

SO THAT'S WHY!

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the Beginning

My life began when I was twelve years old. At that time I woke up in a hospital bed with little or no memory of my past life. When I awoke, two things happened: I saw a woman sitting in a chair at the foot of my bed, and I realized that I was not exempt from bad things happening to me. When I awoke again, the hospital room was full of people, and my father told me that my mother and I had been in a very bad car wreck and she was killed and I had been in a coma for several days. Later, my father took me to a house, put me in a bed, turned around and walked out of my life. Oh, he did a good job of providing food, clothing, and shelter, but that was the extent of his involvement in my life.

In the years to follow, I played catch-up due to my amnesia. I played catch-up with family, friends, society, and my general education. To my advantage, when I would see someone or some object, the memory banks would open and the memories of that person or thing would be at least partially restored. When I would participate in a physical activity in which I had previously engaged, the memory of how to perform that physical activity would also be partially, if not fully, restored. But the more difficult “catch-up” was learning the rules of human interaction with family, society, friendship—basic human relationships; those rules were gone, I had to learn them by constant observation. This presented a real challenge in my small-town life in Oklahoma.

The first lesson I learned was to hide my ignorance while watching people behave and interact. Next I learned that there is no single rule, nor a single set of rules, that govern all human relationships. There are definite rules in the physical realm—a square is always a square no matter if it’s on land, in water, or in the air. There are definite rules governing physical activities—if you open your inverted hand while holding a ball, the ball will always drop to the ground. If you fall from a high point in a tree, contacting the ground produces some degree of pain. And if you go outside while it is raining, you become wet. There are consistent, infallible

rules for the physical world that apply to everybody. But the rules for living among humans and interacting with them are not even remotely consistent or infallible. In spite of this observation, my search for consistent, infallible rules never ceased.

While I searched for these rules, I also had a deep and abiding realization that there was a God and that He ruled over everything. Somehow I knew He was in control of everything, and nothing happened unless He directly ordered it to happen or allowed it to happen. With this understanding of God, I never questioned the death of my mother. I did not know why He took her or allowed her to be killed, but I was comforted by the fact that He was in control. With this understanding of God, all the bad things that would happen to me in my life never eradicated my belief in a sovereign God. I only had one simple question: *Why!*

I didn't ask the simple *why* question from an entitlement point of view, such as, "Why did you allow this to happen to ME!" I knew that all creation belonged to God, He ruled over it, and He could do anything He wanted to do with it. My question was about God's motive. I did not feel like God owed me an explanation, but I was curious about *why* He allowed some parts of my life to be so hard, confusing, and painful. Then one day God sent me on a journey that resulted in answering my simple *why* question and also provided consistent, infallible rules to all human interactions.

The Journey

In my late teens, an aunt was telling me about some major future events that this world would go through. I asked her how she knew about these things and she told me they were prophecies in the Bible. I replied: "Well it must be true then, because that's the Word of God." When I said that, it was as if floodlights came on in my soul and questions came pouring out of my mouth. There were so many questions and they came so fast that my aunt could not answer them. She put me in touch with her Bible-study teacher and we started a conversation that lasted for many years.

The next important part in God's journey was for me to discover the time of

my salvation.

While I was working for a Christian youth organization it was pointed out that the above “floodlight” story was not a testimony about my salvation. That prompted me to begin a search to find out when I was saved. The search led me to contact my mother’s side of the family, with whom I had lost contact. After many “-hellos-” and “-remember whens-” I finally found my answer. I found that before the age of six or seven my mother and my grandmother would read Bible stories to me at bedtime. At the end of each Bible story there were questions to be answered about that story. They said that this was my favorite time of day, and apparently it was at this time that I accepted Jesus Christ as the savior and Lord over my life.

When the floodlights came on in my soul, apparently that was Christ awakening my spirit and activating His Holy Spirit, who was already resident in me. Christ was revealing to me that even though I had forgotten Him, He had not forgotten me. I was His and He was faithful to reclaim me.

The journey continued on.

Through the next fifty years of my Christian life, there were many unexpected and undeserved trials that came upon me and of course my own sin that entangled me and stopped me from being obedient to the Lord. Death was a constant companion to me through my friends and family. There were major economic setbacks due to a changing economy, companies going bankrupt, and stolen investments. There was rejection by friends and loved ones due to false information set forth about me and confusion about my lack of social graces. There were other trials that are so abhorrent that, to this day, I do not talk about them. But all these trials and even my sin did not destroy me, because I knew that God was “and is” sovereign. I had learned that He had provided the way to simple obedience to Him through His written Word, the Bible. I had also learned God’s immutable rules for human interaction, but when I consistently applied them it often caused me more conflict and suffering.

