through whom GOD had performed miracles. The minister pastored a church which was located above a laundry mat, in a very rough inner-city neighborhood. The young man, now confined to a wheel chair, had friends drive him to the church and carry him up the stairs. The young man was prayed for and, not long thereafter, miraculously began walking. He was later hired by a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) company as a maintenance technician, driving his own utility truck.

John the Baptist¹¹ saw a heavenly dove rest upon CHRIST and heard the VOICE of the FATHER saying, “This is MY BELOVED SON in whom I am well-pleased.” Yet when faced with being beheaded (i.e. pending earthly trauma), John waivered in faith and sent a few of his followers to JESUS to inquire as to whether JESUS was truly the MESSIAH. JESUS did not directly answer John, but told John’s followers to report back to John the miracles that JESUS was performing. In other words, the miraculous works of love and power were positive indicators of CHRIST’s identity and heavenly origin. JESUS is still performing miracles in the lives of true believers.

¹¹ JESUS said that among those “born of women” (this includes Moses, Elijah, Samuel, David, and Isaiah), John the Baptist was second-to-none in terms of greatness.

In closing, we must never allow the tragic events incurred in this life to rob us of our faith in the holy, loving, majestic, and ALMIGHTY GOD. The state of world affairs is a direct result of disobedience to GOD, both by Satan and man. With this in mind, we must pray that our vision be expanded to encompass eternal things and realize that what we do on earth (good or otherwise) has a direct bearing on our eternal existence. Look around you.... Earth is filled with breathtaking natural beauty, yet earth is not Heaven¹², and life is not free of heartache. (As one Christian composer expressed in song, “we are not home yet”)¹³. Furthermore, while science and intellect are tools to enhance our quality of earthly life and to help us better understand the rudiments of a temporal existence, scientists can by no means “collect and analyze” samples of spiritual things. We can, however, draw encouragement from the irrefutably providential DIVINE encounters that believers have with GOD and, like these believers, lay claim to our own eternal inheritance, by accepting and confessing JESUS CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOR. HE is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE, forever. No man or woman will come to the FATHER except through JESUS CHRIST, Amen.

¹² The CREATOR of the Universe fashioned earth a glorious place; therefore, earthly words cannot adequately articulate the glory and splendor of Heaven. I Corinthians, Chapter 2, verses 9 & 10 (New King James Version) read, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

¹³ The song, “Not Home Yet,” was composed by Christian recording artist, Steven Curtis Chapman, a man acutely familiar with personal tragedy. Copyright © 1997 Sparrow Song (BMI) (adm. at CapitolCMGPublishing.com) All rights reserved. Used by permission.



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