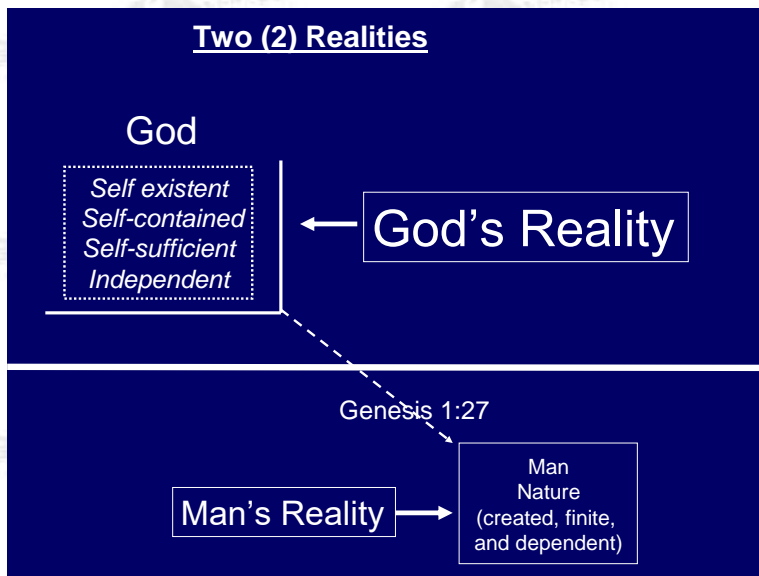


## Biblical Framework Part 1

### The Fall: The Buried Truth of the Origin of Evil

Review:



The basic premise in our discussion is that there are two realities! This is where we learn about the Creator-creature distinction. A distinction we must never forget!

<b>The Basis of Knowledge</b>			
	<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>STARTING POINT</b>	<b>METHOD</b>
<b>Autonomous Systems Perception</b>	<b>RATIONALISM</b>	Innate ideas Faith in human ability.	Independent use of logic & reason
	<b>EMPIRICISM</b>	Sense perceptions External experience; Scientific method Faith in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	<b>MYSTICISM</b>	Inner, private experience; intuition Faith in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, nonrational, nonverifiable.
<b>Divine Viewpoint</b>	<b>REVELATION</b>	Objective revelation of God	Objective use of logic and reason

Robert Dean

We gather all our human knowledge from 3 sources:

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

Rationalism

Empiricism

Mysticism

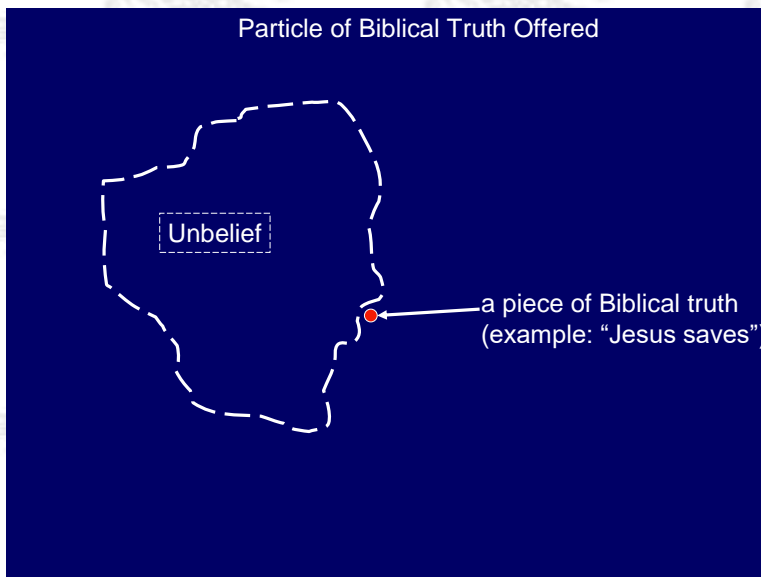
But, there is a 4<sup>th</sup> way to gather knowledge: **The Word of God – the Bible, Scripture**. Then, of course, comes the question: Is God's Word trustworthy? Truthful? Can I rely on it? These are questions that only you can answer, but as the Bible has been taught here in this church, it is the ONLY book that contains the truth about history, the true story of man; how he was created, how woman was brought forth from the man, how disobedience (sin) came about and its consequence, yet a promise of a Savior was given, and how that redemption was accomplished through the Christ, Jesus. The Bible is God's revelation to man. This is how we know about the importance of Israel as the apple of His Eye. We learn about grace and our own unworthiness. We learn about the Church (the bride of Christ) and her future; Israel (the wife of Yahweh) and her future - and so much more. This is where the propositions come from with which we can argue for the truth about Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the New World Covenant. This is where we go to bring forth propositions that argue for Salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. This is where our doctrines come from by which we try to lead our lives and where we build our confidence that God is in control – even in our darkest hour!

And so when the Holy Spirit brings someone into our lives who ask us about the hope we display, He will help us recall those biblical truths and principles we have stored up in our minds (by reading, studying, being taught, discussing the truths) that come from His revelation to man.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**



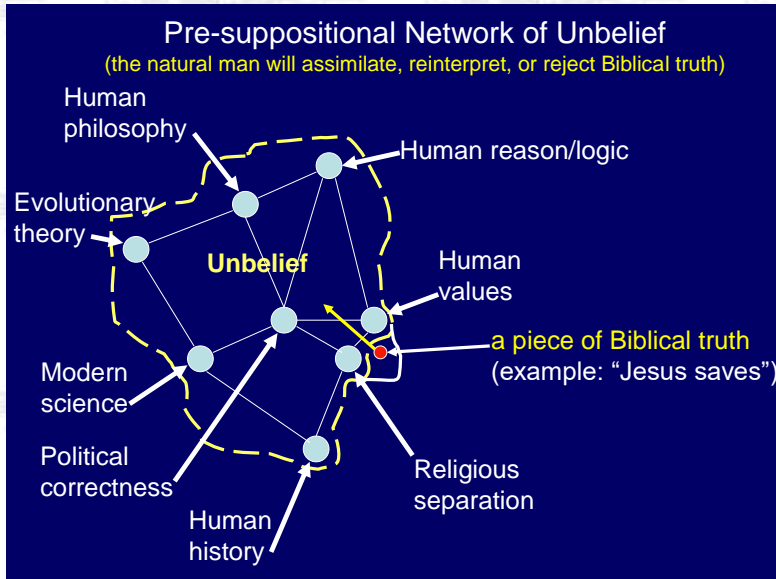
This is how the world “envelops” the believer – by compartmentalism. The world says that each piece must an allotted amount of time because each is as important as the other.



This amount of truth will not suffice in these times of being “dumbed down”. There are too many distractions, too many “push – pulls” in these times of instant information, gratification, political correctness, and the

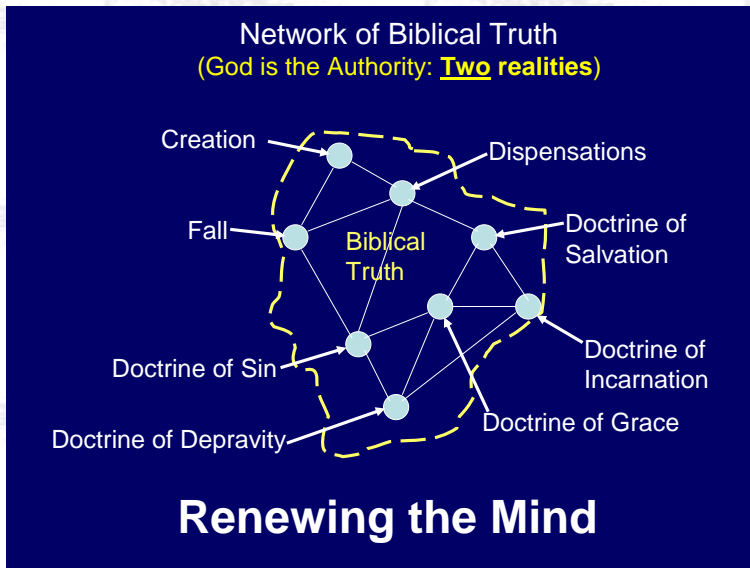
## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

general apostasy in our churches. We have lost the objectivity of the gospel and prefer experience over doctrine, contemporary music over biblical teaching, and social action over presenting a clear, articulate gospel.