The simple question, “*Why* does God allow all this to happen?” still resided in the back of my mind. It was not a troubling thought, it was one of continuous

curiosity. In my mid-forties I decided to leave the business world and begin an in-depth research on my *why* question.

The first thing I did was to take all my biblical knowledge and re-examine it to see if I had missed the answer to my question. What I found was not only a great lack of biblical knowledge on the subject but also that the biblical knowledge I did have was not consistent—it contradicted itself. Was what I had been taught wrong? I decided to go to seminary to learn how to study literature, specifically the Bible.

Even though seminary tried to teach me what to believe rather than how to study, I was able to acquire enough study tools to launch my own independent research on the Bible in order to answer my simple *why* question.

I must admit that the biblical information I found was not new, hidden, or mysterious information. The biblical information I found has been known by Christians since the time of Christ. It has only been in the last one hundred years that this information has been ignored and set aside. This is sad because it is such foundational information that without it Christianity easily morphs into humanism—what’s best for -ME- and what makes -ME- happy. The results of all this led me to establish Things Above Ministries as a vehicle to reintroduce this information back into Christianity.

My Present State

I now enjoy talking about that simple *why* question.

God has not left us ignorant as to *why the world is as it is, why there are trials in our lives, why we are here, and what He expects from us*. In Ephesians 1:9 He states that He has revealed His plan to us. In Colossians 1:19–20 He starts to unpack His plan. By understanding His plan it becomes easy to understand why there are bad times and sufferings in our lives and even why we are here—the single purpose of our lives and *the simple way* to fulfill that purpose.

Although it is seldom easy, I am happy with His simple life.

Chapter 1

A QUESTION

Why is it that sometimes in the Old Testament God seems like such an ogre? He threw us out of the garden for eating fruit that was good for us (Genesis 3:1–24). He almost wiped the entire human race off the face of the earth because He didn't like who we were marrying (Genesis 6:1–7). When we achieved world unity and were working on a common goal, it displeased Him so He confused our languages and scattered us throughout all the earth (Genesis 11:1–9).

He promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a specific portion of land that they never received. As a matter of fact God even admits that none of the Old Testament saints received what was promised them (Hebrews 11:39). And it doesn't stop there. Throughout the entire Old Testament God seems to kill people at will. There were times He ordered the Jews to not only kill, but to kill every man, woman, child, and beast and take none of the spoils.

Moving on into the New Testament we find that the apostles had very difficult lives, especially Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23–28). Along with their hard lives, most of them suffered horrible deaths. And then, after all this, God does an about face and commands us to love our enemies!

What is God doing?

An old prospector once said: "You only find what you're looking for." When we believe something and then go to the Bible to look for that belief, then that's what we will find, even if it's not true. *When the only thing we are looking for is our good, that's all we find* whether that is true or not.

We think we find that God created different laws at different times based solely on what was good, or educational, or healthy for humans. We also think we find that our desired state of being is more important than simple obedience to God's laws. But the Bible never actually says that. With this type of prospecting it is not surprising that when God does not bless us with the things we want, and expect, we perceive God as an ogre.

This “it’s all about us” view creates other problems.

First, since God is perfect, all-powerful, and knows everything, and has been interacting and actively working with humans for thousands of years, you would think this perfect, all powerful, all knowing God, would be able to “get it right” and produce heaven on earth in a much shorter time period.

Secondly, if He is trying to teach humanity certain godly lessons throughout history, He has failed. Someone accurately observed: “The only thing we have learned from history is that we do not learn from history.”

Thirdly, if God only gives laws so that He can bless us, why is there so much suffering in the lives of good people? And in comparison there are some pretty rotten people who are living very prosperous and happy lives.

It’s hard to understand what God is doing when we make it all about ourselves.

Chapter 2

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

There is a different way to view God’s interaction with humans, a bigger picture. This bigger picture begins to be revealed in the Old Testament book of Job. In this bigger view God reveals that there is a relationship between God, the angels, Satan, and humans.

In Job, God reveals that He has a disagreement—a conflict— with Satan. In this conflict there is an active relationship between Himself, Satan, and humanity. This conflict and the relationship within the conflict continues throughout the entire Bible. It is an understanding of this conflict and our involvement that puts a different perspective on God’s actions and answers most of our “why” questions.

