

SIN, SUFFERING, SATAN AND EVIL, PT. 2

Scripture's solution for the "problem" of evil

I. Introduction

- a. Well as we begin, I just want you to know that I really believe in what we're about to do here.
- b. And what we're about to do here is theology
- c. And the thing about theology is that it is not and was never intended to be mere abstract, theoretical ideas disconnected from real life—no!
- d. The essence of what theology is designed to do is holistic life-transformation! It is for life—it is for living!
- e. There is nothing theoretical about it—no! True theology is taking the most lofty, exalted thoughts about God and connecting them to the everyday issues in the trenches of life.
- f. And my job as a pastor—at least, *one* of my jobs, is to have things of eternal weight pressed into your souls!
- g. Part of what it means for me to disciple you is to help you understand all of life's deepest dilemmas in light of all that the Triune God is doing in and through Christ in the world!
- h. In other words, I exist on the planet to repair your wounded souls with the Word of God so that you can go back out there and fight in the trenches of the Great Commission—that is theology!
- i. And *that's* why we're doing these theology seminars every single month!
- j. To help you take the most lofty, exalted thoughts about God and connect them to the everyday issues in the trenches of life.
- k. The secret to a thriving soul is not to avoid thinking deeply about God, but to push ourselves deeper than ever into who God is!
- l. And tonight our topic is one of earth-shattering significance, because we touch upon one of the most sensitive nerves of our existence, namely, the reality of sin, suffering, Satan and evil in the world and how and why God allows it and controls it and does not prevent it.
 - What we need most in a terrifying 21st century is a stunning vision of a glorious God with an unstoppable, sovereign purpose in the universe.

- What we need, more than ever, and more than anything, is to see that the world—with all of its blood and guts and sins and horrors—all of it is under the massive hand of God!
- There are no accidents! There are no mistakes! There are so coincidences! There's no such thing as karma—no!
 - All there is, is God and He governs everything that comes to pass!

II. Proposition

- a. My aim and purpose tonight is to demonstrate from Scripture that the deepest, most ultimate explanation for the existence of sin and evil in the world is the sovereign love of God.
- b. Not just the sovereignty of God alone and not just the love of God alone, but *the sovereign love of God is the deepest explanation for the existence of sin and evil in the world.*
- c. I'm going to argue that, in some mystery that we may never fully comprehend in this life, that God lovingly designed a plan of salvation that included sin, evil and sinners who would need a Savior.
- d. And I'm going to argue that the reason He *did* that, was so that in the end, Jesus Christ would be put on display for the supremely valuable treasure that He is!
- e. In other words, my aim is to demonstrate from the Bible that *the sovereign love of God ordained that sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of the Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever.*
 - Or, think of it this way:
 - If history is like a dramatic play, God the Father wrote the entire script before time began.
 - And every great play needs a Hero and so, God the Father chose His Son to be the Star of the show—everything is about Him!

- The entire plot of the play is designed to put the power and beauty and worth and glory and supremacy of the Son on open display!
- John 17 is clear—the Father wanted the world to see and enjoy what He had always seen and enjoyed, namely His Son! He wanted everyone to feel about His Son the way *He* felt about His Son!
- And so, God included certain elements, events—even obstacles into the play—like sin, evil and death; the Father wrote those things into the script that the Son would overcome by His power and *thus*, as a *result* of the Son overcoming sin, evil and death, *therefore His worth, beauty and supremacy would be put on display for our everlasting satisfaction forever!*
 - In other words, if you want to show off the brute strength of a bodybuilder, you give him heavy weights to lift; if you want to show off the supremacy of the Son for our everlasting satisfaction, you give Him sin, evil and death to conquer.

- f. Now, *how* this all fits with the God’s righteousness and man’s responsibility, before we’re done, we’re going to deal with that!
- g. But just know that I’m arguing that in some mystery, incomprehensible to human logic, *the sovereign love of God ordained that sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of the Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever.*

III. Part I—Posing the ultimate questions and possible solutions to the “problem” of evil

- a. Last time we began by asking a very simple, but staggering question, namely:
 - Is God in absolute sovereign control over sin, Satan, evil and suffering?
- b. If you answer “no” to that question then you simply do not believe in the God of the Bible who is the only God who exists.

- c. But if the answer to that question is “yes”, then our task is then to define what “sovereign over sin” means!
- Option #1: does “sovereignty” mean that God merely *knows* about sin beforehand? He knows its coming, watches it unfold and *merely* turns it for good?
 - i.e., mere cognitive awareness; mere prediction; God, like a mere weather forecaster in the sky only knows beforehand what is coming and like us, can only react after it happens?
 - The problem with this is that although God does know all things perfectly from all eternity, to say that God only *knows* beforehand that sin and evil will happen is to imply that there is an invisible, unseen force outside of God that has determined all events (including sin and evil) and that God kinda just has to “go with it”.
 - And even though He may have power over it to turn it for good once it happens, His role is largely that of a spectator.
 - And that doesn’t work, because the Bible makes clear that God is the One who wrote the script of history. *He* wrote the Script—*He* determined what would go down in the pages of history.
 - The other problem with this is that the Bible indicates that God does so much *more* than merely know beforehand that an evil event is about to take place!
 - Option #2: does “sovereignty” mean that God just passively *allows* or “lets” sin and evil happen and then afterwards turn it for good?
 - To be sure, the Bible is clear that God *does* sovereignly intervene in the events in history and turn them for good to put His power and supremacy on display—no question!
 - But the Bible *also* makes clear that that’s not *all* God does—He does way more than simply passively allow events to take place.