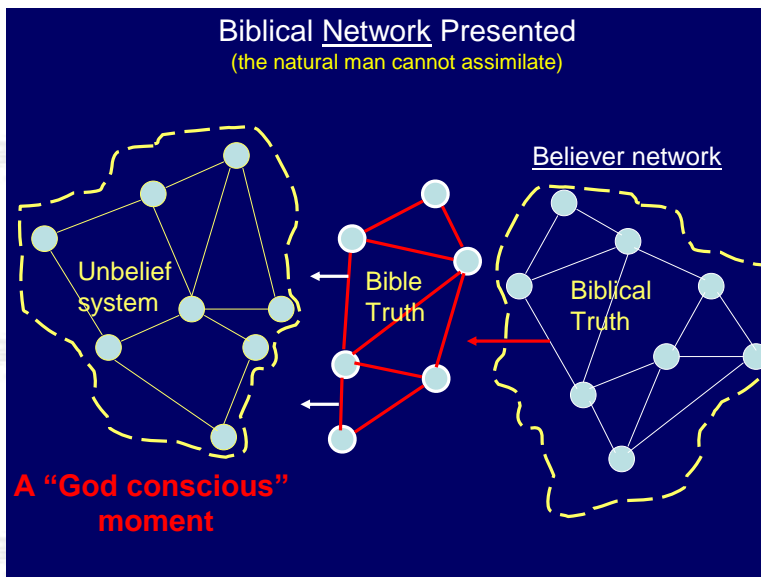


Here is what our minds are cluttered with through public education, poor religious training, and our own lack of searching for truth. We've accepted a worldview that contains these human "truths". And the unbelieving mind will assimilate, reinterpret, or reject this piece of Biblical truth.

## Biblical Framework Part 1



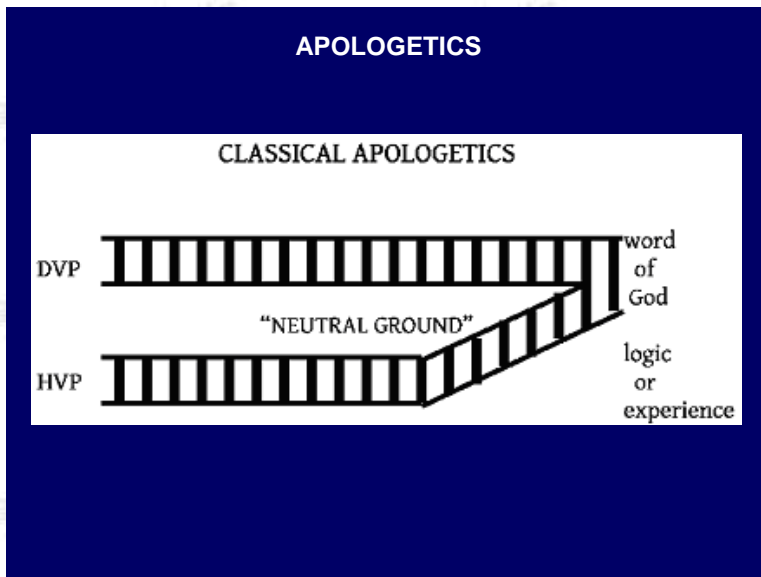
By studying Genesis 1 – 9, we equip ourselves with doctrine, along with attending a Bible believing, Bible teaching church, where we are fed the entire counsel of God, we are able, little by little, to replace human truth with Divine Truth.



Romans 1:18-20 tells us that all men know there is a God.  
Ecl. 3:11 tells us that God has set eternity in their hearts. And when our lives line up with the Word of God, that is, we are being loyal to

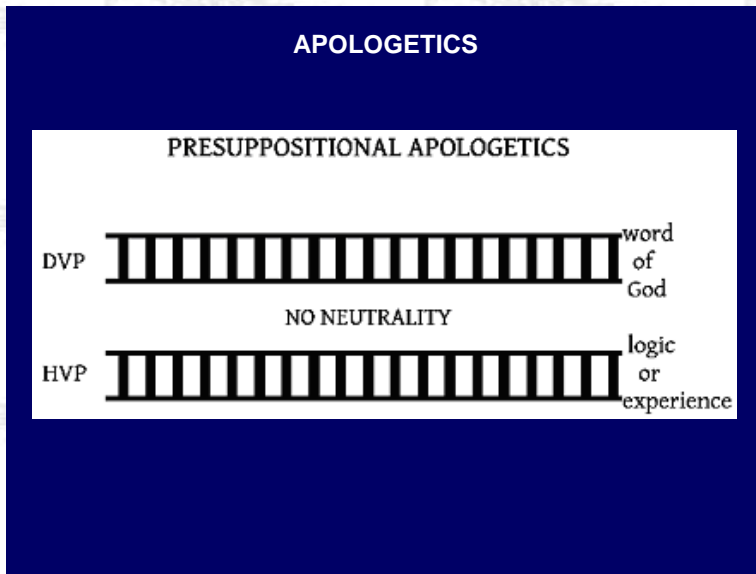
## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

Him, then our lives become a strong witness for God, and people will ask us where we find peace of mind in this chaotic world. Then it is that we can give them a “God Conscious” moment, because we’ve looked at Genesis seriously, understanding that we have been created in the image of God, Who has His own reality and is in complete control of every molecule, every atom at any nanosecond. That the good news of Jesus Christ is that He paid the price of redemption by dying in our place – and now, each person has the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus as his/her Savior.



Classical or liberalism’s view of apologetics: “We can find common ground between the Word of God and man’s logic/experience. Surely God is reasonable, therefore, there must be a neutral area that we can agree upon that will allow us not to be in a position of complete submission, but rather, a common understanding of what we think God is telling us.”

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**



Watch your presuppositions! Watch other's presuppositions! These are the ideas that lead to conclusions:

“The Roman Catholic Church is the only true church established by Jesus Christ.”

“God has lost control of His creation.”

“Man is to become God.”

“The world is 14.5 billion years old and man came from apes.”

“Man, as an autonomous being, can, given enough time, live forever.”

“Man is perfectible.”

Where do presuppositions come from? Somewhere, along the way, in our educational process, we have been told a “truth” that we have held on to and we’ve built a logical chain of ideas upon that “truth” and we are very reluctant to give up that presupposition because it would mean that I made a mistake in believing that “truth” – whether that “truth” came from my parents, teachers, church leaders, government leader, etc. Someone I held in high regard told me that “truth” and it is devastating to have to give it up or admit to accepting a lie and building part of my life on it. My pride is wounded, and I go into a tailspin wondering what else I’ve been told is wrong. Is there really any truth?

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

### **Paganism and Biblical Faith**

Summary:

There is no neutrality.

Everyone knows God exists.

God has set eternity in men's hearts.

Language and knowledge exist only if the universe is stable.

For words to have meaning there must be context.

Bottom line: there are only two contexts.

One is the **Creator-creature** context

The other is the **Continuity of Being** context.

There are no other contexts!

### **Class 7 begins.**

By this point you are aware of the implications of creation in Genesis 1-2 across all domains of life. The corollary truths of God, man, and nature shape how you ought to think in matters of theology, prayer, worship, philosophy, mathematics, science, economics, labor, marriage, and family living. An obedient Christian cannot confine these creation truths off to the side in some religious closet, nor can he pretend to be "neutral." In each area they compel us to choose between the Word of God and paganism.



## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

### **Framework Series Basics**

#### **Remember:**

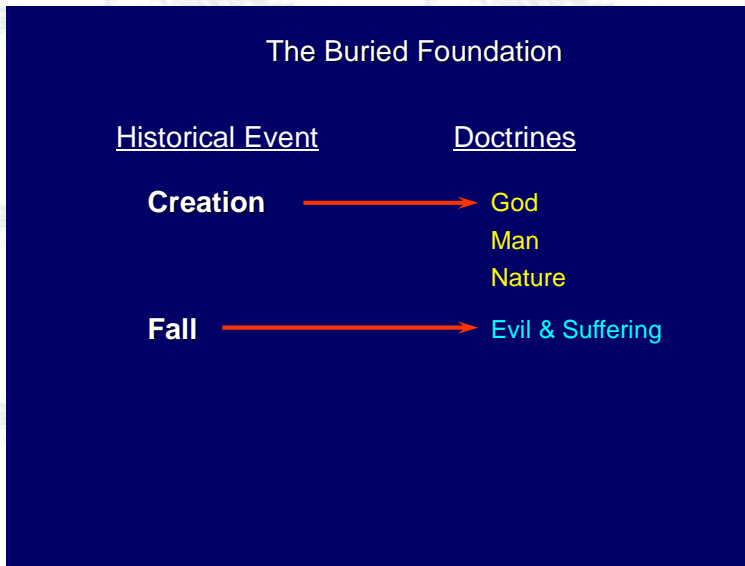
**Either  
you will let the Word of God interpret the world  
around you,**

**or  
you will let the world around you interpret the  
Word of God.**

We have stressed repeatedly that behind every form of paganism lurks the agenda of the carnal mind that is at enmity with God and cannot be subject to His Word. To justify its autonomy, the carnal mind always seeks some way to mutilate the revelation of God in creation with various idolatries. It must bury every reminder of His Presence with an "acceptable" re-interpretation. If this phenomenon ubiquitously affects all men to some degree, where and when did it originate?

