

should rule the world, Christ or Satan. But the cross settled it for all time. It must be Christ above all!

Have you discovered a relationship with the Saviour who died to reveal His matchless, unchanging love? How do you feel about the One who came to our world as a human being and died in your place to save you from the results of sin? Will you bow your head just now and thank Jesus, and then ask Him to come in and take possession of your life?

Dear Father in heaven: I thank You for Jesus' victory over Satan in this world. Thank you for offering forgiveness so graciously from the cross. Please come into my heart just now and fight for me against the evil in my own nature. Please take possession of my entire being. Help me to stay close to Jesus each day. I thank You for hearing my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

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DISCOVER

DOES MY LIFE REALLY MATTER TO GOD?

Some mornings, the world seems a paradise. You wake up, take a deep breath by the window, and look out on golden sunshine spreading color on the trees, leaf by leaf. Some moments make life seem so precious: the face of a beloved friend as you say good-bye, a sublime piece of music that perfectly matches your mood, the unexpected affection of a small child.

But other mornings, the world seems a place of horror. You wake up to newspaper headlines screaming about yet another terrorist bombing that's maimed or blinded some child, yet another serial killer claiming his tenth victim, yet another famine or war or earthquake. There are moments when nothing makes sense, nothing seems fair. You hear about young missionaries speared to death by the tribesmen they have come to help

and at the same time learn of Mafia bosses enjoying their grand-children at their lavish estates.

What does it all mean? Can we make sense of our wonderful and terrible world? Does God have a purpose for it? Why are we here? Does my life really matter to God or am I just a minor cog in some vast cosmic machine?

1. GOD CREATED A PERFECT WORLD

Let's start with the fact that God is the Creator, the architect and designer of everything, from supernovas to butterfly wings.

How long did it take God to perform His mighty miracle of creation?

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”—Psalm 33:6-9. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

God has only to speak, and the electrons, protons, and neutrons scurry off to obey His will. He obviously doesn't need long ages of time to accomplish His purposes. We limit His power if we say that God requires millions of years to bring about the evolution of the world or its creatures. He can take time if He chooses, or He can dispense with it altogether.

2. SIX DAYS TO MAKE OUR WORLD

How long did God decide He would take to



tragic results will stand out so clearly that disobedience to God will seem repugnant for all eternity.

What makes possible the final destruction of the devil and sin?

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”—Hebrews 2:14, 15.

At the cross the angels and the unfallen worlds saw Satan for what he was—a deceiver, a liar, a murderer. There he revealed his true character by compelling men to murder the innocent Son of God. The inhabitants of the entire universe saw how senseless and cruel sin really is. The cross fully unmasked Satan's motives, and when God destroys the devil and those who persist in sin, all will acknowledge that God is just.

Jesus' death on the cross made the removal of sin from the universe a certainty, because it exposed Satan's real intent before all created beings (John 12:31, 32). The cross also revealed Christ for what He is—the Saviour of the world. At Golgotha the power of love stood out in stark contrast against the love of power. It established beyond any question that it was self-sacrificing love that motivates God in all His dealings with Satan, sin, and sinful men and women.

At the cross Christ's eloquent demonstration of God's unconditional love overpowered the worst that men and Satan could do. The devil was decisively defeated. The battle had been over who

Every being in the entire universe will then agree with the declaration:

“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”—Revelation 15:3, 4.

After everyone understands the deadly nature of sin and the destructive nature of Satan’s philosophy, God can destroy Satan and sin. He will also have to destroy those who stubbornly resist His grace and cling to Satan’s alternative. (More about this in guides 22 and 23.)

God is just as anxious to resolve the problem of sin and suffering as we are to have Him do so. But He is waiting until He can do it on a permanent basis, and until He can both preserve our free will and prevent evil from ever appearing again.

How certain can we be that God will destroy sin forever?

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and THE EARTH AND EVERYTHING IN IT WILL BE BURNED UP [margin]... But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”—2 Peter 3:10, 13.