- Which brings us to our proposed definition of the sovereignty of God (still review)

IV. Part II—A presentation of the meaning of the sovereignty of God

- In other words, what, exactly, does it mean that God is sovereign?
- If God's sovereignty is more than just passively allowing things to happen or merely knowing them beforehand, doesn't merely mean that He allows things to happen or merely knows about them *before* they happen, what then does it mean?
- Definition:
 - The sovereignty of God is His infinite, inexhaustible power to accomplish everything He predestined before the foundation of the world.
 - He predestined everything before the foundation of the world!
 - In real time He accomplishes everything by His infinite, inexhaustible power!
 - God's sovereignty means that in eternity past God predestined and designed every moment of every event that would ever take place (including sin and evil), *and* that He is actively and personally involved with every moment of every event that He designed (including sin and evil)—directing, controlling and guiding it to His predetermined outcome!
 - Isaiah 46:9-10
 - זָכְרוּ רֵאשִׁיטוֹת מְעוֹלָם כִּי אָנֹכִי אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אֱלֹהִים
וְאֶפֶס כְּמוֹנִי:
מִגִּיד מִרְאשִׁית אַחֲרִית וּמִקֶּדֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִעְשָׂו אָמַר
עֲצָתִי תִקּוּם וְכָל-חֲפָצִי אֲעֹשֶׂה:
 - Ephesians 1:11
 - ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.

- Charles Spurgeon graphically portrayed the sovereignty of God like this:
 - “I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of . . . leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.”

V. **Part III—A portrayal of the Biblical evidence of the sovereignty of God...over everything**

- a. So now that we’ve defined the sovereignty of God, we have to display the sovereignty of God from the Bible itself.
- b. We need to demonstrate that God does, in fact, ordain *and* control every moment of every event.
 - Because if we can establish that, then we can see that even sin and evil are not merely allowed by God, but even ordained and controlled by God.
- c. This is what I call the “meticulous” sovereignty of God—which means, we want to demonstrate from the Bible that God has absolute, undisputed dominion not only over the universe as a whole, but *also* the meticulous details within the universe.
- d. That there’s nothing random or accidental in the universe, but that all things are under the jurisdiction and command of God’s authority.
- e. And the Bible identifies at least 10 realms over which God has absolute, sovereign control.

f. And you'll notice that, funnel-like, we will start with the broadest possible categories and work our way down to the most specific and particular.

1. The universe
2. Creation
3. Nations
4. Kings and authorities
5. Individuals and their individual actions and decisions
6. The minutia (details) of life
7. Satan and demons
8. Sickness and suffering
9. Natural evil (earthquakes, hurricanes)
10. Moral evil (sinful actions of human beings)

VI. 1st realm—God is sovereign over the entirety of the universe

a. Job 42:2

- יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־כֹל תּוּכָל וְלֹא־יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּנִּי מְזִמָּה

- After having his life decimated by tragedy, Job understood at the end that God had sovereign power to do whatever He wanted and that nothing could prevent God from doing what He had predetermined to do!

b. Psalm 115:3

- וַיֵּלֶּהֵנוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־חָפֵץ עָשָׂה:

- What comforted the Psalm writer in the midst of hostile persecution was that God does whatever He darn well pleases.
- God being בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “in the heavens”, does not describe His detachment from the affairs of life, but rather His supremacy over the affairs of life.
- And the Psalm writer declares what? That God does what He pleases most of the time—except for when man’s free will gets in the way?
- No! God does whatever He pleases all of the time, unhindered and unobstructed by evil actions of humans or demons.

- Everything that God has determined to do, He does freely without any constraints or limits except what He Himself determines!
- He is invincible! He is unconquerable! He is unstoppable! He is uncontainable!

c. Daniel 4:35-36

- וְלִקְצֹת יוֹמֶיהָ אֲנִי נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר עֵינִיו לְשִׁמְיָא גְטִלִּית וּמִנְדַּעַל עָלַי יִתּוֹב וְיִלְעָלֵא "וְיִלְעָלֵא" בְּרַכְתָּ וְלִתִּי עָלְמָא שְׂבַחְתָּ וְהִדְרַת דֵּי שְׁלֹטְנָה שְׁלֹטֵן עָלַם וּמְלֻכּוּתָהּ עִם-דָּר וְדָר:
 וְכָל-דְּאָרִי "וְכָל-דְּיָרִי" אַרְעָא כְּלָה חֲשִׁיבִין וְכַמְצָבִיהָ עֶבֶד
 בְּחִיל שְׁמִיָּא 'וְדְאָרִי' "וְדְיָרִי" אַרְעָא וְלֹא אִיתִי דִּי-יִמְחָא בִּידָהּ
 וַיֵּאמֶר לָהּ מָה עֲבַדְתָּ:

d. Romans 11:33-36

- Ὡς βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ· ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ. Τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο; ἢ τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

- Notice very carefully:

- *From God* are “all things”: that means there is not one thing that takes place in the world that is outside of His sovereign control.

- *Through* God are “all things”: nothing happens in the world that is without His direct guidance and supervision. He has direct oversight over every moment of every event, governing and guiding it to result in the exact outcome which He determined!
- *To* God are “all things”: every single thing that transpires in history will, in the end, in some way or another, wind up resulting in the glory of God.

VII. 2nd realm—God is sovereign over all creation

- a. Last month we saw that the Scriptures are unmistakable that everything we see and experience *in* creation, God Himself controls it and directs it and although separate *from* it, divinely superintends it and *causes* it to come about.
- b. There’s just no such thing as “mother nature” as a force that operates independently of God.
- c. The concept of nature that operates on its own without God’s providential control and superintendence. In other words, although transcendent from creation, God is intimately involved *with* creation!
 - Planets, stars and space (Job 9:7; 26:7; 38:31–33; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 31:25)
 - God commands the sun, He orders the moon, He fixes the days and seasons, He numbers the stars, He calls them by name, He directs the constellations and even suspends the planets in space. This is not an impersonal force that does these things—it is very profoundly God who does these things in real time.
 - Implication:
 - Oceans, seas and rivers (Job 38:8–11; Psalm 89:9–12; Psalm 104:10–13; Psalm 135:5–6; Matthew 8:25–27)