The "origin of evil" must be included in any story of origins. The conscience of all men everywhere testifies there is a state-of-affairs that "ought" to exist but doesn't. People do things to you that they "ought" not to do. Babies are born with horrid defects in their tiny bodies. Tornadoes, floods, famines, earthquakes, and plagues cause human suffering everywhere. Human language is filled with "ought" statements.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**



Now, we want to look at the biblical story of how evil began (the "fall") over against the different story told by the pagan origin myths. Remember looking at and comparing the Bible account of Creation with Enuma Elish, the pagan origin myth from biblical times?

### Reflections of the Truth

The Southeast Asian Karen people still remember the fall of man in their tradition about the creator "Y'wa":

"Y'wa formed the world originally.  
He appointed food and drink.  
He gave them the 'fruit of trial'.  
He gave detailed orders.  
Mu-law-lee deceived two persons.  
He caused them to eat the fruit of the tree of trial.  
They obeyed not; they believed not Y'wa. . . .  
When they ate of the fruit of trial,  
They became subject to sickness, aging, and death....

Well, in modern times the Southeast Asian Karen people still remember the fall of man in their tradition about the creator "Y'wa":

"Y'wa formed the world originally.  
He appointed food and drink.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

He gave them the 'fruit of trial'.

He gave detailed orders.

Mu-law-lee deceived two persons.

He caused them to eat the fruit of the tree of trial.

They obeyed not; they believed not Y'wa. . . .

When they ate of the fruit of trial,

They became subject to sickness, aging, and death. . . .

Such parallels with Genesis 3 shows that the Karen people as well as other tribes in ancient times had access to original revelation passed down through Noah (Isa. 40:21).

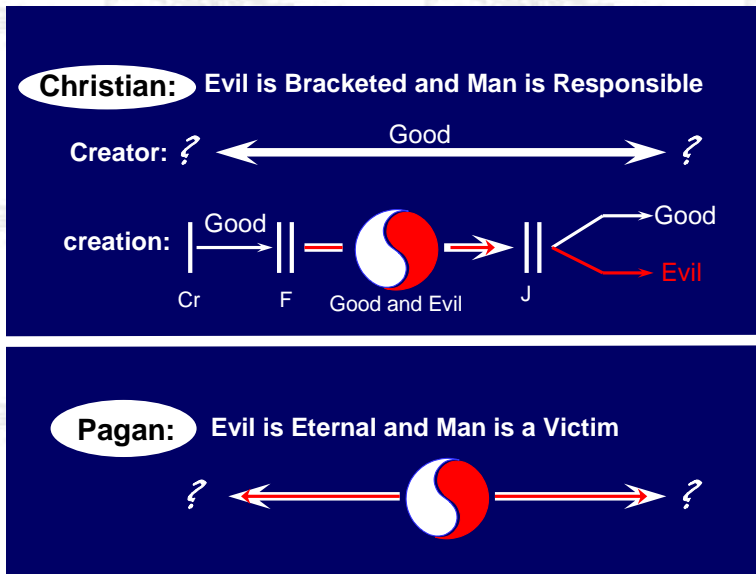
Keeping in mind these differences, you can see what the carnal mind creates on its own versus what minds sanctified by the Spirit of God produced in the Bible.

We will now discuss the implications for our knowledge of God, man, and nature as well as the great human dilemma of suffering.

As we have seen before, it is the contrasts between Genesis and the pagan stories that show the effect of the carnal mind's re-interpretation of revelation. These contrasts are a virtual study in human depth psychology for understanding how sin works in our hearts.

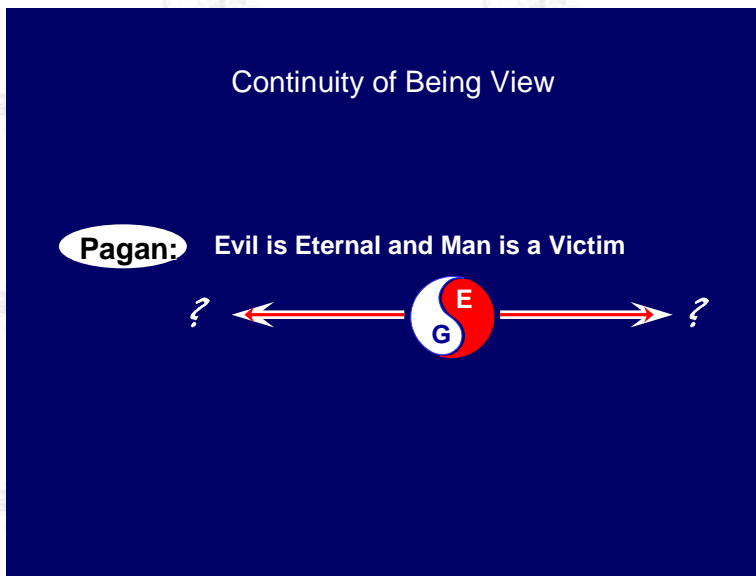
Earlier we learned that there were two major areas of contrast regarding origins. There was a contrast between the Creator-creature "two-level" view of reality and the pagan Continuity of Being "one-level" view of reality. Then a second contrast was found between the Personal Sovereignty of God and the Impersonal Chance/Fate of paganism. In the matter of the "origin of evil" there are also two major areas of contrast.

## Biblical Framework Part 1



### Bounded Evil vs. Eternal Evil.

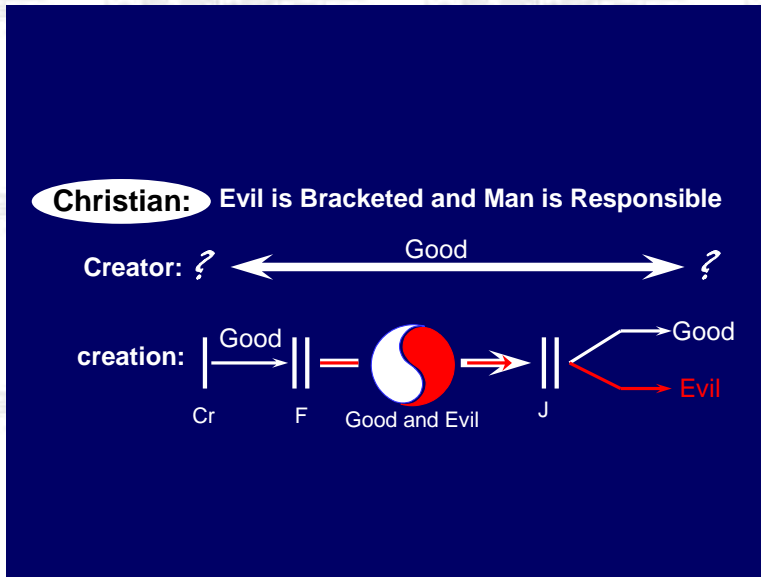
Evil has always been a part of existence according to paganism. Strictly speaking, paganism, in the end, does to the origin-of-evil question what it does with the origin-of-the-universe question: it never comes up with a true temporal origin! Both the universe and evil somehow always existed.



Moreover, it always will be a part of existence. From Enuma elish to Socrates to Darwin, evil is an inescapable component of existence. Thus

## Biblical Framework Part 1

to escape the horror of an eternal existence with evil, some forms of oriental religion devised the only conceivable escape: going into a state of "non-existence". Non-existence would be preferable to an existence with eternal evil.



By contrast the Bible insists that both Satan and Adam were created perfect without evil (Ezk. 28:15; Gen. 1:31). Whether Satan fell before God created man or afterward is a debate. In either case, the point remains the same. Neither of these creatures was created evil.