When God does finally say of sin, “It is done!” (Revelation 16:17), sin will be truly finished for all time. It will never again infect the universe. Sin’s

make our world?

“In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

—Exodus 20:11.

The eternal, all-powerful Creator could have formed the world in a moment “by the breath of His mouth.” But when God decided to create our inhabitable world, He chose to take six days to do it. He didn’t need six days—six minutes would have been sufficient, or even six seconds.

The first chapter in the Bible, Genesis 1, describes what God created on each day of the creation week. Read it when you can.

CREATION WEEK

Day One:

light; sequence of day and night

Day Two:

earth’s atmosphere

Day Three:

dry land, vegetation

Day Four:

sun and moon appeared

Day Five:

birds and fish

Day Six:

land animals, man

Day Seven:

the Sabbath

What crowning masterpiece of creation did God bring into existence on the sixth day?

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule . . . over all the earth. . . .’ SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, in the image of God he created him; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.”—Genesis 1:26, 27.

God decided to create individuals like Himself who could reason and feel and love. Every human being is made in God’s “image.” That’s the first Good News statement from the Bible that will help us understand ourselves.

“The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”—Genesis 2:7.

On the sixth day, the world was filled with plants and animals, and God was ready to introduce His masterpiece of creation; the Almighty formed Adam’s body from the dust of the ground. So when God breathed “the breath of life” into his nostrils, man became “a living being”—that is, he came to life.

God named the first man Adam, a word that simply means “man” (verses 19, 20). And to complete His act of creating people in His image, God made the first woman, called Eve, which means “living” (verses 18-25; 3:20). A loving Creator saw the need for human companionship.

Fresh from the hand of God, Adam and Eve both reflected His image. The Almighty could have programmed beings to wander contentedly about the Garden of Eden and raise their hands in adoration on cue. He could have created actors to play flawless parts for Him. But God wanted more: real relationships. Animals can make nice house pets, but

8. THE CROSS MAKES POSSIBLE THE DESTRUCTION OF SIN

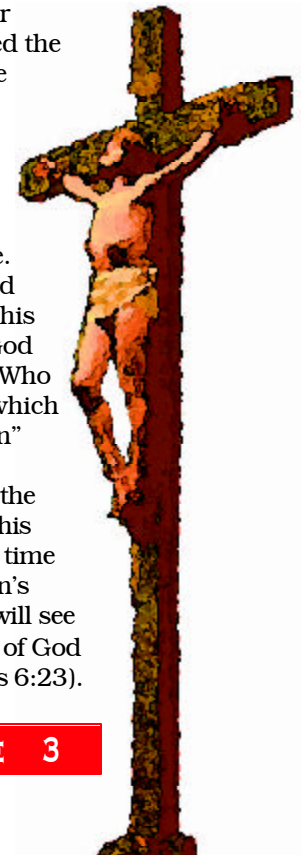
But why didn’t the tragedy of sin stop with Lucifer? Why didn’t God destroy him before his sin-disease could spread? It’s important to remember that Lucifer had challenged the fairness of God’s government. He had told lies about God. The idea of telling a lie had never entered the minds of the angels. Naturally they didn’t grasp all that lay behind Lucifer’s deceptions.

If God had destroyed Lucifer immediately, the angels would have begun to serve Him from fear rather than from love. This would have defeated the very purpose He had in creating beings with the power of choice in the first place.

How did anyone really know God’s way was best? No one had dared to try an alternative. God gave Satan a chance to demonstrate his alternative system. That’s why he was given an opportunity to make his pitch to Adam and Eve.

This planet has become a testing ground where the character of Satan and the nature of his kingdom are contrasted with the character of God and the nature of His kingdom. Who is right? Who can we ultimately trust? These are the issues which “the great controversy between Christ and Satan” must resolve.

