

LIFE MYSTERY

Life is a mystery. We have all wondered to some extent: Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous seem to barely get by? What is life all about anyway?

According to the revelation that we have from God – the Bible: God is ultimately in charge. He has created the world and set it in order. God created everything good (Gen 1:31).

When sin entered the world – things changed. But how did sin get here? In Genesis we are told that Adam disobeyed God and from that point sin entered into the world (Gen 3:17). Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, “Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” God had created man and made him ruler of all the earth (Gen 1:26 & 28). Man had certain responsibilities.

BUT – man forfeited his dominion when he sinned against God. Because of that sin, evil and destruction became a part of the picture (Gen 3:17).

So –

There are certain elements of our world that must be taken into account:

1. God is ultimately in control and has influence in this world. (Gen 1:1)
2. Associated with God are the heavenly hosts (angels) who have influence in this world, but only in obedience to God. (Psalm 103:20)
3. Satan, the archenemy of God has influence in this world (even before the fall) (Gen 3:1-4, 12-14), including demons (Rev 12:9), over men (2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chron 21:1), and sometimes over the elements. (Note: In Job, after Satan has come before God concerning Job, he is allowed to destroy Job’s sheep and servants by what appears to be lightning [fire from heaven] (Job 1:16), and to destroy Job’s children who were gathered at their eldest brother’s house. The house is destroyed by “wind”, which was probably a cyclone, tornado or something of that nature. All of Job’s children were in the house celebrating and all perished in the storm. However, his influence is controlled by God. (2 Sam 24:1; Job 1:6-9, 12; 2:1-7)
4. Man, who has become a sinner and alienated from God, has influence in this world. Man’s influence in this world is attested by all who live here. Although man is a free moral agent, he is still subjugated to God’s omnipotence. It has been said this way – man proposes, God disposes.
5. Nature, that is, all of the laws of nature that apply to this world such as gravity, the law of thermodynamics, the natural workings of earth such as rain, hail, wind, etc. influence the earth and all that is in it and are an integral part of the

functioning of this world. However, since God is Sovereign, He can and does intervene in the natural course of nature when He wills or in answer to prayer.

6. Evil, or sin has an effect upon this world. Perhaps we should say death, decay and destruction have influence in this world because they are the results of sin. However, since God is Sovereign, He can and does intervene according to His own will to restore life, health, prosperity, when He wills or in answer to prayer.

How are we to understand what is going on in this world? For example: When a particular automobile accident occurs and lives are lost – is God responsible? Is the devil responsible? Is man responsible? Is nature responsible? Is sin responsible? When someone, anyone, though that person be Christian, Atheist, Muslim, Hindu, or any other religion or theistic or philosophic persuasion becomes ill and passes from this life – Is God responsible? Is the devil responsible? Is man responsible? Is nature responsible? Is sin responsible?

When a person is stricken with a life-threatening illness, are we to blame God? Are we to blame the person who is ill? It is a fact that our behavior or certain behaviors can sometimes cause sickness and disease. Smoking, drinking, overindulgence in eating, sun-bathing without using sun-screen, stress from work or family problems, and life-style habits that keep us from getting the rest our body needs to recover can cause sickness or illnesses of many forms. No particular religious affiliation, theistic, or philosophic ideal negates the possibility of health-related problems. There are some doctrines that regulate food consumption and immoral habits. However, these disciplines do not guarantee that compliance will provide total health, although they certainly help.

In order to present a more understandable scenario of how things work in our world, let's consider the following. Let's imagine an automobile is traveling down the road and its passengers are killed when a tire blows and the car rolls over.

Did God have anything to do with the occurrence? Well, ultimately God could have stopped this – or could He? (Certainly, God could, for He is Omnipotent. That is, He has all power in Heaven and in earth.) But, why would He intervene? After all death is what sin brought into the world. By this we do not infer that all of the victims in this scenario were bad people. They could have been church people. We could say that God did not tell the people to be traveling in the car, or did he? We could say that God did not manufacture the tire that blew out. In an indirect sense, God gave the company and/or persons working for the company, the knowledge and ability to build machines, to build automobiles, tires and other necessary parts. We could say that God did not manufacture the automobile in which the people were riding, in which a tire blew out causing an accident. We could say that it was just a part of what happens in this world. Nothing here lasts forever, the tire or the people. We all know that tires do sometimes fail. There could have been a problem with the tire and the owner of the auto knew this but neglected to do anything about it. It could be true also that the driver believed that the

manufacturer of the tire was reputable and there was no reason to doubt whether the tire was safe or not. We could also say that the Lord had in some way, by impression, by a sense of something being wrong and needing fixing, or whatever warned the owner, but the owner procrastinated and decided to do something about it another day. So, no, how could God be blamed, or why would we believe that God had anything directly to do with this incident. Do you think He did? Why?