Evil according to the Bible had a beginning, and for the redeemed inhabitants of the New Universe (Rev. 21-22), evil will have an end. Evil according to the Bible is bounded or "bracketed." Evil, just like the universe, has a definite temporal origin. Paganism has buried this truth because to admit it would be to admit its own false pride and wrong presuppositions.

Responsible Guilt vs. Victimization. Pagan stories try to explain man's suffering and dying on the basis of innocent foolishness or victimization. In Enuma elish it was the original divine parents who selfishly abused their children, and mankind merely followed in their footsteps. Since evil was a corollary to existence itself, no personal

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

responsibility for evil's origin is given. Mankind is just a passive victim to what is.

Genesis 3 narrates a different story. The woman when faced with two contradictory claims (from God, "you will die"; from Satan, "you will not die"), sought in the grand tradition of the autonomous mind to be "neutral" and to treat both claims as inherently equal. Thus by treating the Creator's word on the same plane as the creature's word, she immediately denied the Creator-creature distinction. Adam deliberately followed. Both tried to deny responsible guilt for the event when confronted by God. By holding both responsible, God denied the victimization theory. Modern paganism continues the victimization tradition by offering elaborate "explanations" to excuse aberrant behavior on the basis of genetics, early socialization, and economic hardships.

### **EVIL UNDER GOD**

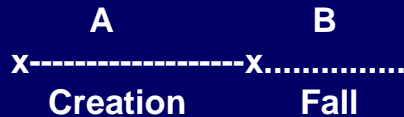
The story of the fall is opposed at every point by the fleshly mind of paganism. We now turn to the first area of this "great debate"--the character of God as Creator of a world that became evil. Over the centuries unbelievers have taken great delight in pointing to what they have convinced themselves is a glaring contradiction between the existence of evil and the existence of an omnipotent, sovereign, and loving God. "Either your God must be loving and powerless," they taunt, "or He is powerful and hateful."

### God and Responsible Creature-choices That Originate Evil.

Clearly the stories of the fall of Satan and of Adam separate the origin of evil from the origin of the universe. You saw above how Genesis 3 differs from Enuma elish and other pagan myths in that the pagan stories really have no origin of evil at all; evil was always there. The Bible insists there was a span of time between the origin of all things and the fall:

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

Span of Time Between the Origin of All Things & the Fall



In that span of time, there was existence without evil, something denied in all forms of paganism. This is not speculation. It is true history. So the question, then, doesn't directly concern creation itself. Rather, it concerns post-creation history. Was it "right" for God to have created creatures with responsible choice who, though created without evil, would certainly originate evil sometime shortly after creation (obviously the God of the Bible wasn't surprised by their choice)?

God could have created creatures with responsible choice who would never have originated evil. Angels had choice, but not all of them rebelled with Satan. Men had choice, but one (Jesus) did not rebel. Heaven and the New Universe contain responsible creatures without any further origination of evil. Because in the Bible evil is limited under God, the question arises why He did not limit it down to the point of elimination altogether.

God Trusted Without a Full Answer. In facing a major question about the Christian faith like this one, you must return to the basic procedure you learned in lesson 1--begin within the biblical framework. How does the Bible itself answer this question? In every major passage that treats the question of why God allows evil and suffering (e.g., Gen. 3; 22; Job; Romans), the Bible never gives a comprehensive, ultimate answer. As John Frame notes, God in each case turns the complaint

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

around as being disobedient, denies He owes us such an answer, and expects us to trust Him that He has a just and sufficient reason.

How can He be so trusted? Go back to the Creator-creature distinction. Remember the relationship between the (Q)uality of omniscience and the (q)uality of human knowledge? Between the (Q)uality of holiness and the (q)uality of conscience? The human intellect and moral sense are similar to God's attributes of omniscience and holiness so that we yearn for a reason and a moral justification. There must be one. The Bible doesn't present us with an irrational, existential absurdity (in spite of some modern theologians' claims).

Nevertheless, the human intellect and moral sense are not identical to omniscience and holiness so that "the" reason and justification, though existing in the Creator, may never fully be grasped by and exist in the mind of the creature. There are, after all, two levels of reality in the biblical worldview. How, then, do we trust Him for such a reason and justification without being able to fully understand it?

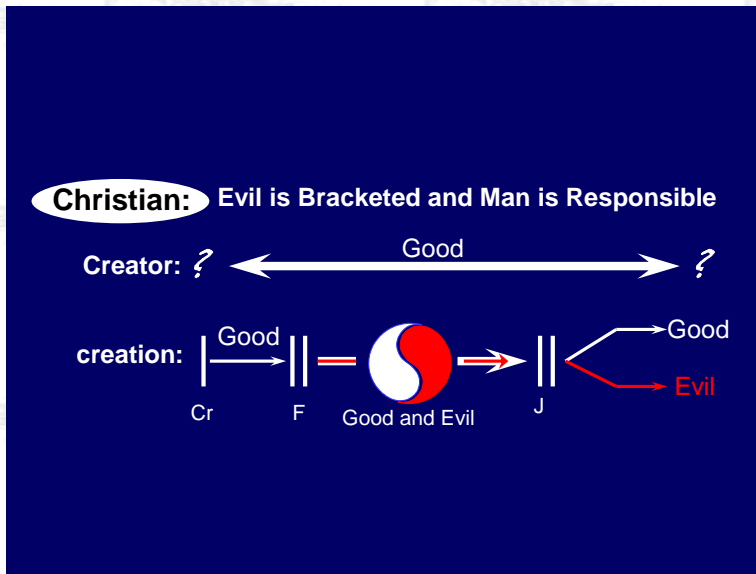
We trust His character as He has so far chosen to reveal it to us. When Job finally saw God in Job 38-42 for Who He really is, he dropped his demand for a reason and a justification (42:1-6). Today, after the additional revelation since Job's day, you and I have more evidence that God does indeed possess a reason and justification for creating a universe in which responsible creatures would originate evil.

We see Jesus as God Incarnate. Through His behavior we can see more of the character of God. Outside the tomb of His friend Lazarus, Jesus weeps at the consequences of evil (John 11:35).

As Francis Schaeffer pointed out years ago, He can be upset at evil without being upset at Himself. Evil truly grieves Him. Moreover, at the cross, He absorbs evil to Himself and bears its judgment to make a way of escape. Whatever His reason for allowing evil, then, God doesn't remain aloof like Allah in Islam but bears the pain along with His creatures. After the display of Jesus and the Cross, can we not trust that He can also resolve the rest of the "apparent contradiction" between His omnipotence and love on one hand and the existence of evil on the other?



## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

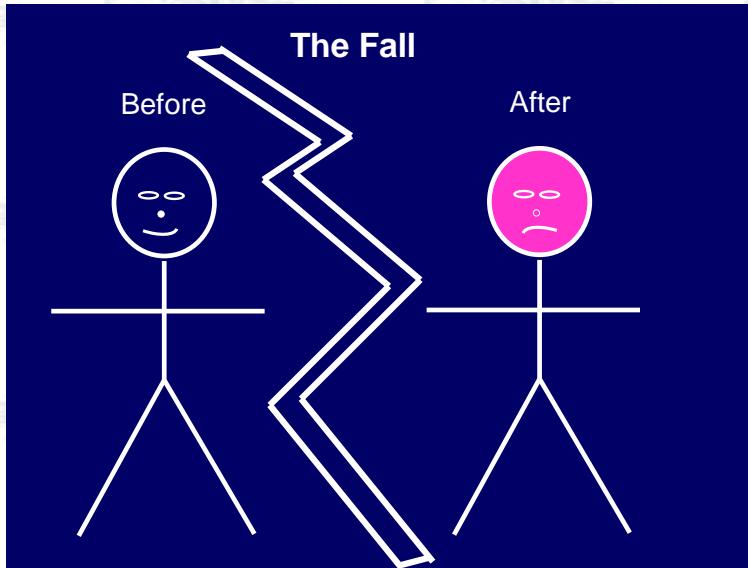


The fall reveals that God did not create an evil universe. Responsible creatures, not God, originated evil. God sovereignly bracketed their evil for reasons known fully only to Himself. Yet He came into full contact with the suffering of evil so we are assured that He is the kind of God Who has a sufficient reason and justification for His plan. Until He reveals it, we must trust Him for it.