So deceptive was Lucifer, that before all the universe could be fully convinced, the nature of his alternative had to be fully exposed. It has taken time for everyone to really grasp how disastrous Satan’s alternative actually is. But eventually everyone will see that “the wages of sin is death” and that “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).



evil in our world.

To answer that question we must go back to why God created us in the first place. He wanted people who could have meaningful relationships. So God did something that only He would think of: “God created man in His own image” (Genesis 1:27).

This means we are free and responsible. We can decide to love God or turn our backs on Him.

What special ability did God give people and angels that distinguishes them from animals?

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.”—Joshua 24:15.

God gave the people of Joshua’s day, as well as the angels and human beings of every generation, a spiritual nature and a capacity to make real choices. He challenges the beings He created in His image to choose to do right because their reasoning powers tell them “God’s way is best.” And to turn from wrong because their reasoning powers warn against the results of disobedience and sin.

The Lord didn’t have to make us free moral agents. But only beings with the power to reason and choose can experience real love. God longed to create individuals who could comprehend and appreciate His character, freely respond to Him in love, and be filled with love for others.

God wanted to share His love so much that He was willing to take the enormous risk of creating angels and people with the power of choice. He knew it was possible that some day one of His created beings might choose not to serve Him. The devil was the first being in the universe to make that terrible choice. The tragedy of sin began with him (John 8:44, 1 John 3:8).



they can’t carry on a stimulating conversation. Robots can smile, speak courteously, and even do the dishes, but they can’t love.

That’s why God made people. He could have given us no greater honor than to create us in His image, with the capacity to think and decide, to choose and remember, to understand and love. Adam and Eve were the crown of God’s creation. They were His children, and therefore inexpressibly dear to Him.

3. EVIL COMES TO A PERFECT WORLD

When God created Adam and Eve, they had everything to make them happy. They enjoyed perfect physical and mental health, living in a beautiful garden home in a flawless world (Genesis 1:28-31). God promised them children and the ability to do creative thinking, and to find satisfaction in the work of their hands (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). They experienced face-to-face fellowship with their Maker (Genesis 3:8). No trace of worry, fear, or sickness marred their blissful days.

We still, on occasion, catch an echo of that original Eden during moments when life seems indescribably precious. But what about the other side of life? How did the world change so drastically into a place of suffering and tragedy? The second and third chapters of Genesis tell the entire story of how sin entered our world. Read them at your leisure. Here is a brief summary of their contents.

Some time after God established

a perfect world, the devil came to the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve into disobeying their Creator. God limited the devil's sphere of influence to one tree in the garden, the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And He warned the first human couple to stay clear of this tree and never to eat its fruit, for that would result in death.

But one day Eve wandered over by the forbidden tree. The devil quickly launched into his sales pitch. He claimed God had lied to her and that if she ate the tree's fruit she wouldn't die but would become wise like God Himself, knowing good and evil. Until then Adam and Eve had known only good. Tragically Eve, and then Adam, allowed the devil to con them and they sampled the forbidden fruit—thus breaking their bond of trust and obedience with God.

God planned for Adam and Eve to "rule" over our world as the stewards of God's created works (Genesis 1:26). But because they broke faith with God and, by default, chose the devil as their new leader, the couple lost their jurisdiction. That was the first critical step that eventually led to a planet in rebellion against God. Today the devil claims the world as his turf and tries his best to enslave its people.

There are many times when we find ourselves doing something selfish or even cruel when we really want to do the opposite. Why? Because there is an evil force at work in our world. The invisible

persuade other heavenly beings that he had a better plan. It is easy to imagine Satan arguing that God was holding something back from them, and that the divine law was too restrictive, and that God was an uncaring sovereign. He slandered the name of the One whose character defines what love is.

How was this conflict in heaven resolved?

***"Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth."*—Ezekiel 28:17.**

When Lucifer's heart became proud and he chose to rebel, God had to cast him out of heaven. Why? Because pride and selfishness, which are sin, and at the root of all sin, cannot exist in the presence of God.