Did the devil have anything to do with it? My answer is probably not. Although the Bible says that he has the power of death (that is, over sinners). But, God is still in control over the devil and limits his actions in any given situation. In this case it may not mean that the devil just decided today to take the lives of all in this auto. We know that when humans are injured in particular ways, they do not survive. Who knows what injuries may be caused upon impact in an auto crash, or what particularly is going to happen until it happens? We are assuming that a blowout caused by a defective tire is the reason for the crash. Did the devil have anything to do with the tire blowing? Did Satan manipulate circumstances so that some object was lying in the road which punctured the tire and resulted in a blowout? There is always the possibility that he did, but it is not likely. Did the devil manipulate the thinking of these people, any or all of them, to be on this particular journey? Who knows? However, human beings are autonomous and make decisions whether to make a trip in an automobile or not. But the devil does not know the future, and cannot know with certainty beforehand who will be in the automobile. He only knows the plans he has for the future and even at that he does not always have the power to carry them out. There is no doubt in my mind that he had planned to destroy Job's life but could not carry out his plans because God had a hedge about Job. Jesus said that the devil is a destroyer. He comes for no other reason but to steal, to kill, and to destroy. He does know, and so do we to some extent, that certain actions produce calculated results. So, no, I don't think the devil had anything directly to do with the auto accident in question. Unless, of course, you want to believe that when the tire blew the devil's influence caused the blowout, or when the crash occurred supernatural evil intervened in the laws of nature and in some way catapulted these persons or manipulated them into particular positions in an attempt to fatally injure any or all of them, you would have to agree with me.

Did man have anything to do with it? Quite possibly he could have. It was human will that brought all of the people into the automobile. It was human responsibility that was required for the auto to be in proper condition for operation. It could have been the fault of the person or persons who the driver or owner put in authority to inspect or insure that the auto was in operable condition, or it could be that the owner made no inspection of the vehicle prior to the trip. It was either human neglect or human error that caused the auto to be traveling at an unsafe speed for the quality of tire that was on the vehicle, if indeed speed had anything to do with it. Where were the passengers going and why were they going to that destination? Could that have anything to do with the fact that these particular persons lost their lives? Did God warn any of them not to go on this particular journey and they disobeyed? It could have been human neglect or procrastination that kept the defective tire from being replaced, if indeed the tire that blew was defective. It could even have been a lack of funds, preventing the

owner from replacing the defective tire. It could have been human error at the place of manufacture when the tire was inspected but not scrutinized wholeheartedly and some person let it pass anyway. It is also possible that defective machinery had something to do with it and no human being was directly involved.

What part could just “being” in this world and functioning in this imperfect world have on this incident? A crude fact of life is that we live in a fallen world. Nothing here is perfect. In everything we do there is a chance of failure. There is always the possibility that something can go wrong. We don’t cover our heads in the sand and say “I’m not coming out,” or sequester ourselves as a recluse and refuse to function in society. No, chance is a part of life. We are all susceptible to life happenings.

God does intervene in issues of this life. Some theologians believe that like a watchmaker makes a watch and winds it up, lets it wind down, without any intervention, God created the world and just lets it work without any intervention. However, we know from the Bible that God does intervene into issues in this world and in human life. When it comes to God’s plan of redemption and salvation concerning His people, Israel and the Church, He moves His plan faithfully to completion. However, God spoke to the Israelites, through the prophet Ezekiel, that some things would not be done until God is inquired of concerning them (Ezekiel 36:37). In other words, some things happen because we did not pray and some events come to fulfillment because we did pray. Some helpful events do not come to fulfillment because we do not pray and ask for God's help and some disastrous occurrences come our way because we did not seek God and listen for His guidance or walk close enough to Him to hear and obey when He warns of the danger. However, when we do pray, God answers prayer and circumvents disaster or provides victory and provision.

There was a Christian young man who testified to sensing God warning him of danger when he was about to throw a stick of dynamite into a hole of water, to remove the water, so that a mining operation could proceed. He felt something was wrong, but lit the dynamite fuse. The dynamite blew up near his face, scarring and blinding him. This writer can tell of events in his own life where God warned, but the warning was not heeded. Some things happen because God allows them for our trials. Consider the life of Job and how life fell out to him. He was going along taking care of daily business, offering sacrifices, serving God. Job was a man God bragged on when at a particular time He asks the adversary if he had considered His servant Job? God allowed Job to be tested in certain areas, namely anything in his life except his person – his physical body. When Job continued in his steadfastness with the Lord, God allowed Job to go through a trial in which his physical health was compromised but his life could not be ended. In this scenario we see both God and Satan involved in human affairs. Consider all the events that occurred in Job's life. Some of those happenings we attribute to nature like the storm that destroyed (Job 1:19) Job's eldest son's house and all his siblings or the fire (most probably lightning) that fell from heaven and burned up Job's sheep and servants (Job 1:16). Some events in the story of Job we might attribute to human nature such as when the Sabeans stole his oxen and asses (Job 1:15), or when the Chaldeans stole his camels and killed his servants (Job 1:17). But scripture specifically tells us here that

Satan orchestrated these events (Job 1:12). So, we readily see that in some circumstances the archenemy of our souls is directly involved.

