

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE weekly teaching summary from the week ending April 12, 1998

Tree of Life 04/12/98

The Doctrine of Suffering and Solutions.

Tree of Life for 04-12-98

Our study, Suffering and solutions, brings us to the question, why does God allow Satan to cross examine the believer upon reaching spiritual maturity? To answer this we must go back in time. All human suffering is linked to the chain of events that began in pre-historic times. What existed in pre-historic times was the angelic race. God created angels rational beings who were able to travel though the vast universe that God had created for them. God also gave them free will that they may understand His character and freely choose to worship Him. God perfectly blended freedom, authority, and responsibility creating a structured environment within which each angel could express his own volition. Among these angels was one with special privileges and great beauty and genius, he was entrusted with responsibility and granted privileges beyond any other angel... but he abused his freedom through arrogance and rebelled against God. Of course this angel is who we have come to know as Lucifer or Satan. However, his true name seems to be **Heylel** as noted in Isaiah 14:12.

Through his example we are shown that arrogance is the enemy of the rational creature. Arrogance caused Heylel to compete with God, as if he could! Hence, arrogance is the cause of his misery and the cause of his horrible future. His future was the sentence God handed down in answer to his rebellion, Matthew 25:41. But in his arrogance "**Heylel**"/"**Satan**" appealed this sentence, much as what takes place in our own judicial system. God granted the appeal trial in order to demonstrate his perfect justice and grace to all angels. This is why the sentence of Matthew 25:41

cf John 16:11 is not executed until Revelation 20:10. In between the sentence and the execution of that sentence we have God's witness in Satan's appeal trial... the human race.

The courtroom for this appeal trial: Planet Earth. God's first witness: The Human Race! Satan and the angels were quite struck over such a witness! But God claimed that this lower creation, this limited, finite cast of creatures would use their free will to glorify Him. Oh surely you must be joking, was the attitude of Heylel! Let me enter my witness boasts Satan, my claim is that these human creatures of yours will not choose you when I am through with them. Be my guest agreed God. Well, here is the makings for what we call the angelic conflict, the very reason for why we are here!

You see, because Satan fell, his arrogance had to attack the justice of God rather than admit he was wrong. And to prove to millions of angels that He, God, is just and a God of grace, He created a lower creation with much of the same circumstances as the angelic race was offered, especially that of FREE VOLITION. In duplicating the circumstances of the angelic conditions, God is stating that the fault of the fall of the angelic race lies not with Him but with the creatures themselves. That is, with their own negative volition. And to prove this He created another race with free will who were not even half as grand yet some would and will use their volition to choose for Him and His plan and glorify Him on the witness stand of Satan's appeal trial.

Satan, in his arrogance, still thinks he is right and that God's plan is doomed to fail. It is true that Satan's force of persuasion is as compelling today as when he convinced one third of all the angels to join his pre-historic revolution against God, Revelation 12:4a. Right now, Satan remains the most talented, personable, attractive creature to come from the hand of God, Eze 28:12; 2Corinthians 11:14. And he is now the god of this world, Ephesians 2:2; 2Corinthians 4:4. So, you can be sure that what this world offers as truth is far from it! But not to worry, we are not up against more than we can handle. God has created not only salvation for all but fabulous assets, privileges, and opportunities for every believer so that we might enjoy fellowship with God in spite of the conditions of this world and this conflict. God sent His Son in flesh as the sacrifice on our behalf who established the road to salvation and the road to power. That power being the filling of the Spirit by which each church age believer is afforded the opportunity to accomplish what Christ left for them to do, witness to His resurrection and to execute God's plan and glorify of God!

Human history then, displays God's magnificent character and gracious policy to Satan, to all angels, as well as to all mankind. The resolution of the angelic conflict does not lie with the angels but with man's exercise of volition for or against the Lord Jesus Christ and for or against God's plan. Therefore, angels observe humans for the proof of Satan's own guilt and condemnation and for the proof of God's perfect justice and grace, Job 1:6; 2:1-3; Luk 15:7,10; 1Co 4:9; 11:10; Eph 3:10; 1Ti 3:16; 5:21. Hence, God duplicates every situation Satan used as an objection in the human race proving that a lower creation would remain faithful, just as the higher creation could have done.

Now, a major concept in the duplication of situations in Satan's appeal trial is suffering. Satan continues to argue with God as Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6 proves. And his main thrust of all his arguments is the issue of suffering. Satan has a two fold claim or argument:

- 1) Men will not be able to handle suffering especially if unjust! He claims if suffering is inflicted upon man, he will turn from God.
- 2) No one will remain faithful to God if he is offered sufficient wealth or power. Here Satan claims that every man has his price. (The type of test each mature believer receives in evidence testing is up to Satan since God is allowing him to choose.)

Satan argues that mankind, like angels, will not be able to handle their suffering, especially if undeserved, nor prosperity, that either case will cause man's fall from faithfulness to God. Job discredited Satan's theory as did others, Abraham, Moses, David, and especially the Lord Jesus Christ! Job remained faithful to God not because God was blessing him but due to the doctrine he had learned and eventually applied. As a mature believer, Job possessed the resources to rake extreme suffering in stride and to identify his circumstances as suffering for blessing rather than punitive suffering. And under Jewish law only two or three eye witnesses are needed to confirm a case, so in actuality God already has the witnesses needed in Satan's appeal trial. Why then is this trial still going forward? The answer is to offer us the grand opportunity and privilege to witness for God as well. And, even now Satan (arrogantly) thinks he still has a chance. Wow, is arrogance divorced from reality or what?! The issue in Satan's argument is, will humans lust for power, fame, wealth, or any other attainment be more powerful than their desire to remain faithful to their Creator? And, will man choose self-promotion and self-aggrandizement independent of God and His plan, Matthew 4:1-11.