The Conflict

“But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:13–14)¹

When Satan first rebelled against God, he focused on two issues. First, he wanted to take God’s place as ruler over the entire creation. The second issue was one of character: Satan wanted to make himself like God. Satan not only wanted to rule like God, he wanted to become like God. Satan not only wanted God’s ability to rule but he wanted His character.

Our Involvement

In Genesis 3:15 we find that humans are involved in this spiritual conflict. As a matter of fact this earth is the battleground for God’s rebuffing action against Satan’s rebellion! Our lives and all our relationships go far beyond the physical

¹ While some have argued that this text is not about Satan, C. Fred Dickason in chapter 13, pages 127–137, of his book *Angels Elect & Evil* presents the best understanding and balanced approach of this passage, which is reflected here.

realm.

The Bible is the story of our involvement in the conflict between God and Satan.

The New Perspective

We are commanded to have a spiritual perspective, God's perspective (Colossians 3:1–2). When our focus is placed in the spiritual realm, we see the ongoing spiritual conflict between God and Satan; we see that we have a place in that conflict, and we see God's actions toward us from a new spiritual perspective.

With this new spiritual perspective we understand that we are directly and intimately involved in the conflict between God and Satan and most, if not all, of our “why” questions are answered (Job; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Chapter 3

GOD'S SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

God's goal is not simply to save humans:

For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him *to reconcile all things to Himself*, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.* (Colossians 1:19–20, *emphasis added*)

Satan's rebellion affected all creation. God's plan includes all creation. And the goal of His plan is only achieved in eternity future, it is not achieved during time (Revelation 22:1–5). This means that throughout *all time* God is acting to complete His plan and achieve the goal of eternal reconciliation.

What is reconciliation? In Scripture *reconciliation* simply means “to bring back into unity.” This unity is accomplished when everything is once again placed back under God's unchallenged rulership. This means everything will exist only under God's wonderful rulership for all eternity (Ephesians 1:9–10; Colossians 1:19–20; Revelation 21:1–22:5). Since God's plan is to once again establish His unchallenged, eternal rulership over all creation, His plan can be titled “Eternal Rulership.”

Eternal Rulership

In the beginning God created everything to operate perfectly under His wonderful rulership (Psalms 148:2–5, 103:20). But Satan challenged God's rulership, rebelled against God's rules, took one-third of the angels with him, and was allowed to establish an area of rulership (Isaiah 14:13–14; Ezekiel 28:14–15; Revelation 12:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Humanity also rebelled against God and chose to follow Satan (Genesis 3:6–8; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23).

Because of this rebellion, the earth, all the plants, and all the animals were affected in a negative way (Genesis 3:17–18, 9:2).

But God revealed:

“And I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring; her
offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her
offspring’s heel.” (Genesis 3:15 NET)

God revealed that He was going to crush Satan’s head—Satan’s rulership². God did not tell Satan that He was going to kill him, God told Satan that He was going to destroy his rulership. God also revealed that He would use humans—not angels—to do so.

Christ became a human in conformity to God’s plan to use humans to destroy Satan’s rulership and to reconcile all creation to God’s wonderful unchallenged rulership (1 John 3:8; Colossians 1:19–20).

²Any time the word *head* is used figuratively in either the Hebrew or the Greek, it always means “rulership.” For example, “head of the tribe,” “the head priest,” “the head of the nation,” or “head of the body.”

Chapter 4

SOME ANSWERS

There is a conflict between Satan and God. God has a plan to resolve this conflict, and that plan is directly focused on humans. Therefore there will be trials and suffering in our lives. In light of this, let's examine some of the greater questions, and answers, that arise because of this conflict.

Question: Why is there such a character difference between God in the Old Testament and the loving Savior, Jesus Christ, in the New Testament?

Answer: From a heavenly point of view, in the Old Testament, God was proving to Satan that He and He alone was, and is, able to rule creation. (John 18:33–37; Isaiah 44:6–8; Psalm 103:19). However, in the New Testament, God is working to develop a new set of eternal rulers (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:5). Because of this, we have a more personable relationship with God through our Savior Jesus Christ, and this produces a greater understanding of God's love (Galatians 4:7; John 14:21).

Question: Since Satan has been judged and cast out of Heaven why is he allowed to roam this Earth, why isn't he in Hell?

Answer: Throughout the Bible we have a picture of a heavenly court room. In this heavenly court room Satan brings accusations against God's chosen (Psalm 82:1 (NET); Deuteronomy 32:9 (NET); Zechariah 3:1–7; Job 1:6ff; Job 16:19; 1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 12:22–23; Revelation 12:10; 20:11–15). Satan is presenting an argument to God and using humans to try and prove his argument.

