

enormous risk of creating angels and people with the power of choice. He knew it was possible that someday 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).

8. THE CROSS MAKES POSSIBLE THE DESTRUCTION OF SIN

Why didn't God destroy Lucifer before his sin-disease could spread? Lucifer had challenged the fairness of God's government. He had told lies about God. 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 purpose God had in creating beings with the power of choice in the first place.

How did anyone really know God's way was best? God gave Satan a chance to demonstrate his alternative system. That's why he was given an opportunity to tempt 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? So deceptive was Lucifer, that it has taken time for the beings of the universe to be fully convinced of 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).

Every being in the universe will then agree that:

"Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. . . . 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.

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.

God has promised to destroy sin forever by purifying the heavens and this earth with fire. "In keeping with his

promise" we can look "forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous" (2 Peter 3:10, 13). Sin will never again infect the universe. Sin's tragic results will stand out so clearly that disobedience to God will seem repugnant for all eternity.

Who 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 exposed Satan's real intent before all created beings (John 12:31, 32). The cross also revealed Christ for what He is—the Savior of the world. At Golgotha the power of love stood out in stark contrast against the love of power. The cross established beyond any question that it is 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 decisively defeated the Devil. The battle had been over who should rule the world, Christ or Satan. And the cross settled it for all time. It must be Christ above all!

Have you discovered a relationship with the Savior 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?



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DISCOVER

Guide **3**

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 reflecting 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 maimed or blinded a child, yet another serial killer claiming his tenth victim, yet another famine or flood or war or earthquake. These are moments when nothing makes sense, nothing seems fair.

What does it all mean? Can we make sense of our wonderful and terrible world? 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

God is the Creator, the architect and designer of everything from supernovas to butterfly wings.

"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."—*Psalms 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 elements obey His will.

2. SIX DAYS TO 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 God chose to take six days to do it—six minutes, or even six seconds would have been sufficient. The first chapter in the Bible, Genesis 1, describes what God created on each day of the creation week.

What crowning masterpiece did God create on the sixth day?

"GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, in the image of God he created him; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM." —*Genesis 1:27.*

CREATION WEEK

- Day One:** light; sequence of day and night
Day Two: earth's atmosphere
Day Three: dry land and vegetation
Day Four: sun and moon appeared
Day Five: birds and fish
Day Six: land animals and man
Day Seven: the Sabbath

then God introduced His masterpiece of creation. According to Genesis 2:7, 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 created in His image, Adam, a word that simply means "man," and the first woman, Eve, which means "living" (2:20; 3:20). A loving Creator saw the need for human companionship.

Fresh from the hand of God, Adam and Eve both reflected His image. God could have programmed beings like robots to wander contentedly about the Garden of Eden and raise their voices in adoration to Him. But God wanted more: real relationships. Robots can smile, speak, even do the dishes, but they can't love.

God created us in His image, with the capacity to think and choose, and to remember, understand, and love. Adam and Eve were God's children, and inexpressibly dear to Him.

3. EVIL COMES TO A PERFECT WORLD

Adam and Eve had everything to make them happy. They enjoyed perfect physical and mental health, living in a beautiful garden home in a flawless world (Genesis 2:8; 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. No trace of worry, fear, or sickness marred their blissful days.

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, or they would die.

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. Tragically Eve, and then Adam, who had only known good, 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 chose the Devil as their new leader, the couple lost their jurisdiction. Today the Devil claims the world as his 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 the invisible enemy, the Devil, works to make people fail morally.

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. Thorns appeared along with the flowers. The soil suffered from drought, and labor became a burden. Disease began to strike at random. Jealousy, animosity, and greed multiplied human miseries. Most terrible of all, with sin came death!

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

"He was A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, . . . 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?"

5. DID GOD CREATE THE DEVIL?

No! A good God would not create 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.

"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.*

How did the Devil 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 WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS from the day YOU WERE CREATED till WICKEDNESS WAS FOUND IN YOU." —*Ezekiel 28:14, 15.*

God did not create the Devil, He created Lucifer a perfect angel, 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.

6. WHY DID LUCIFER, THIS PERFECT ANGEL, SIN?

"How YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O morning star, son of the dawn! YOU HAVE BEEN CAST DOWN TO THE EARTH . . . You said in your heart, 'I will

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ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; . . . 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." In this angel's heart, vanity and ambition began to take the place of devotion. The seed of pride grew into an obsession to take God's place.

Lucifer must have worked hard to persuade other heavenly beings. It's 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 One whose character defines what love is.

How was this conflict in heaven resolved?

"Your heart became proud, . . . So I threw you to the earth." —*Ezekiel 28:17.*

Pride 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 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 evil in our world. But God wanted people who could have meaningful relationships. So "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.

God gave the angels and human beings of every generation, a spiritual nature and a capacity to make real choices.

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." —*Joshua 24:15.*

God 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.

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