### **EVIL IN MAN**

If evil, then, is confined wholly to the creature and does not touch the Creator, we are left with evil man and evil nature. We must learn well the effect of evil on both man and nature, or else we will never appreciate God's redemptive project. A wrong diagnosis of a disease usually produces a wrong prescription of a cure. Non-Christian and sub-Christian religions inevitably fail because they trivialize evil and end up with a works-based, trivialized salvation.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**



### Sin-Damage to Man's Design.

We were created in God's image in both body and spirit. Sin has so damaged His image that we are a tragic relic of that great theomorphism we once were. Full restoration to His image in both spirit and body can only come through regeneration and resurrection in His Son.

1. The Body. What happened at the fall to the body? God promised a new thing--death. Man would be torn asunder. His spirit would leave the body, and his body would disintegrate back to the earth from which it was made

(Jas. 2:26; Gen. 2:17; 3:19). A sentence of capital punishment has been placed upon Adam and all his progeny corporately. Created for immortality, we become frail and mortal. Pain and an apparently disturbed metabolism causing "sweat" are never far from daily life. Neither physical exercise, vitamins, hormones, miraculous cures, nor any future genetic engineering can ever overcome death. So that which God had once created to Incarnate Himself in, we destroyed in disobedience!

2. The spirit. And what happened at the fall to the human spirit? We saw earlier that the spirit reveals its presence by exhibiting the God-like phenomena of choice, conscience, love, and knowing. Each of these has been perverted by the tragedy of the fall.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

### **Sin Damage To The Human Spirit** **Man's (q)ualities similar to God's (Q)ualities**

#### **Choice**

Rebellion against all authority and in particular against God's authority, is inherent now to man.

#### **Conscience**

Sin tends to restrict the conscience from absolutes, but once you restrict an absolute it's no longer absolute. It breeds moral relativism.

#### **Love**

Sin has a draining effect on love. In order to love I first have to be secure.

#### **Knowledge**

Knowledge now becomes a tool to reconstruct my perception of the world to make it fit what I want it to be.

At the fall, the (q)uality of choice became rebellious and defiant. None of Adam's progeny naturally seek after God (Rom. 3:10-13). All men choose themselves as ultimate authorities, as counterfeit overlords, just as Satan did (Isa. 14:13-14; I Tim. 3:6). To justify this choice they immediately have to pervert the revelation in and around them of the Creator (Rom. 1:21-23). Even while fully knowing such truths, they chose not to welcome them into their heart (Rom.1:28-32; I Cor. 2:14).

The (q)uality of conscience becomes what biblical writers call "defiled" and "seared" (I Cor. 8:7; I Tim. 4:2). Moral judgments continue, but now they are no longer directed inwardly, but always outward, to accuse and judge others. After the fall man's conscience is kept from exercising authority over the self. The pagan characteristic "victimization" replaces honest responsibility before God. Man's integrity disintegrates and his conscience is devoid of any truly universal moral judgment. Truth becomes relative.

The (q)uality of love is radically altered. Instead of loving others out of a secure position under God, man reverts to self-protection. No longer secure because of his guilt before a holy God, man's greatest priority is seeking a replacement security for himself.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

Other potential objects of his love, creatures of his own kind, become threatening, competing selves that seek their own security at his expense just as he now seeks his security at their expense.

Finally, the (q)uality of knowledge turns into a vaporous "vanity" as the Bible calls it. It loses its foundation and all justification. Finite man obviously cannot generate infinite universals ("always", "never", etc.). He no longer can tell whether his thoughts fit real truth in the world or are merely electro-chemical phenomena of his brain.

So then, both man's body and his spirit were systematically damaged in the fall. None of Adam's progeny have been normal, physically or spiritually, save One. Sin damaged every area of man's original design, and it cannot be restored by the political, economic, or psychological programs of today or tomorrow.

### Sin-Damage to Man's Institutions.

#### **The Divine Institutions**

- 1. Responsible dominion**
- 2. Marriage**
- 3. Family**

We spoke earlier of the three social structures of man--responsible dominion, marriage, and family that God instituted at creation. With the fall so damaging to man, it is to be expected that each of these institutions would reap the sad results.

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

1. The first divine institution of responsible dominion became perverted but not taken away. Instead of a peaceable, godly dominion over all the earth under God and His Word, man fights and claws his way to a counterfeit dominion built of his own works (cf. Jas 4:1-4). Note two aspects of this perversion.

One aspect is **quantitative**. Production from the rebellious ground costs far more; it is radically less efficient, yielding instead of easy harvests of sweet fruit the unintended "thorns and thistles" after hours of "sweat" (Gen. 3:17-19). Not only is the ground out of control, but man's social behavior is out of control. Unrestrained perverted addictions stymie every attempt to control them (Rom. 1:24-32).

A second aspect of perverted dominion is **qualitative**. In a previous section we saw that labor invites evaluation or imputation of value by a person ("pricing"). God's imputation is objective and absolute; society's imputation is subjective and relative. At the fall, man's value-system changed. Ever since man prices his work based upon his own autonomous judgment—evil becomes good and good becomes evil.

2. The second divine institution of marriage received very severe blows from the fall. Instead of harmonious teamwork in dominion, competing rivalry occurs. The man is cursed in his job as provider; the woman in her role as mother (Gen. 3:17-19 vs. 3:16). The man must exert great effort to lead over against his wife's tendency to control him (note Gen. 3:16b parallels the Hebrew construction in 4:7b). The man can look elsewhere than his wife to satisfy him (Prov. 5:18-21), while the woman can exert tremendous pressure through nagging and resentment (Prov.19:13b; 21:9). Divorce is an all-too-common post-fall feature (Matt. 19:3-9).

3. The third divine institution of family, like marriage, experienced the devastation of the fall as the history of the first family reveals (Gen. 4:8ff). The parents can neglect their responsibility to train their children for God, either by being overbearing and unfair (Deut. 21:15-17; Eph 6:4) or by being too lenient (I Sam. 2:29; 3:13; Prov. 13:24; 14:18; 22:15). The children can

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

rebel by disrespecting the fundamental authority of the parents (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 21:18-21; Eph. 6:1-2).

When faced with the corruption in each of these social structures, fallen man responds in several ways. One way is to reinterpret the struggles with sin in terms of economics (Marx's "class war") or of race (white and black racists) or of psychology (Freud and others). Another cope-out is to abandon the institutions themselves as outdated, arbitrary social "conventions" that need "re-engineering". All such responses, however, are costly failures to the societies that try them. In the end, they reflect the pagan mindset that denies the responsibility of the fall and the abnormality of evil.

### **EVIL IN NATURE**

Evil permeates both sides of the man-nature distinction. When Adam fell, God cursed the ground because of his sin, a fact crucial to Paul's exposition of the resurrection hope in Romans 8:18-23. Evil damaged nature as it did man.

#### Sin-Damage to Nature's Design.

While it is still true after the fall that nature reveals its Creator, it is also true that much chaos has come into the message. Nature has become abnormal. There is now natural evil: storms, earthquakes, plagues, and famine. Nature even pollutes itself! Gases and vapors from natural decay pollute the atmosphere.

Paganism interprets such natural evil as a normal occurrence. The pagan mind cannot imagine nature without evil in it. Evil has always been and will always be. Thus evolutionary theory relies on natural evil (struggle for survival) to bring forth life. That, says the pagan, is the message of nature.

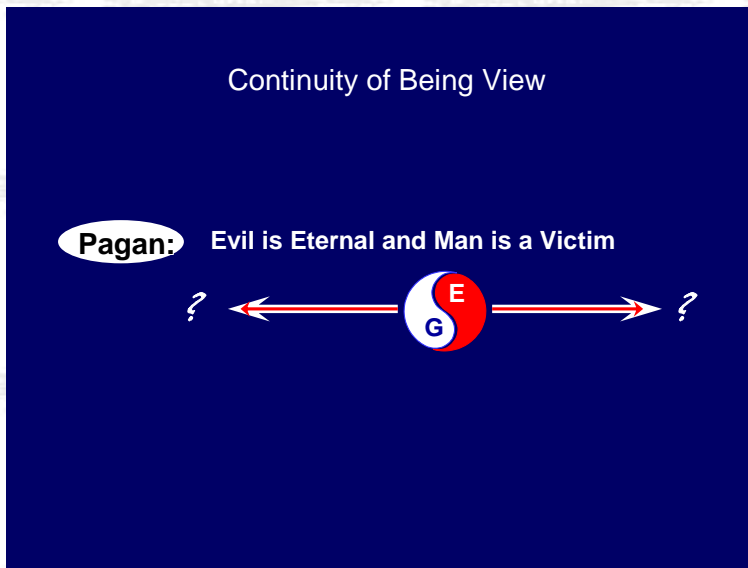
Once this "revelation" is accepted, a counterfeit moral code quickly arises. For example, Sir Arthur Keith, a British anthropologist who had just survived Hitler's bombing of Britain could write these amazing

## **Biblical Framework Part 1**

words in 1947: "To see evolutionary. . .morality being applied to the affairs of a great nation we must turn to Germany of 1942. We see Hitler devoutly convinced that evolution produces the only real basis for a national policy." American business tycoon John D. Rockefeller made the same inference: "The growth of large business is merely survival of the fittest. . . .This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working out of a law of nature."