- The Scriptures are clear: it is God (and *not* some impersonal force outside of God) that rules the oceans, sets their limits, directs rivers and streams and governs the lives of everything that lives *in* the water.
- Psalm 104:10-13: “He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; 11 They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up their voices among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.”
 - Implication:
- Trees, grass and vegetation (Job 35:25-27; Psalm 104:14-17; Psalm 147:7-8)
 - Flowers that bloom in the desert that no one ever smells, trees and grass and vegetation in the hidden valleys in the Amazon jungle, God Himself is the One who causes it to exist and sprout and grow in real time. It all comes by order of His command!
 - Psalm 104:14-17: “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, 15 And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill, The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, 17 Where the birds build their nests, And the stork, whose home is the fir trees.”
 - Implication:
- Weather: rain, snow, clouds, lighting and wind (Psalm 147:8; Psalm 147:15-17; Jeremiah 10:12-13)

- Every raindrop follows the exact coordinates upon which God sent it; God not only makes it snow when He pleases, but He is even the One who determines the intricate design of every snowflake, the jagged path of every lightning bolt was determined by God's will; the gentle breeze that blows the fragile leaves in the parking lot and the hurricane winds that devastate entire cities are all on order from the throne.
- Jeremiah 10:12-13: "It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens. 13 When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses" (cf. Psalm 135:7)
 - Implication:
- Animals, birds and wild beasts (Genesis 2:19; 2 Kings 2:23-24; 2 Kings 17:25; Psalm 104:24-30; Daniel 6:22; Jonah 1:17; 4:7; Matthew 10:29)
 - From Genesis to Revelation (literally) we see that God is the King of the animal and insect kingdom. He opens the mouths of pit-bulls, He shuts the mouths of lions—bears that attack, giant fish that swallow you whole, the little worms that eat your plants and every tiny bird perching on a branch in the jungle is all appointed by God's decree!
 - Matthew 10:29: οὐχὶ δύο στρουθία ἀσσαρίου πωλεῖται; καὶ ἕν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν.
 - Implication:

VIII. 3rd realm—God is sovereign over nations

- a. Last time we saw that God’s Word is clear: God is sovereign over nations and the shifting of entire civilizations. Not only did God supernaturally cause nations to come into existence (i.e., Babel, Genesis 11:1-10), but He also determines where those nations would live (cf. Acts 17:26); how long they survive (cf. Acts 17:26); how powerful they are (cf. Job 12:23); if their plans succeed (cf. Psalm 33:10-11) and if a nation in power crumbles to the ground and turns into a bunch of roaming nomads who live in tents—the Bible is unmistakable—God is the One who made it come to pass!
- Job 12:23-25: "He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away. 24 He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people And makes them wander in a pathless waste. 25 They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man."
 - Psalm 33:10-11: "The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation."
 - Acts 17:26: ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς, ὀρίσας προστεταγμένουσ καιροῦσ καὶ τὰσ ὀροθεσίασ τῆσ κατοικίασ αὐτῶν.
 - Implication:

IX. 4th realm—God is sovereign over kings, authorities and government

- a. Last time we saw that every king, ruler, president and tyrant in history was ordained and ruled by God (cf. Romans 13:1-3). And every single one of them fulfilled only what God had decreed they would do and could not operate independently on their own outside of His constraining power!
- b. When we survey the Scriptures, the supreme power of God over kings and rulers is precisely what we see: God hardened the heart of Pharaoh (cf. Exodus 4:21, etc.); He sent an evil spirit to torment Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 18:10); He drove Nebuchadnezzar to madness (cf. Daniel 4:31-34); He restored Nebuchadnezzar to sanity (cf. 4:26) and every single public policy or decree a king has ever made in history came about ultimately by the sovereign hand of God (cf. Proverbs 21:1).

- Proverbs 21:1: פִּלְגֵי-מַיִם לִב-מֶלֶךְ בִּיַד-יְהוָה עַל-כָּל-אַשֶּׁר יַחְפֹּץ יִטְנוּ.
- Daniel 2:21: וְהוּא מְהֻשָּׁא עַדְנִיָּא וְזַמְנִיָּא מְהַעְגָּה מַלְכִין וּמְהַקִּים מַלְכִין יְהִיב חֲכָמְתָא לְחַפְיָמִין וּמַנְדַּעָא לִידְעֵי בִינָה.
- Romans 13:1: Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν.

○ Implication:

X. 5th realm—God is sovereign over individuals and their individual actions and decisions

- a. Last time we saw that God ordains and governs every single individual as well as their actions, decisions, intentions and their private plans.
- b. Every single moment of our lives was planned and prepared by God before the foundation of the world—who we'd be, what we'd do, where we'd live—without violating our personal responsibility or accountability in *any* way, God predetermined all of that before time began!
 - God prevented Abimelech from sinning against Him (cf. Genesis 20:6)
 - God determined that Jeroboam would say something stupid that would split his own kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 12:1-15)
 - V. 15: וְלֹא-שָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הָעָם כִּי-הִתְּהָ סָבֵה מֵעַם יְהוָה לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת-דְּבָרֹו אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה בְּיַד אֶתְנִיָּה הַשִּׁילֹנִי אֶל-יִרְבְּעָם בְּוִנְבֵט.
 - The lifespan of every individual (down to the very day!) is determined by God (cf. Job 14:5; Acts 17:26)
 - Psalm 139:16
 - גָּלְמִיו רָאוּ עֵינֶיהָ וְעַל-סִפְרָהָ כָּל־יְמֵי יַצְרֹו 'וְלֹא' אֶתְדָּ בְּהֵם.

- Proverbs 16:1
 - לְאָדָם מֵעַרְכֵי־לֵב וּמִיְהוָה מַעֲגָה לְשׁוֹן:
 - We can (and *should*) make plans, but in the end, God is the One who determines where we go and what we do.

- Proverbs 16:9
 - לֵב אָדָם יַחֲשֵׁב דְרָכָו וַיְהוָה יִכִּין צִעְדָו
 - We can (and *should*) make plans, but in the end, God is the One who determines where we go and what we do.