Lucifer twisted love for God into an unhealthy love of self. Jealousy changed the chief of angels into the devil or Satan. And in order to preserve the peace and harmony of heaven, he and one-third of heaven's angels, those who joined him in rebellion, had to be expelled (Revelation 12:4, 7-9).

7. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SIN?

Why didn't God create beings incapable of sinning? If He had, there would be no problem of

God's great enemy was once the most beautiful and wisest of the holy angels.

6. WHY DID THE DEVIL SIN?

If God created the devil as a perfect angel, why did he become a sinner?

“How YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O morning star, son of the dawn! YOU HAVE BEEN CAST DOWN TO THE EARTH, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I WILL MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH.’”—Isaiah 14:12-14.

The being who became the devil was originally called Lucifer, meaning “day star” or “shining one.” Somehow, in this angel’s heart, vanity and ambition began to take the place of devotion. The seed of pride grew into an obsession to actually take God’s place. God had already given him a very high position in heaven as a leader of the angels. But he wanted even more. Growing more and more jealous of God, he sought to seize God’s throne.

Lucifer must have worked very hard to

enemy, the devil, works to make people fail morally. Many of the senseless, vicious crimes we read about with dismay are the result of individuals who’ve consciously or unconsciously given themselves over to the control of this evil power and who find themselves doing things they could not have imagined before.

As you read chapter 3 of Genesis, you will discover that sin caused Adam and Eve to hide from God in fear. Sin affected all of creation adversely. It was like throwing a wrench in a smoothly running machine. Thorns appeared along with the flowers. The soil suffered from drought and labor became a burden. Disease began to strike at random. Jealousy and animosity, suspicion and greed started multiplying human miseries. Most terrible of all, with sin came death!

4. WHO IS THIS DEVIL WHO INFECTED OUR WORLD WITH SIN?

The New Testament mentions the devil, or Satan, nearly one hundred times. The Bible clearly teaches that there is a real, personal devil.

What insight does Jesus give us into the character of the devil?

“He [the devil] was A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, not holding to the truth, for

there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and THE FATHER OF LIES.—John 8:44.

According to Jesus, the devil is the originator of sin in the universe, the “father” of sin and thus of murder and lying.

Thomas Carlyle, the great English philosopher, once took Ralph Waldo Emerson through some of the worst streets of London’s East End. As they walked along, silently observing the wretchedness and evil around them, Carlyle finally asked, “Do you believe in the devil now?” We might extend such a walk to the hospitals, prisons, and inner cities of today’s world, or follow the TV cameras into battles which maim and kill innocent civilians, and then ask, “Do you believe in the devil now?”

5. DID GOD CREATE THE DEVIL?

According to Jesus, where did the devil come from?

“I saw Satan fall like lightning FROM HEAVEN.”—Luke 10:18.

How does the Bible further describe the devil’s fall from heaven?

“And there was WAR IN HEAVEN. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they LOST THEIR PLACE IN HEAVEN. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”—Revelation 12:7-9.

Did God create the devil? No! Everything God makes is perfect. A good God would not produce a devil. And yet the Bible states that the devil, along with the angels he had deceived, lost their place in heaven and came to our world where he carried out a successful coup: wresting the stewardship of the world from Adam and Eve.

Where did the devil come from? How did he get into heaven in the first place?

“You were anointed as A GUARDIAN CHERUB, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS from the day YOU WERE CREATED till WICKEDNESS WAS FOUND IN YOU.”—Ezekiel 28:14, 15

According to this scripture, God did not create the devil, He created a perfect angel, and this angel gradually turned himself into a devil. Satan actually began his career as one of heaven’s leading angels, standing next to God’s throne. But then he sinned—“wickedness was found in” him. Expelled from heaven, and posing as Adam and Eve’s friend, he became humanity’s deadliest enemy.

When you see cartoons portraying the devil with horns, a tail, and split hoofs, remember that the Bible is not so naive. In Scripture we discover that