### **LIVING WITH EVIL: BASIC COPING STRATEGIES**

As with the creation event, so with the fall event: you and I are driven to chose between the Word of God and the carnal thoughts of paganism. Perhaps the worst conflict lies in the area of living with sorrow, hurts, sickness, death, and natural catastrophes.



Let's look at the Pagan Coping Strategies. Because the carnal mind cannot be subject to God, it buries the key truths of the fall: that evil is bounded and abnormal; and responsible guilt for its origin rests upon us. In their place the carnal mind substitutes falsehoods: that evil is unbounded, eternal, and normal; and we are non-responsible victims. These falsehoods powerfully shape unbelieving coping strategies for everyday living.

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One such strategy is to try to deny evil really exists. The founder of the cult of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote: "Sickness, sin, and death are. . .illusion; the mirage of error." But this "it's-all-in-your-head" kind of approach never works well in day-to-day practice. Mrs. Eddy herself confirmed the reality of pain when, toward the end of her life, she received injections of morphine and had her (real) bad teeth removed.

Another strategy is to try to deny our sense of conscience, our sense of something being abnormal and wrong. The fault, it is claimed, lies in our too-sensitive conscience.

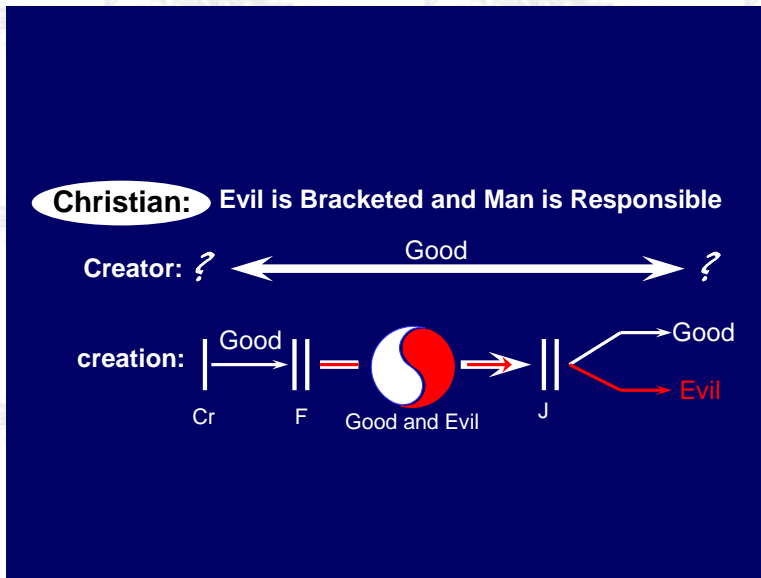
Good and evil are just part of the evolutionary struggle--the yin and yang of existence.

Sensitive and intelligent paganism, however, historically keeps returning to what modern existentialism calls the sense of the Absurd. "Accept the reality of evil, accept the reality of our conscience's condemnation of it, and live with the conflict", they say. In other words, even though you know the whole cosmos is purposeless and evil, pretend as though it isn't so inside your head!

The average pagan finds it a lot easier to "eat, drink, and be merry" as Paul acknowledged (I Cor. 15:32). Once the horror of living with evil forever is faced, the coping strategy of choice is some form of anesthesia: alcohol, drugs, sexual or musical ecstasy, and finally suicide.



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Now, let's look at the Biblical Coping Strategy.

We need get back to the reality of the creator-creature distinction. We need to come to grips with the Love, Sovereignty and Omniscience of God, realizing that He is in control and He knows what He is doing, and remind ourselves that we are finite creatures, self-damaged by sin. We need to submit to His Omniscience, knowing that God has a better idea of what's really going on than we do, and trust Him, knowing that He is trustworthy because He loved us enough to send His only Son to die for us and that He has a plan for each one of us. That, whatever the problem or suffering, we know that will work out for the good. To keep things in perspective, instead of asking, "how can a loving God send people to Hell or have suffering like this go on?", ask another question: "how can a just God send people to heaven and give a gracious delay from immediate judgment right now?" Instead of "why there is so much suffering", ask "why is there so little of it", given the Fall's real existence?

The Bible points to definite patterns of cause-effect in suffering. By studying these patterns you may find it easier to trust Him with suffering in your life. The patterns of suffering reveal enough design to point to the existence of an overall plan on His part. As believers, you have available in the Word of God assurance that every detail of your

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suffering has a purpose, whether God chooses to share it with you or not.

Remember all evil originated through creatures' rebellious choices; evil wasn't there at creation. In both angelic and human spheres evil can be traced back to responsible post-creation choices that had suffering consequences. All suffering, therefore, has an aspect of directness for its origin. Yet not all suffering is due to the immediate choices of those afflicted. For example, what did an infant do to deserve to suffer and die in infancy, or what did we do as unbelievers to merit God's "wake-up" call to salvation? Jesus warned in John 9:3 against falsely concluding that suffering is always in a simple one-to-one relationship to the sufferer. There is an indirectness, too, in suffering whereby it is an "interference" into a person's life and is not directly "asked for". The patterns of suffering, therefore, which follow are divided into direct and indirect categories. Some apply to all men; other apply to only unbelievers or believers.

You can study the expanded Direct and Indirect Suffering Patterns from your handout package below, but for now, here is an abbreviated list of the **6 Direct Suffering Patterns**:

### **Direct Suffering Patterns** (clear consequences of creatures' choices)

1. General existence of sickness & death (physical and spiritual).  
Applies to all men.
  2. General existence of "self-induced misery" (intensified physical, mental, and spiritual deterioration).  
Applies to all men.
  3. General judgment on families and nations.  
Applies to all men.
  4. Eternal judgment in Lake of Fire.  
Applies to unbelievers only.
  5. Judgment in Time of Believers.  
Applies to believers only.
  6. Judgment Seat of Christ for Rewards.  
Applies to believers only.
1. General existence of sickness & death (physical and spiritual).  
Applies to all men.

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2. General existence of “self-induced misery” (intensified physical, mental, and spiritual deterioration).  
Applies to all men.
3. General judgment on families and nations.  
Applies to all men.
4. Eternal judgment in Lake of Fire.  
Applies to unbelievers only.
5. Judgment in Time of Believers.  
Applies to believers only.
6. Judgment Seat of Christ for Rewards.  
Applies to believers only.

Here is an abbreviated list of the **5 Indirect Suffering Patterns**:

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### **Indirect Suffering Patterns**

(God personally intervenes but not as a direct consequence of some particular choice by the individual)

7. Evangelistic "Wake-up" Call.  
Applies to unbelievers only.
8. A "nudge" to Spiritually Advance.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Heb 2:10; 5:8).
9. Evangelization of Unbelievers.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Acts 2:13-18).
10. Edification of Believers.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Phil 2:5-9; I Pet 2:21-23).
11. Resolution of Unseen Angelic Conflict.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Matt 4:1-11; 26:53-54).

7. Evangelistic "Wake-up" Call.  
Applies to unbelievers only.
8. A "nudge" to Spiritually Advance.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Heb 2:10; 5:8).
9. Evangelization of Unbelievers.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Acts 2:13-18).
10. Edification of Believers.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Phil 2:5-9; I Pet 2:21-23).
11. Resolution of Unseen Angelic Conflict.  
Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ  
(Matt 4:1-11; 26:53-54).

We point these out because there are reasons for suffering and some of those reasons we know, some of them we don't. The encouragement is that when you think about it, there are at least eleven different areas,

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maybe you can find more<sup>i</sup> but these at least give some of the possible explanations for why this is happening in my life.