Satan was given tremendous assets prior to his fall but he rejected these divine assets therefore he has absolutely no legitimate case. Everyone knows this except him, and his deceived cronies. It is Satan alone who is to blame for the state to which he has miserably fallen, but he wants the angels and us to think he is a victim of injustice. You know, the ole' victim

claim that is still prevalent today in our own judicial system. 'It's not my fault I'm a victim!' Satan loves this attitude and he loves to see humans fail. But he also loves to see humans remain wallowing in their failure, he hates to see them return back to God since it exemplifies God's grace. And the last thing Satan wants us to know is that God is a God of bountiful grace.

Following is a list of similarities between the circumstances surrounding the angelic race and the human race:

- 1) Satan and Adam were both created in a perfect state of what is theologically called innocence.
- 2) Angels and man have free will.
- 3) Adam freely and deliberately chose to follow the pattern of arrogance which characterized Satan's original revolution.
- 4) The fall of Adam duplicates the fall of Satan.
- 5) The rebellion of Satan in the Garden of God resulted in the fall of angelic creatures, Rev 12:4b, just as the disobedience of Adam in the Garden of Eden result in the fall of mankind, Rom 5:12a.
- 6) God offered non-meritorious positive volition to angels in the decision for salvation, likewise this offer was made to humans as well, 2Pe 3:9, through faith in Christ, Joh 3:16.
- 7) Through exercise of free will angels are divided into categories, elect and fallen, Heb 2:2; Rev 12:7, humans are also divided into two categories, believers and unbelievers, Joh 3:36.

Now, in order for the angelic (and human) race to be reconciled to God the need to be made perfectly holy, i.e., perfectly righteous was in view. The only reason angels are called holy is because God made them holy by providing for them some non-meritorious way to receive His perfect righteousness (+R), Rev 15:4; 16:5. Rev 15:4 states that God alone is holy and our holiness and that of angels is a gift. Rev 16:5 states that Jesus Christ alone is holy. So then, how can angels be holy if the only holy One is Jesus Christ?! Well they must have been unholy at one time to be made holy. In Rev 7:10-12 we find resurrected believers praising the Lord of salvation, and the angels shout amen, which is their enthusiastic agreement for the thanks for salvation. If the angels had never failed their holiness would be their own, but the word of God clearly states that there is only One who is holy, Rev 15:4.

Even in the Tribulation no angel is allowed to execute judgment apart from Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy, Rev 5:2-5. Compare this information with Job 4:17-18 in which we find the statement of God charging error to His angels. Charging error to His angels, note not some

of His angels, but His angels. And if the human race duplicates angelic circumstances reason follows that this pertains to salvation as well. Heb 2:2-4 gives us our one vague reference to salvation offered to angels. But Gen 3:6 and 3:21 give us even greater insight into this matter.

Before God ever offered man salvation (Gen 3:21 animal skins representing blood), Satan offered man a counterfeit (Gen 3:6, fig leaves representing man's efforts). This counterfeit was also seen in the offering of Cain and Abel, Cain offered that from the ground of his own labor which was rejected by God and Abel offered an animal sacrifice of blood. Now, the counterfeit plan for salvation offered to the man and woman in the Garden by Satan reflected Satan's knowledge of the concept of salvation. And since Satan is not omniscient nor did he know of God's plan for Jesus Christ, we can infer that Satan's concept was based on and developed from what he knew according to that which God had offered to angels in the realm of salvation in the past. What can be logically surmised then is that TLJC is also Satan's Savior and that is definitely information Satan wishes to withhold from man! If man were to understand this it would emphatically make Satan guilty of wrong and he would no longer be able to pull off the righteous victim act. Remember, there is only One who is holy and all other creatures need that One to pave the way for their holiness. For another creature to have holiness inherent in them and adhere to that holiness via free will would mean that others were also perfectly holy and this is a direct contradiction of Rev 15:4. Only One remained pure and worthy of praise and that is what is so great about Jesus Christ! He remained impeccable in spite of all temptations. But Satan and all other angels failed this test as did mankind which is why the holiness of all creatures is based on what one thinks of Jesus Christ. No man nor angel could be in heaven today if it were not for the humanity of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is not some flimsy assumption to say that God provided salvation for all mankind, likewise for all angels as well through the non-meritorious expression of free will toward Jesus Christ, Joh 3:16. When we note the similarities between the fall of the angelic race and the fall of mankind, and then note Satan's knowledge of salvation as illustrated in his counterfeit offer in Gen 3:6, this existing knowledge points to the theory of salvation offered to angels as standing on its own.

Even if we suppose that only one third of angels fell and God did not offer a plan for reconciliation, then God would be unfair if He then offered the reconciliation to man who also fell!! Satan would definitely claim such to be unfair! And, whatever would be unfair between the two creations had to be duplicated to demonstrate God's perfect justice. Hence we have the angelic conflict in which angels watch our lives. They watch how we handle suffering and prosperity, life and death. We truly are on a stage and

our decisions in life do constitute a theater-type production for all angels to witness to the perfect justice of God. But how many of us will go as far as SM and be called to the witness stand by God for Satan to cross examine in evidence testing?! This high echelon of suffering is the very reason for which we were created and is the highest of all privileges in life. Satan has used and will continue to use suffering in an attempt to force man to abandon God's plan, but God offers all the assets needed for the believer to continue to advance in His plan and glorify Him. Therefore the issue is: what man's volition chooses just as the issue in the angelic realm was volition. It is not what God allows, or what Satan endeavors to do, but what man's free will allows, chooses, and pursues! That is the issue in life.

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[Return to list of trees](#)

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