- Proverbs 20:24
 - מִיְהוָה מֵצִעְדֵי־גִבּוֹר וְאָדָם מֵה־יִכִּין דְרָכָו
 - Here Solomon doesn't solve the mystery of God's sovereignty and our responsibility, but he does declare how astonishing that mystery is!
 - Our “steps” (i.e., life directions, situations, etc.) are literally, *from* YHWH.
 - That is, He is the One who ultimately determines what we'll be, where we'll be and how we'll do it!
 - But then he declares: מֵה־יִכִּין דְרָכָו.
 - I.e., how are we possibly supposed to understand how this works? We are supposed to make wise plans based on sound wisdom and we are 100% responsible for all of the decisions that we make, but *in the end*, all that happens to us in life is מִיְהוָה!
 - The most brilliant man in the history of the world exclaims: “How are we supposed to understand this?!”
 - I think Solomon was expressing the wonder of trying to reconcile human responsibility in a world in which God governs everything that comes to pass.

XI. 6th realm—God is sovereign over the minutia of life

- a. The Scriptures are absolutely clear: God is not sovereign over the universe in an abstract, general, ambiguous way, but even in the seemingly meaningless details of life.
- b. Some people (like A.W. Tozer, for instance, in his cruise ship metaphor) try to use analogies to help us understand sovereignty and responsibility (or, what some call “freedom”) in a way that doesn’t include God’s control over meticulous details.
 - In other words, some will say that God ordains/predestines the big picture events of history—He ordained the beginning and the destination, but the smaller, nitty-gritty details of life *in between* are basically determined by the freedom of human beings.
 - There are two problems with that generalist view of God’s control.
 1. The biggest events of human history are always preceded *by* and comprised *of* smaller, seemingly insignificant details.
 2. This view of God’s control just doesn’t square with what the Bible actually says!
 - According to the Scriptures the glory and supremacy of God is in the details of life!
- c. Chariot wheels: Exodus 14:24-25
 - “At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. 25 He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

d. Arrows: 1 Kings 22:34

- Context: wicked king Jehoshaphat from the south and wicked-er king Ahab from the north team up to fight against the Arameans to the north. They had Micaiah the prophet incarcerated in prison and, for whatever reason, they consulted him as to the battle.
- Micaiah said that if they go into battle Ahab would be killed. Micaiah goes into battle anyway, but disguises himself so that he wouldn't be identified as the king.
- Vv. 30-33, Ahab to Jehoshaphat: "I will disguise myself and go into the battle, but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. 31 Now the king of Aram [i.e., Ahab's enemies] had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, "Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone. 32 So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel," and they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. 33 When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him."
- The implication is: Ahab is totally safe! He is disguised, no one knows where he is, no one can find him! Micaiah the prophet was going to be proven a false prophet because he predicted that Ahab would die, etc.
 - V. 34: "Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded.""
 - God directed the anonymous soldier to randomly shoot an arrow in a general direction with no particular purpose, only to have the arrow pierce Ahab at the exactly vulnerable spot in his armor and kill him.

e. The book of Esther

- The purpose of Esther is to display God's preservation of His beloved people from annihilation by the psychotic plot of Haman.
- If the Jews get exterminated, God's promise a people as numerous as the stars in the sky (cf. Genesis 15:5).

- If the Jewish people get wiped out, there is no Messiah, no atoning sacrifice and no future kingdom.
- But in the end, God delivers His people and preserves them from certain destruction. But how did God preserve His people? Through means—very small and seemingly insignificant means!
 - King Ahasuerus threw a party, got drunk, offended his wife, she mouthed off, got deported (chapter 1)
 - Ahasuerus shopped for another wife. He had his assistants gather “every beautiful young virgin” (כָּל־נְעֻרָה־כְּתוּלָה טוֹבֹת) (מִרְאָה) in the entire district, from whom he would choose one to be his wife (2:1-4).
 - Out of all of the women that impressed Ahasuerus the most, a young Jewish girl from the captives of Jerusalem was the one (2:9).
 - In unrelated news, Esther’s cousin Mordecai, just happens to overhear a secret conversation about a murder plot planned against the king, he then saves the king’s life, the heroics of which are recorded in the official records of the king, and then put on the shelf (2:21-23).
 - Meanwhile, Haman goes on a psychotic tirade to wipe the Jewish people out of existence, which gets the approval the king (who is unaware that his own wife would have to be killed as well), (chapter 3).
 - Later on, one night the king has insomnia and so, to make himself fall asleep he has someone read him a book—the very book of records in which Mordecai’s heroic deed was found (6:1-3).

- He honors Mordecai, listens to Esther, allows the Jews to take up arms and defend themselves, and 9:1 says: “on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them.”
 - A drunken party, an offended wife, an overheard conversation, a sleepless night and a boring book sitting on the shelf were all seemingly insignificant events that God used to preserve His people from destruction and thus, to keep His promise to have a future kingdom of the Messiah ruling the world from Israel!

f. Movement of clouds over moon: Job 26:8-9

- "He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not burst under them. 9 He obscures the face of the full moon And spreads His cloud over it."

g. Dice: Proverbs 16:33

- בְּחֵיק יוֹטֵל אֶת-הַגּוֹרָל וּמִיָּהּ כָּל-מַשְׁפָּט׃
 - The modern-day equivalent to that verse would read something like this: “Every role of the dice in Las Vegas is determined by the God of the universe” or, “every slot machine combination is what God has decided.”

h. Hair: Matthew 10:30

- ὑμῶν δὲ καὶ αἱ τρίχες τῆς κεφαλῆς πᾶσαι ἠριθμημέναι εἰσίν.
 - Summary of God’s sovereignty over the minutia of life:
 - The Bible is clear and undeniable! The sovereignty of God is meticulous and all-inclusive and extends to every single particular detail of life. There is nothing random in life—no coincidences or anything truly accidental, since every meticulous detail is under the sovereign hand of God.

- “There is not even one rebel molecule running around loose in the universe, floating independent of the sovereignty of God.”