The goal of the biblical strategy toward evil is an inner peace that comes from looking at your Lord and knowing, really knowing, He has a perfect plan for you. But you can't get this quiet conviction "that all is well with my soul" by thinking and reacting with the carnal mentality. We have to get over the thought that we are "innocent victims" and start accepting the truth that we (mankind) are responsible for the evil and suffering. God is not.

We are spiritual creatures, and we must resolve issues with God to restore a clean conscience and a true faith. In the struggle with evil, whether directly a clear consequence of our bad choice(s) or indirectly a not-so-clear "intrusion" into our lives, we ought not to rest until we can handle it by faith. Unlike those without hope, we don't turn off our minds and flee to some irrational anesthetic. We flee to our Creator and Savior honoring His character by trusting its love and power over all evil.

In conclusion, we want to deal with our suffering like Jesus Christ when He faced His maximum suffering. He didn't turn His mind off, He didn't take an anesthetic, He didn't take drugs, He didn't go to sleep, He kept His mental alertness, and that gets back to the point where we started, that when we suffer we go into shock and to get out of that brain freeze we've got to get back to the basics of who God is, who we are, that He has a plan, that He knows what He's doing, that evil is limited, it's bracketed, He's got a purpose for this, but you've got to get thinking; thinking about the Scriptures, thinking about God to get the suffering in focus. That's the goal of the biblical coping strategy.

**Next time, we'll talk about the Flood event.**

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<sup>i</sup> For example, we also suffer because of association, marriage, family, church, job, national identity, etc...

### **Handout package for Class #7**

#### **DIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS**

**(Clear consequences of creatures' choices)**

- 1. General existence of sickness & death (physical and spiritual):** law of Gen 2:17 was disobeyed by Adam and Eve and consequences spread throughout world (Rom 5:12-14; 8:19-23); the "fall event" vindicates God's Word as reliable. Applies to all men.
- 2. General existence of "self-induced misery"** (intensified physical, mental, and spiritual deterioration): law of Gal 6:7 works out through the first divine institution of responsible labor; continued rebellious living yields corrupt fruit of foolishness showing again that God's Word stands (Rom 1:24-32; Eph 4:17-19). Applies to all men.
- 3. General judgment pattern on families and nations:** law of Gal 6:7 works out through the third and fourth divine institutions; preserves opportunities for repentance among those inside these families and nations (Exod 20:5-6; Num 14:18; Acts 17:26-27). Applies to all men.
- 4. Eternal judgment in Lake of Fire:** justice of God originally directed against the fall of angels but which a man comes to share through Adam's fall, if he never responds to God's grace in this mortal

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life (Matt 25:41, 46; Rev 20:10-15); provides for a permanent exclusion of evil from the new universe to come (Rev 21:1, 4). Applies to unbelievers only.

**5. Judgment in Time of Believers:** God the Father disciplines every believer as a spiritual parent when he rebels against His authority; warning to confess sin and be restored to fellowship (1 Cor 11:29-31; Heb 12:5-13; Rev 3:19-20); can include physical death; can work simultaneously with authorized church discipline (Matt 18:17-18; 1 Cor 5:1-5). Applies to believers only.

**6. Judgment Seat of Christ for Rewards:** Jesus Christ evaluates fruit of believers whether produced in obedience to His Spirit or produced in the energy of the flesh (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10-11; 2 Tim 2:11-13). Applies to believers only.

### **INDIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS**

**(God personally intervenes but not as a direct consequence of some particular choice by the individual)**

**7. Evangelistic "Wake-up Call":** specially designed suffering can shock arrogant unbelieving self-confidence in pagan idolatries and self-righteousness (1 Sam 5; I Kings 18:21-40; Jonah 3; Acts 9:1-9); provides an extra opportunity for repentance unto

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salvation independent of choices of unbeliever. Applies to unbelievers only.

**8. A "Nudge" to Spiritually Advance:** specially designed suffering to immunize against arrogant autonomy and protect a sense of dependency upon God's grace (Deut 8:2-6; Ps 119:71, 75; 2 Cor 12:1-10; 1 Pet 1:5-9; 5:5-10); provokes growth and preparation for coming service to others (2 Cor 1:4-7). Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 2:10; 5:8).

**9. Evangelization of Unbelievers:** specially designed suffering to convince unbelievers of the truth of the gospel (1 Tim 1:16; 1 Pet 2:12-3:17). Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:13-18).

**10. Edification of Believers:** specially designed suffering to convince other believers of the adequacy of the gospel (2 Cor 1:5-15; 4:7-18; Heb 12:1). Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5-9; 1 Pet 2:21-23).

**11. Resolution of Unseen Angelic Conflict:** specially designed suffering that has unknown (to us) ramifications in the angelic conflict between God and Satan (Job 1-2; Lk 22:31-32; 1 Cor 6:2-3; 11:10; Eph 3:10). Applies to believers only and to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 4:1-11; 26:53-54).

### **DIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS – (a fuller explanation)**

The first one, "**General Existence Of Sickness And Death,**" why, because the law of Gen. 2:17, what did God say? In the day that you eat thereof you're going to die. Is it true or false? It's true, so we age, we get sick, we die, it's pretty straightforward. So the existence of sickness and death is because we were in Adam, Gen 2:17 and somehow we sinned in Adam. The references I give in Romans are just a commentary on it,



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Rom 5:12-14; Rom 8:19-23. The Fall vindicates God's word as reliable. If there wasn't death after they ate that fruit then that would show Satan was right, Satan said you're not going to die, go ahead and eat it, no problem. So the fact that we have sickness and death is a direct consequence of this historic event.

Second, the "**General Existence Of 'Self-Induced Misery,'**" this is intensified suffering, and it's the law of Gal 6:7. Let's go to Gal 6:7 because a large percentage of our suffering is due to this, it should be memorized because it's such a powerful verse that shows creatures have choice but there are consequences to those choices, cause-effect, choice-consequences, etc. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." That's the problem that in a fallen world we do stupid things and that just adds misery on top of misery. Every time we do something stupid, rebellious, we just add a little more misery to the total equation that the world is experiencing at the present time.

The third, "**General Judgment Pattern On Families And Nations.**" Gal 6:7 again, it works it's way out in our individual lives as well as families and nations. Turn to Exodus 20:5-6, right in the middle of the Ten Commandments and a lot of suffering happens because of this principle, but it's all traceable to personal choices. Exodus 20:5-6, what does God say, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, because I visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me." People stop there and never read verse 6, "But I show lovingkindness to thousands, to them who keep My commandments." Do you notice the incongruity there? Cursing for three to four generations but blessing for thousands? That's one of the most eloquent verses in the Old Testament. You always hear "The God of the Old Testament is wrathful God. No! Read the text. His love far outweighs His wrath even in the OT. It's obvious that God doesn't get a big thrill out of judging. He's reluctant to do that, but He does

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discipline to the third... what does that mean? In summary, there's a pattern in Scripture, you'll see this with the first chosen family of Abraham, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and you read their stories and you'll see the same pattern of sin in that family. When it gets so bad in the fourth generation what does God do to the Jews? By the time you get to the fourth generation of that family where does God put them? He sticks them down in Egypt, and it's not a pleasant place. Why did He do that? Because that family didn't deal with the sin pattern that was being transmitted from father to son, father to son, father to son. It's very clear in the Genesis text what's going on, because the sons commit the same sin the dad did, and it's always a little bit more. Families transmit sin patterns. They may also transmitted patterns of godliness, but the family will transmit something, and you've got baggage, and this is why divorced couples sometimes have additional difficulties raising children, or adopting children may sometimes bring additional baggage because you don't know where that pattern comes from, especially adopting older kids. When you have your own kids, what infuriates you the most about your children? When they do the stuff that you do, right, because you recognize "Dog gone it, there I go," I see it, the stuff that I have to deal with I see it in my kids, and I don't like it because I have to deal with it and I say "Why do I have to transmit it. It's coming in a new version over here, but I can still see it," that's me again. The point is that families transmit culture, and God says, "I'll let that go on only so long and then I'm going to take that family out." Pretty sobering, God will cut off a family.<sup>i</sup>

Suffering happens with nations, Acts 17 is a good example of the theory of how that happens, a great perspective on history, that God sets the boundaries of nations to maintain God consciousness and when a country doesn't maintain God consciousness—they're out! And they suffer. Someone gets in authority who's a poor manager or greedy or hateful or something they implement foolish policies and the nation

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goes down. We saw this in OT Israel, you see this with Russia, you can see it with America today, there's this gradual decline as we reject God.