Solomon says that rolling a stone has its problems (Proverbs 26:27). Also, an axe-head can fly away from the handle and injure someone (Deut. 19:5). There are germs, microbial fungi, viruses. Some of these microbes are good, useful to mankind. Others are deadly. We all live in this environment called “earth” and are in some way susceptible to everything here. We can, however, by diligent study and action upon knowledge attained, help ourselves and others to navigate in a more intelligent way through this realm. In many ways it is up to human beings to protect themselves from tragedy by using common sense and training for certain situations.

Before we can come even close to unraveling the mystery of life, we must have a better understanding of what God has to say about life in the scriptures. After all, He created the world that we dwell in. Because He is the Creator and is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3), He wanted us to know the instructions for living here and how to get out of the mess that Adam got us into. Whatever answers we can’t find in the scripture we must trust God for. He says the mysteries or secret things are left for God (Deut. 29:29).

One of the problems with our trying to understand life is that we fail in our objectivity. Our thoughts become truncated, we become critical and faultfinders instead of keeping a level head, searching all the answers out, and seeking wholeheartedly for truth. Basically, we jump to conclusions. God says for us to “come let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). We may never really find “the” answer concerning a particular incident, and sometimes it is not for us to know. But we can come to a better understanding by diligent search and study.

Now, here are a few more simple facts to ponder. Some of you who read this document may say “I don’t believe in God.” The fact is, you can believe anything that you want to believe. One of our God-given rights is the right to make choices. However, with every choice there is a consequence. Whatever one bases his or her opinion of whether God exists, it is important to at least consider the evidence. And of what evidence do we speak? Of course, we speak of the earth, the moon, the stars, creation. Where did this universe come from? There has to be a power somewhere that brought this into being. It is against all the laws of logic to deny that Power’s existence. After all, how many watches, buildings, automobiles, and anything else man has designed and made do you think just all of a sudden one day appeared. How then can it be possible to logically deny a Designer, Creator, of all that we see here in this magnificent world in which we live? All you need do is stop and think, logically. God told us the answer in Genesis 1:1. The rest of the Bible is what He wants us to know about why we are here and what is going to happen in the future. Some things are left for us, like – choices. Either to believe or not believe. Either face judgment without Christ or come to Him now and confess our need for His cleansing and salvation.

I hope this gets you to thinking. If it does and you realize you need to do something about your eternal welfare, here is a key to your eternity. First – realize that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself. Second – understand that Jesus Christ is your only means of salvation from sin. Third -- confess your sins to Jesus Christ asking for His forgiveness. Fourth – repent, turn away from everything that you know God is displeased with in your life. From this day that you confess and repent, read the Scriptures and ask God for light and direction, then obey the Word of God. Fifth – ask Jesus Christ to save you from sin, come into your heart and be with you forever. Sixth – as you obey Christ's Word in the Bible, seek to be filled with His Holy Spirit. Seventh – Obey Jesus by telling others what He has done for you, or testify of His saving grace. Eighth -- and finally, find a fellowship of like-minded believers to gather and worship God. Continue wholeheartedly seeking, obeying, and worshipping God. If, for any reason you fail in your walk of obedience, repent immediately, confessing your sin and asking God for His mercy.

Romans Road to Salvation:

Who needs salvation. (Everyone)

Why we need salvation. (All born in sin)

How God provides salvation. (Through Jesus Christ)

The results of salvation. (Life Eternal)

1. Everyone needs salvation because all have sinned. Romans 3:10-12 and 23.
2. The price of sin is death . Romans 6:23
3. Jesus Christ died for our sins. He paid the price for our death. Romans 5:8
4. We receive salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ Romans 10:9-10, and 13.
5. Salvation through Jesus Christ brings us into a relationship of peace with God. Romans 5:1; 8:1; 8:38 - 39.

If you believe Romans Road leads to the path of truth, you can respond by receiving God's free gift of salvation today. Here's how to take your personal journey down Romans Road:

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Rom 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Admit you are a sinner.
2. Understand that as a sinner, you deserve death.
3. Believe Jesus Christ died on the cross to save you from sin and death.
4. Repent by turning from your old life of sin to a new life in Christ.
5. Receive, through faith in Jesus, his free gift of salvation