XII. 7th realm—God is sovereign over sickness and suffering

- To be sure, at first, it sounds foreign to say that God designs, ordains and controls our suffering—that seems really inconsistent with God’s perfections of love and kindness and mercy. And yet, that is *exactly* what the Scriptures say.
- Anonymous woman in a letter to John Piper: “It is radical thinking to say that God wills and ordains our suffering and not just passively allows it, hoping to make the best of it for us. As I have grown in my walk, I can see that nothing in this world happens apart from the sovereign will of God.”
- We’ve all felt the effects of living in a fallen world, either by suffering directly, or those we love experiencing suffering.
- And it feels almost impossible to say that God could ordain suffering and distribute it to whom He desires.
- And yet, the divine sovereignty over all health, pain and suffering is, in fact *precisely* what the Scriptures say.
 - Exodus 4:10-11
 - Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"
 - So, clearly God is the One who ordains these kinds of suffering. Notice too that YHWH puts it in the form of a rhetorical question to Moses as if it was something that he should have known (“Is it not I, YHWH, who does these things?”)

- Yes—they are effects of and as a result of the Fall, but ultimately, even within a fallen world, God is the One who determines the health sickness of every person for His own wise and even loving purposes
- Deuteronomy 32:39
 - רָאוּ | עֲתָה כִּי אֶנִּי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאִסְחִיהָ .
מִסְצָתִי וְאֲנִי אֲרַפָּא וְאֵין מִיָּדִי מִצִּיל:
 - Life and death are God's gifts to give and take!
 - All sickness and healing are determined by Him!
- 1 Samuel 1:5-6
 - וְלִחְנֹה יִתְּנוּ מִגֵּנָה אַחַת אַפְּיִים כִּי אֶת-חֲנֹה אֶהָב וַיְהִי סֹגֵר
רַחֲמָה...:כִּי-סֹגֵר יְהוָה בְּעַד רַחֲמָה
- Job 1:21-22; 2:9-10
 - וַיֹּאמֶר עָרִם [יִצְתִּי כ] (יִצְאֲתִי ק) מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרִם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה
יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהִי לְקַח יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה מִבְּרָא: בְּכָל-זֹאת לֹא-חָטָא
אִיּוֹב וְלֹא-נָתַן תִּפְלָה לְאֱלֹהִים: פ
 - Now think about what Job just went through here. This is just catastrophic! People do not come back from things like this!
 - V. 14—Raiders stole Job's oxen and donkeys
 - These were Job's tractors and plows
 - V. 15—His servants were slaughtered by raiders—these were his employees! Businesses FAIL if all the employees are killed!
 - Vv. 16-17—His sheep and camels were consumed by fire from heaven
 - These functioned as his bank account. Animals were used as cash in those days

- Vv. 18-19—all ten of his kids crushed in a home that collapsed on them
- And what does Job say about who sovereignly brought this about?

• וַיֹּאמֶר עָרַם יִצְאָתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרַם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה
יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוּהָה לְקַח יְהוָה יֵשׁ יְהוָה מִבְּרַחֲוֹ:

- To whom did Job attribute the ultimate cause for his afflictions? Who did Job understand was the ultimate cause of his afflictions? Satan or God?

▪ יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוּהָה לְקַח

- YHWH did that! YHWH is the One ultimately who gave the affliction and took away what Job had!
- But was not Satan involved? Of course he was! It's just that his power was not ultimate—God's was! His will was not decisive—God's was! His aim and design to ruin and destroy only worked out to accomplish God's ultimate aim and design.
- Even when Satan was doing his worst, little did he know that he was playing right into the sovereign hands of God!

- And just to show us that Job's theology was correct and that he wasn't speaking like a crazy person, the narrator reassures us in v. 22:

○ כָּכֹל-זֹאת לֹא-חָטָא אִיּוֹב וְלֹא-נָתַן תְּפִלָּה
לְאֱלֹהִים: פ

- Job understood that God is the One who wills and controls all suffering, pain, loss, blessing and joy.

- Job 2:9-10

וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ עַדְיָהּ מִחֲזִיק בְּתַמְתְּגָהּ בְּרַדְיָה אֱלֹהִים וַמָּת:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ כְּדַבֵּר אַחַת הַנְּבִלּוֹת תְּדַבְּרִי גַם אֶת־הַטּוֹב נִקְבֵּל
 מֵאַתְּ הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתְּ־הִרְעָה לֹא נִקְבֵּל בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב
 בְּשִׁפְתָיו: פ

- People always ridicule Job's wife, or they make her the punchline to a joke.
- And yet, to do so is not only insensitive to suffering, but in so doing, they also miss out on something crucial in the text.
 - She also lost all of her kids, just like Job! So when she said this, it was as a woman in despair who lost nearly everything just like Job! She was as equally heartbroken and crushed as he was!
- But when she told Job to “curse” God (בְּרַדְיָה אֱלֹהִים) notice who it is she credited as the ultimate source of their afflictions. *Who* did she say?
 - In telling Job to “curse” God she was articulating who they both knew was the One who ultimately brought unspeakable devastation into their lives, namely, God Himself.
- Job's response to his wife, from multiple angles is unbelievably profound! Verse 10:
 - כְּדַבֵּר אַחַת הַנְּבִלּוֹת תְּדַבְּרִי גַם אֶת־הַטּוֹב נִקְבֵּל מֵאַתְּ הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתְּ־הִרְעָה לֹא נִקְבֵּל בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב בְּשִׁפְתָיו: פ
 - “You speak like one of the foolish women speaks”
=

- He's not insulting her—it's just the opposite! He recognizes that what she just said was an unusual, momentary lapse of reason from a woman who normally says really wise things!
- “You don't normally say things like this. Usually you speak so wisely and thoughtfully, but this is the exception for you!”
- “shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept evil?” =
 - הַטּוֹב = any kind of blessing that is inherently enjoyable!
 - הַרָע = any kind of painful difficulty, calamity or action against you that comes as a result of the fall—oftentimes, in the form of the sinful actions of human beings.
 - Job's point: good *and* evil have God as their ultimate source!
 - That doesn't mean God does evil; He doesn't approve of evil; He doesn't delight in evil, but that He ultimately is the One who brings it into our lives for loving, kind and gracious motives!
 - John Piper: “Satan strikes Job out of malice. The Lord strikes Job out of a loving concern for His glory.”
 - Where did his wife go wrong? What was it, exactly, that Job was correcting?