The fourth one, it's obvious in Scripture, "**Eternal Judgment in Lake of Fire.**" It's obviously due to choice, the negative choice of unbelievers, God says it is, "If you reject my gracious offer of salvation in My Son what do you want Me to do? You can't hang around forever so I'll put you in a little garbage dump over here for eternity." History will go on with or without you.

The fifth one we have is "**Judgment In Time For Believers,**" a classic instance is in Heb 12. This is a book written to Hebrew Christians who were under persecution and as a result they were contemplating quitting Christianity for awhile until the persecution lifted and look at Heb 12:7. People always talk about the signs of salvation, "Oh, if you're really saved you'll see good works or you'll be financially blessed" but the Scriptures say, if you're disciplined when you rebel against God then that's a sign of salvation is. "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." One of the signs is that you can't get away with it because our Father loves us and He's going to go after us and straighten us out. We all need straightening out. Is that related to choices? You bet, we make bad choices and Daddy comes along and whips us into shape.

Then the sixth, "**Judgment Seat of Christ for Rewards.**" The works of the believer will be evaluated. That's a sobering thought. In 1 Cor 3 Paul lays it all out and there's only two categories, the good and the bad and it'll all be heaped up so to speak and Jesus Christ applies His blow torch and it either burns up or is refined. Paul says some of us are going to "suffer loss". It's not going to be a pleasant experience for all

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believers. “Well done good and faithful servant” is not standard fare for all believers. It’s a sobering evaluation that brings focus to what you did with your life.

So what we’ve tried to do here is look at some of the direct suffering patterns in Scripture and it’s refreshing because it shows us something about our God, that there is a reason for the suffering, there’s a reason He’s shaping the evil in our lives a particular way. Frequently you can’t tell why at the time but years later when you look in the rearview mirror of your life you can say “By golly there was a reason for that, God was setting me up for this.” So you acquire meaning and presumably at the Judgment seat of Christ we will have a complete examination and maybe we’ll realize more of what God was doing with us.

### **INDIRECT SUFFERING PATTERNS**

Let’s look at the more subtle kinds of suffering, the indirect, it’s more difficult to detect this kind of suffering but I show you these because it shows that God is always working with evil and suffering whether you can see how it relates to you or not. Turn to 1 Sam 5.

The seventh one is an “**Evangelistic Wake-Up-Call**” wake them up to the gospel, get the attention of an unbeliever. He’ll do it, and some of you can testify to the fact that you were fat, dumb and happy, walking around as an unbeliever, and all of a sudden somebody intervened, something happened. Was that due to your immediate choice, were you really looking for God? No, not really. So why did this, all of a sudden, drop into your life? The Bible does have a sense of humor and 1 Sam 5:1ff is one of these passages. This is a passage of mockery, a passage directed against the paganism of the culture of the time. It’s about the Philistines. “Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.” And the story goes on to point out that they set it in the temple of Dagon, their god. Verse 3, “When the Ashdodites

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arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord.” So here’s their little statue god and he fell over right in front of the ark of God. So they took Dagon and put him back up again. The next day, verse 4, “But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of God. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.” Now what’s the deal? Dagon was *the* god of the Philistines, he’s their sacred god, the integration point of their society, and he’s fallen on his face. Now, here’s where God gives them a little suffering. Verse 6, “Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories.” In the King James it’s “emerods” and what this is talking about is “hemorrhoids”. God struck them with “hemorrhoids” and you have to have a little sense of humor to see this. You’ve heard of a pain in the you know what, and this is a Biblical passage that shows you where that idea came from. This is suffering as ‘a wake up call’. God was giving them a little coffee, trying to wake them up to see who the true God really was. Was the suffering due to their choices? Not really. They remembered it for quite some time and the Jews would read 1 Sam 5 and laugh, because it’s a mockery of their god, it’s not just a funny story though, there’s a profound mockery going on. The true God of the Bible vs the gods of the world; the gods of the world need to be propped up, they fall over.

The eighth one, “**A ‘Nudge’ To Advance Spiritually.**” Turn to Deut 8:2-6, another example in the Old Testament of suffering of believers for training, and there’s a particular wording here that is interesting. Deut 8:2, “And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Watch the wording of verse 3; it’s very particular, pay attention to the verbs. “And He humbled you

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and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone,” stop right there and think about that sentence. Let’s think about that sentence for a minute. Here we are, down through history, and the Jews, for forty years they’re out there wandering for 40 years. During their experience this generation, all the way back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, none of them had ever empirically observed manna. In fact, the word “manna” is the Hebrew word for “what is it?” Ever hear of a food called “what is it?” That’s what manna is. We don’t understand this, nobody has ever seen this before, where did this stuff come from; never empirically observed. This is what’s so important about verse 3, what God does is He gets us into circumstances such that there is no way out by our own resources. He got them in a situation, they had no food; there are two million people out there. Here we are in Iraq fighting this war on terror and you have all these troops out and that’s a tremendous logistical problem. It’s not necessarily battlefield skills that win wars, if you can’t supply your troops what they need you lose. So, logistics is a vital effort in all situations and the logistics of taking 2,000,000 people out in the middle of the dessert, just think of the water problem, multiply the gallons of water a person needs a day by 2,000,000 and think about the logistics. Think about the clothing, for 40 years, how many pairs of shoes would two million people need to use in 40 years of walking around in that dessert, the dessert is not smooth to walk on, there are a lot of hard rocks out there. What about all the clothes? They didn’t have a Wal-Mart out there, where do they get all this stuff. Look at what it’s saying, it’s saying their clothing didn’t wear out; you had food that you didn’t grow. So there’s a principle in this that sometimes God will put us in a box that we can’t get out of. And what He’s doing is reminding us, “Hey, you don’t live by your own devices, you live by trusting Me.” And it’s a case where our suffering is really “A ‘Nudge’ from God to Spiritually Advance”. Often we don’t like that because we get so comfortable where we are, and then God says “Okay, I’m going to stir

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things up a bit.” We may not like that, but it’s really for our benefit. I encourage you to look at some of those verses; there are plenty of verses in the Bible that deal with suffering.

Nine, ten and eleven are sufferings, all of which are evidences for something very real going on in history that are beyond us. The ninth one is “**Evangelization Of Unbelievers.**” 1 Pet. 2:12-3:17, Peter says your suffering shows the reality of the gospel, when unbelievers look at you and they see that you respond to suffering in a radically different way than they would, they begin to ask questions. In fact, that’s the context that leads up to the passage, “Sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready to give an answer to every man that asks a reason of the hope that is in you.” Why do they ask a question? Because they’ve watched you suffer and they marvel at how you handle it.

Number ten is similar “**Edification of Believers,**” we suffer for the encouragement of other believers. 2 Cor. 1:5-15 is a whole passage where Paul says that when you suffer and deal with something in your life that makes you a counselor in that area. We’ve seen that in this congregation, where someone suffered a particular way and then someone else comes along a few years later and goes through the same thing. Those people can get together and be encouraged because we see that “Hey, other people have been through the same things I’m facing and maybe I can get through it too.” That’s what edification is about.

Number eleven is the most mysterious of all, “**Resolution of Unseen Angelic Conflict,**” something is going on behind the scenes and that’s one reason angels watch us. Somehow they learn from what we do. They watch how we handle conflict, how we grow, how we handle suffering and it’s like the suffering of Job. No one ever explained to Job why he was suffering, but we know something was going on behind the scenes between God and the fallen angels. So, God has a lot more going

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on than just our lives, there's more to history than the seen, there's also the unseen realm and the resolution of that ages old conflict.

We point these out because there are reasons for suffering and some of those reasons we know, some of them we don't. The encouragement is that when you think about it, there are at least eleven different areas, maybe you can find more<sup>i</sup> but these at least give some of the possible explanations for why this is happening in my life.

In conclusion, we want to deal with our suffering like Jesus Christ when He faced His maximum suffering. He didn't turn His mind off, He didn't take an anesthetic, He didn't take drugs, He didn't go to sleep, He kept His mental alertness, and that gets back to the point where we started, that when we suffer we go into shock and to get out of that brain freeze we've got to get back to the basics of who God is, who we are, that He has a plan, that He knows what He's doing, that evil is limited, it's bracketed, He's got a purpose for this and I've suggested 11. But you've got to get thinking, thinking about the Scriptures, thinking about God to get the suffering in focus. That's the goal of the biblical coping strategy.