But a popular theory has distorted this information. This popular theory says that Satan knows he is defeated and doomed to Hell, so he is going around causing as much destruction as possible before he has to go to Hell. To put this theory into a frame of reference we can understand, let's apply it to our personal

realm:

There is a gang roaming about the country defying all the laws; they steal, kill for no reason, and destroy everything in their path. Their reign of terror lasts for decades and the citizens live in constant fear for their lives. But finally the authorities apprehend the gang and drag them into court where they are convicted and sentenced to a lifetime in prison. All the citizens begin to celebrate, but then something odd happens: the judge releases the gang and tells them to go back to what they were doing until he calls them to go to prison!

That is what the above popular theory is actually saying about what God did to Satan and us.

Another theory more accurately conforms to biblical information.

Satan is the greatest of God's creation. He is the most intelligent creature God ever created. In the past his duty was to surround God's throne room. He was the closest being to God.

Satan is so intelligent and has been so close to God that he thinks he can displace God. Therefore when Satan rebelled and God judged and sentenced him, being the intelligent being that he is, he challenged God's judgment and legally appealed that judgment. Within the appeal there are many specific issues by which Satan is now trying to prove that God's laws and character are fallible. If Satan can prove this, he then has legal grounds by which he can challenge God's judgment. In short, Satan is trying to legally get out of going to Hell.

God does the exact same thing with humans. In the future, all who have already been sentenced to Hell are allowed to appeal God's judgment in an effort to escape Hell (Revelation 20:11–15).

God, Satan, and the entire human race are active participants in a heavenly appellate court. God's character and laws are being challenged daily. Every issue

that Satan has against God is being thrust upon humans to try to prove God wrong by inconsistency (Job 1:1–42:17). If God is ever inconsistent in any way, Satan can legally challenge God’s original judgment and conviction.

Question: Why do bad things happen to anybody? Why is my Christian life so hard? Why did He let my loved one die? Why doesn’t God make this world perfect, without sin and suffering?

Answer: Because we are presently in appellate court. Satan is arguing his case and God continues to reprove and rebuff him. At the end of the appellate court hearings, God will not make this earth perfect, He will make the entire universe perfect, without sin and suffering (Revelation 20:15–21:1)

Question: “Why am I here?”

Answer: God’s chosen are here to be His active agents in the appellate court hearings. Our role is to be obedient to God and therefore reveal His glory to the rebellious angels who are separated from Him (Ephesians 3:10). We are not here for our glory, intelligence, physical comfort, or personal advancement (Genesis 3:6–7).

God has left us on this Earth to destroy Satan’s rulership; that is our job (Genesis 3:15). This job is only completed in each of our individual lives when we destroy Satan’s rulership over us by obedience to God (Romans 16:20; 1 Peter 5:8–9; Romans 14:23).

Question: Why isn’t this biblical knowledge more evident and easily understood?

Answer: There is nothing new presented here. This information was known in past generations. In the last 200 years we have downplayed and turned away from accurate biblical spiritual information. Sometime in the mid-1900s it seems we made a big mental shift to “quit preaching about heaven and hell and give me something for the here and now.” Because of that attitude, the prosperity doctrine found fertile grounds in which to grow and now has widespread acceptance in

Christian religion.

The Bible is a book with accurate spiritual information about the unity between us and the spiritual beings; a relationship that affects all time and every human generation. The conflict between God's light and Satan's darkness is revealed in Genesis 1:1–2. The goal of our eternal existence is revealed in Genesis 2:16–17. Our involvement in the conflict between God and Satan is revealed in Genesis 3:15. So from the very beginning of our time, God has directed our focus toward spiritual truth and eternal goals.

When we dismiss biblical spiritual truth, then we believe it's all about us and hold the human condition as supreme. Therefore we can think that God is an ogre because physical things don't go the way we expect or want them to go. When we hold the God/human relationship as supreme, we will see God's relationship with the spiritual beings and the rest of his creation as a minor issue. When we believe it's all about us we only pick up the Bible to find out what God is doing to make our physical lives on this earth better. When we believe it's all about us, we redefine "what is good" to our liking (Isaiah 5:20).

The bottom line is this: When we get it backwards, we turn Christianity into humanism. Only then do the above questions arise. But when we get it right, we know that God is the supreme ruler and we are pleased to be His active agents, revealing His glory in all our daily activities, no matter what it cost us.

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