- Where she went wrong was *not* that pain ultimately comes from God (she had that right!), where she went wrong was *assuming that God had no right to bring pain and affliction where someone didn't do something directly to deserve it.*
 - It's called retribution theology—a mathematical karma that believes that God always and *only* rewards the righteous and that He always and *only* punishes the wicked.

- בְּכָל־נְזֹאת לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב בְּשִׁפְתָיו
 - I.e., in the event that someone thinks Job went too far in saying “evil” ultimately came from God, the narrator affirms that what Job said was dead on theologically!
 - Job knew that God was sovereign over his suffering and yet, he *also* knew that God was sovereign in such a way that He could not be credited as mean, evil or malicious.
 - i.e., he knew that God bringing evil into his life didn't automatically make God cruel, malicious or blood-thirsty—he knew that God bringing evil into his life didn't automatically call God's goodness into question!

- 2 Samuel 12:15
 - וַיִּגַּף יְהוָה אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה אִשְׁת־אוּרִיָּה לְדָוִד וַיֵּאָנֶשׁ׃
 - The context is, of course, David's tragic adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah.
 - The writer, without any explanation or panicked qualification that YHWH was the One who caused the baby to be sick.
 - Then in v. 18 we read: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיָּמָת הַיֶּלֶד׃

- Why would God do this? Why would God ever bring deliberate harm to an innocent baby whose only fault in the matter was being the result of David's lust?
- The answer is not easy—either to say *or* hear. But the conclusion to which we are forced to come is that there must have been something more important at stake than even that baby's life!
 - Like what? What could be more important than that baby's life? It *had* to have been the glory of God through David's repentance.
 - God being displayed as the supreme treasure of David's life was the issue that had priority even over the life of an innocent infant.
- What's more, we are consoled by what it is that consoled David in v. 23:
 - אָנִי הִלְךְ אֵלָיו וְהוּא לֹא-יָשׁוּב אֵלַי
 - Cryptic though this statement is, it does give us assurance that the baby was alive and well and that David would see him again.
- John 9:1-4
 - Καὶ παράγων εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον τυφλὸν ἐκ γενετῆς. 2καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, Ῥαββί, τίς ἥμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆι; 3ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, Οὔτε οὗτος ἥμαρτεν οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῆι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.
- And I believe the clear implications from v. 3 is that God Himself caused this man to be born blind.

- And yet, His divine reason for doing so was absolutely glorious and loving.
 - And what is that reason? So that “the works of God should be made manifest in him.”
 - In other words, God brought about this blindness from birth so that the infinite power and supremacy of the Messiah would be put on display!
 - This text doesn’t mean that it’s always the will of the Lord to heal!
 - This doesn’t *always* mean that the sick gets well or that the disease gets healed, because *sometimes the glory of God is even more clearly displayed in the patient trust and endurance of the one who suffers as they cling to God as their supreme treasure even in the midst of their suffering.*
- Summary
 - The Scriptures are clear and unanimous: behind all disease and disability is the ultimate will of God.
 - God is the One who, in His loving discretion, determines who gets sick and who gets well, what maladies with which we are born and the ones we get later in life, who lives and who dies and how long they live and how they will die.
 - And the truth to which we must cling in all sickness, suffering, disability and death is that, in the end, God will be more glorified and our souls will be more satisfied than if God had not brought about those afflictions!

XIII. 8th realm—God is sovereign over Satan and demons

- a. With your permission, for the sake of time, I'm going to skip this one—not because there isn't any Biblical material, but because there is too much material!
- b. In the future I will do this as its own seminar!

XIV. 9th realm—God is sovereign over all evil

- a. By “all” evil I mean “natural” evil and “moral” evil
 - Natural evil = the pain, suffering, affliction and tragedies that are a result of the effects of sin; these are not directly caused by the moral evil actions of human beings, but they *are* evil, because they are a result of the fall
 - Moral evil = the deliberate, conscious acts of human beings to bring harm to another (whether by an individual or by a group)
 - And I'm going to argue from the Bible that God is absolutely sovereign over all evil in such a way that is more than just Him merely knowing or allowing it to happen.
 - We have to come to grips with the undeniable Biblical evidence that God has both willed, predestined *and* controls all evil acts and events in human history.
 - What this means and *how* this works, exactly, we'll get to all that, but let's examine the evidence from the Bible!
- b. Genesis 50:20
 - וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים חֲשַׁבָה לְטוֹבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהַחֲלִית עִם-רַב־:
 - The context is that decades after his brothers who hated him, sold him into slavery, faked his death without a care in the world as to what would ever happen to him, Joseph stood face to face with his brothers.
 - And you know that Joseph's life in Egypt was anything but easy. After his arrival in Egypt he was subsequently

slandered, falsely accused and then imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit.

- And *then* you remember while in prison Joseph interpreted a dream for the cupbearer, who promised to get him out of prison. The man forgot about Joseph who sat rotting in that Egyptian prison for another two years.
 - And yet, how did Joseph interpret his circumstances, particularly in relation to his brothers? The text is clear!
 - וְאַתֶּם הַשְׂבִּיתֶם עָלַי רָעָה
 - *You* did that! You consciously, intentionally and maliciously did evil to me without a care in the world what happened to me! You are guilty!
 - אֱלֹהִים הַשְׂבִּינִי לַטֹּבָה.
 - Notice *very, very* carefully what the text *does* and does *not* say!
 - The text doesn't say that God *used* their evil for good; it doesn't say He *allowed* their evil for good; it says that what they meant for evil, God meant for good!
 - The Hebrew word “meant” (חשב) literally means “plan, intend, invent.” They intended and invented evil against Joseph.
 - Notice the text: “you meant **evil** against me, אֱלֹהִים הַשְׂבִּינִי לַטֹּבָה.
 - What's the “it”? *They* meant evil, God meant *it* for good! What's the “it”? The evil!

- God meant the evil for good! That means God planned it! God intended it! God invented it! The very thing they designed for evil, God had designed for good!
 - The text says in there were two different designs for the same act of evil.
 - The brothers designed the evil to destroy their brother and to put an end to his life! “You meant evil against me!”
 - And yet, God had designed the very same evil to produce the exact opposite result of what they had intended, namely, the preservation not only of Joseph, but even the preservation of the very people of Israel!
 - Joseph had no problem articulating the mystery of God’s sovereignty over evil. They were guilty for their evil crime, but that very evil crime was ultimately invented and designed by God to advance the plan of salvation!
- Joseph said the same thing to his brothers 5 chapters earlier in 45:5:
 - וַעֲתָהּ אֵל-תַּעֲצָבוּ וְאֶל-יַחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי-מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי
הַגָּדָה כִּי לְמַחְלָה שְׁלַחְנִי אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵיכֶם.
 - Wait a minute! That can’t be true! *God* didn’t send Joseph to Egypt, he was dragged there by force by slave traders when his brothers sold him!

- That's true too! But what Joseph understood was that in and through and behind their evil intentions was God pulling the strings and orchestrating the entire event to advance His plan!
 - And lest you think that Joseph made a slip of the tongue and got his theology wrong, Psalm 105 when describing the events of Joseph's life, says *the exact same thing!*
 - Listen to how Psalm 105 interprets the events of Joseph's life!
 - Vv. 16-17: "And *He* called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. 17 *He* sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave."
 - God planned the famine, God planned the treachery of the brothers, God sent Joseph down to Egypt!
 - Why would God do it like this?!
 - So that 400 years later, He could bust His people out of Egypt with sovereign power, put His glory on display, save a prostitute in Jericho and ultimately preserve His people so that the Messiah could come and die for sinners!
- c. Job 1-2; 42:11

- Job 1 & 2 are clear and unmistakable: although Satan was involved in the evil that happened to Job—although he was *a* cause of the evil in Job's life, he was not the *ultimate* cause, was he?
- God initiated the process, He defined the limits of what Satan could do and both Job *and* the narrator made clear that God was the One calling the shots!
- You see, the lesson that the book of Job has to teach us is that God can bring evil into someone's life and it is not evil for Him to do so!

- 42:11

- וַיִּבְאוּ אֵלָיו כָּל-אֶחָיו 'וְכָל-אֶחָיוֹ" וְכָל-יִדְעָיו לַפְּנִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ עִמּוֹ לֶחֶם בְּבֵיתוֹ וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ וַיִּנְחֲמוּ אֹתוֹ עַל כָּל-הַרָעָה אֲשֶׁר-הֵבִיא יְהוָה עָלָיו.
- What this means is not that God Himself performed evil, but that God Himself was ultimately responsible for bringing evil into Job's life!

d. The hardening of Pharaoh

- Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 17.
- Although Pharaoh's hardening was a sovereign, divine hardening caused by God, in some mystery Pharaoh retained full responsibility for his defiance to YHWH!
 - Even Pharaoh himself acknowledged that he had acted wickedly (cf. 9:27; 10:16)! Pharaoh knew that he was fully responsible and guilty!
- Yes, the text does say 3x that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (cf. 8:15, 32; 9:34). And that's true—he did!
 - And yet, this self-hardening of Pharaoh was only the result of what God had already determined he would do all the way back in 4:21 when God initially called Moses on his mission!
- But why did God do it like this? What would be the purpose of hardening Pharaoh's heart and dragging out this saga over 10 long plagues? He gives us the "why" several times in the text!
 - 7:3-5: "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great

judgments. 5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

▪ 14:4: **וְאֶפְרָתָה** וְחִזְקִי אֶת־לֵב־פְּרֹעֹה וְרַדְף אֶחְרֵיהֶם **וְאֶפְרָתָה** בְּפְרֹעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־
:כּו.

▪ 14:17: **וְאֶפְרָתָה** בְּפְרֹעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ בְּרַכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרְשָׁיו:
וְאֲנִי הִנְגִּי מִחֲזֶק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶחְרֵיהֶם

- God's intention is that by hardening Pharaoh's heart and dragging this thing out over 10 long plagues, was so that there would be an extended occasion to display His sovereign power and His glory as the One who was supreme over Egypt.
- In the end, we have to come to grips with the fact that, as much as we would like to think that there is, there is no contradiction between God hardening someone's heart and then punishing them for their hardened heart.
 - In other words, even though God even ordains the hard-hearted resistance of those who reject Him, they still retain full responsibility for their rejection and God is fully just in judging them!

e. Psalm 105:23–43

- Israel also came into Egypt; Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.²⁴ And **He** caused His people to be very fruitful, And made them stronger than their adversaries.²⁵ **He** turned their heart to hate His people, To deal craftily with His servants.²⁶ **He** sent Moses His servant, *And* Aaron, whom **He** had chosen.²⁷ They performed **His** wondrous acts among them, And miracles in the land of Ham.²⁸ **He** sent darkness and made *it* dark; And they did not rebel against His words.²⁹ **He** turned their waters into blood And caused their fish to die.³⁰ Their land swarmed with frogs *Even* in the chambers of their kings.³¹ He spoke, and there came a swarm of flies *And* gnats in all their territory.³² **He** gave them hail for rain, *And* flaming fire in their land.³³ **He** struck down their vines also and their fig trees, And shattered the trees of their territory.³⁴ **He** spoke, and locusts came, And young locusts, even without number,³⁵ And ate up all vegetation in their land, And ate up the fruit of their ground.³⁶ **He** also struck down all the firstborn in their land, The first fruits of all their vigor.³⁷ Then **He** brought them out with silver and gold, And among His tribes there was not one who stumbled.³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed, For the dread of them had fallen upon them.³⁹ **He** spread a cloud for a covering, And fire to illumine by night.⁴⁰ They asked, and **He** brought quail, And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.⁴¹ **He** opened the rock and water flowed out; It ran in the dry places *like* a river.⁴² For He remembered His holy word *With* Abraham His servant;⁴³ And **He** brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout.

- Now you see so clearly what the Psalm writer wants to emphasize about God—the pronoun “He”!
- The Psalm writer wants to emphasize that God was the One who drove every single event when Israel was in Egypt.
- And I want to direct your attention, in particular, to v. 25:

▪ הִפְךָ לָבָם לְשׂוֹנְאֵי עַמּוֹ לְהַתְנַחֵל בְּעַבְדָּיו:

- God inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to hate His people and to deal craftily with them!

- What does this mean?! It means, at some level, without violating their personally responsibility or accountability at all, God supernaturally made/caused/produced hatred in the heart of the Egyptian people for Israel and thus provide an opportunity for God to dramatically intervene and deliver His people!
- The mystery here is that Egypt retained full guilt and responsibility for their crimes against Israel, but that behind the scenes, God was orchestrating the most unforgettable event in Israel's history.

f. Isaiah 45:5-7

אָנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זֹלָתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים
 אֶפֶס בְּלִעְדֵי אָנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד:
 יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רָע אָנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל־אֵלֶּה:

- Notice in vv. 5-6 YHWH proclaims His supremacy and exclusivity. And yet, what is it, exactly that sets Him apart from everyone and everything?
 - V. 7: יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רָע.
 - In Hebrew poetry, these are parallel statements
 - Light = peace
 - Darkness = evil
- And YHWH just said that what it is that demonstrates His exclusivity and supremacy over everything is that He not only makes peace, but He is the One who creates רָע!
 - That word is the exact same word in Genesis 50:20 and Job 2:10 and 42:11!
 - And depending on the version you use, God says that He is the One who creates “evil” or “calamity.” And that

term “calamity” is the Hebrew term **עָרָב**, and you can translate that term as “calamity”, “adversity” or “evil.”

- And whether you translate this as “evil” or “calamity” makes absolutely no difference because calamity includes sinful, evil actions committed by human beings.
- God is the creator of “calamity” or “evil” not in the sense that He delights in evil—because He emphatically does not. Nor does it mean that He in any way actually commits evil—because He most emphatically does not!
- But God is the creator of “evil” or “calamity” in the sense that He is the One who ultimately designed, ordained and predestined that it come into existence!

g. Lamentations 3:38

- **מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הָרָעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:**

h. Amos 3:6

- **אִם־תִּהְיֶה רָעָה בְּעִיר נִיתְּנָה לָא עֲשָׂה:**

i. Acts 2:22-23

- Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, ἀκούσατε τοὺς λόγους τούτους: Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσι καὶ τέρασι καὶ σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησεν δι' αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, καθὼς αὐτοὶ οἶδατε, ²³τοῦτον τῇ ὠρισμένῃ βουλή καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε.

- The most wicked, evil sin committed in the history of the universe was according to the “having been predestined plan and foreknowledge of God”
- Predestined in eternity past!

j. Acts 4:27-27

- ²⁷συνήχθησαν γὰρ ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ ἐπὶ τὸν ἅγιον παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν, ὃν ἔχρισας, Ἡρώδης τε καὶ Πόντιος Πιλαῶτος σὺν ἔθνεσιν καὶ λαοῖς Ἰσραήλ, ²⁸ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἡ χεὶρ σου καὶ ἡ βουλή [σου] προώρισεν γενέσθαι.

- Everyone on the list here was guilty!
- And yet, what they did they did what God's sovereign hand and His will predestined to occur

k. Conclusion

- As much as it melts the hard-drive of our minds, we simply must yield to the mind-exploding reality that in eternity past God ordained that sin and evil would exist and that He currently controls it and guides and governs it for loving, wise, holy, sovereign and glorious purposes.
- I believe that in some unfathomable mystery sin and evil existing in the world is the best of all possible worlds or plans that God could have made!
 - In other words, in the end God will be more glorified by ordaining sin and evil in the world than if He had not done that!
 - “We believe that God, from all eternity, in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons— all in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image.”

XV. Conclusion: Sin and evil for the supremacy of Christ

- a. I believe that when you look at the Scriptures as a whole, I believe that you must come to the ultimate conclusion that what drove God to ordain that sin and evil would exist was His love—and love both for His own Son and for us.

- b. Texts like John 17 and Acts 2 make it clear that the Father crafted a plan with His Son at the center because for all eternity He wanted us to see and enjoy what He had seen and enjoyed for all eternity, namely His Son! He wanted us to feel about His Son the way He had felt about His Son!
- c. And to do that, He constructed a plan that included sin and evil and sinners who need a Savior, because those elements would provide the perfect path to display the glory of Christ.
- d. So again, I'm arguing that sin and evil in the world is the best of all possible plans that God could have designed, because that plan will result in causing us to see Jesus Christ for the supremely valuable treasure that He is!
 - The most loving thing God could have ever done is give us His own Son to enjoy forever and ever and ever. Agreed?
 - And I'm saying sin and evil in the world, in some mystery, is how Christ is most fully put on display—not *only* because He saves sinners by dying in their place, but *also* because He will reverse the curse and effects of sin and death when He comes in His kingdom *and in so doing, will put His worth and beauty on display for our enjoyment forever!*
 - Illustration: if you want to show off the brute power of a bodybuilder, you give him tons of weight to lift; if you show Christ off as a great Savior and a treasure of infinite worth, you give Him sin and death to conquer.
 - It's all about a plan of God to send Christ to save sinners and reverse sin's curse and to put death to death forever and in so doing, put Christ on display!
 - Sin and evil in the world is the black velvet backdrop that puts the worth and beauty of Jesus Christ most distinctly on display.