

LECTURE 7: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD & THE REALITY OF EVIL:

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Lecture 7 of 12

In our seventh presentation we will be introduced to the five-fold problem of evil and various ways to reconcile this obstacle for both non-Christians and Christians. Problems we will be examining are the following:

1. God does not exist because of the reality of evil.
2. God is not all-perfect.
3. God is the Author of evil.
4. God is responsible for natural evil.
5. The problem of gratuitous (unnecessary and pointless) evil.

I. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE ENCOUNTER EVIL?

- A. **If there is an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good God, then how can it be that the world is full of evil? Or why does an all-loving, all-sovereign God allow moral evil in this world?**
- B. **People bear witness to evil every day. People have been touched by evil. People hear about the stories of evil.**
- C. **What is our response to the reality of evil?**
 1. Look away
 2. Can't ignore
 3. Labor at obliviousness
 4. Good Samaritan
 5. Explain evil way
 6. Disbelief and despair
 7. Use evil as a tool of excuse to live the way one wants to live

II. FIVE-FOLD PROBLEM OF EVIL:

A. **Problem # 1: God does not exist because of the reality of evil:**

1. An all-good God would destroy evil.
2. An all-knowing God would know how to destroy evil.
3. An all-powerful God could destroy evil.
4. Evil remains.
5. Therefore, God does not exist.

B. **Problem # 2: God is not all-perfect:**

1. **God could have chosen a better alternative by:**
 - a. not creating a world at all;
 - b. not creating a free world;
 - c. creating a free world that would not sin;
 - d. creating a world that sinned but would all be saved.
2. But God did not choose one of these better alternatives.
3. Therefore God did not do his best.
4. But to do so less than his best is an evil for God.
5. Therefore, no all-perfect God exists.

C. **Problem # 3: God is the Author of evil (Isaiah 45:7):**

1. God is the Author of everything.
2. Evil is something.
3. Therefore, God is the Author of evil.

D. **Problem # 4: God is Responsible for Natural Evil:**

1. Nature evil cannot be explained by free choice of creatures.
2. Hence, God must be responsible for natural evil.
3. But natural evils cause innocent suffering and death.
4. Therefore, God is responsible for innocent suffering and death.

E. **Problem # 5: The Problem of Gratuitous (unnecessary and pointless) evil.**

1. If there were an all-powerful and all-good God, then there would not be any evil in the world unless that evil is logically necessary for an adequately compensating good.
2. There is some evil in the world.
3. Some of that evil is no logically necessary for any adequately compensating good.
4. Therefore, there is no God of a relevant kind (all-powerful, all-knowing, and absolutely good).

III. RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL?

- A. Various views of evil in terms of worldview thinking:
1. Atheism affirms evil but denies the reality of God.
 2. Finite godism can claim that God desires to destroy evil but is unable to do so because he is limited in power.
 3. Deism can distance God from evil by stressing
 4. Panentheism insists that evil is a necessary part of the on-going progress of the interaction of God and the world.
 5. Pantheism affirms the reality of God but denies the reality of evil.
 6. Theism affirms both the reality of both God and evil.
- B. The Problem of evil may be viewed in simple form as a conflict involving three concepts:
1. God's power
 2. God's goodness
 3. The presence of evil in the world.
- Common sense tells us that all three cannot be true at the same time.
- C. Solutions to the problem of evil typically involve modifying one or more of these three concepts:
1. Limit God's goodness
 2. Limit God's power
 3. The presence of evil in the world.
- D. Consider:
1. If God made no claims to being good, then the existence of evil would be easier to explain; but God does claim to be good.
 2. If God were limited in power so that he was not strong enough to withstand evil, the existence of evil would be easier to explain, but God does claim to be all-powerful.
 3. If evil were just an illusion that had no reality, the problem wouldn't really exist in the first place. But evil is not an illusion. Evil is real.

- E. Various theological responses and potential objections to the problem of evil:
1. Evil is punishment for sin.
 - a. But it does not seem evil is distributed evenly.
 2. Evil is repaid in heaven.
 - a. But which is better? What about a child going straight to heaven without having to suffer at all on earth.
 3. Evil builds character.
 - a. We become more compassionate? But couldn't God develop character in people by other means than by suffering?
 4. Evil leads people to glorify God.
 - a. But is this fair to babies who are suffering... in order that others might glorify God?
 5. God has a reason, but we can't know it.
 - a. This response seems more compelling if we know who this God is. I can trust Him if He is the God of the Bible-even though He may never tell me why this happened.
- F. Classical Free-Will Defense Argument:
1. God created every substance.
 2. Evil is not a substance (but a corruption in a substance):
 - a. Evil is the corruption or privation of something good.
 - b. Evil exists only in another, but not in itself. Evil is not an actual substance but a corruption of a good substance. It is not an actual entity but real corruption in an actual entity.
 3. Therefore, God did not create evil (for evil exists in another but not in itself).
 4. God is absolutely perfect.
 5. God created only good creatures (creaturely perfection).
 6. One of the gifts God gave some of his creatures (angels, Lucifer, Adam & Eve) is the gift of free choice.

7. Some of these creatures freely chose to do evil.
 8. Therefore, a good creature caused evil.
- G. Evil arose in the abuse of a good power called freedom: Freedom in itself is not evil. It is good to be free. But with freedom comes the possibility of evil. Adam and Eve possessed goodness or creaturely perfection.

IV: ANSWERS TO FIVE-FOLD PROBLEM OF EVIL:
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- A. Problem 1: God does not exist because of the reality of evil. The objection actually assumes the moral law argument. Argument is self-defeating.
- B. Problem 2: God is not all-perfect. No one can demonstrate that any alternative world is morally better than the world we have. This does not mean that we are committed to the belief that the present world is the best world that can be achieved. God is not finished yet. Scripture promises that something better will one day be achieved. God took care of the sin problem at his first problem and will take care of the problem of evil beginning with the Second Coming. Evil will ultimately be destroyed with the Eternal State (Revelation 21-22). The Christian assumption is that this world is the best way to the best world achievable.
- C. Problem 3: God is the Author of Evil. This problem is dealt with a striking blow because evil is the corruption of something good and not an actual entity created by God.
- D. Problem 4: God is Responsible for Physical Evil. No one can demonstrate that any alternative world is morally better than the world we have. This does not mean that we are committed to the belief that the present world is the best world that can be achieved. God is not finished yet. Scripture promises that something better will one day be achieved. God took care of the sin problem at his first problem and will take care of the problem of evil beginning with the Second Coming. Evil will ultimately be destroyed with the Eternal State (Revelation 21-22). The Christian assumption is that this world is the best way to the best world achievable. What values come out of natural evil?
- E. Problem # 5: God is an irrelevant kind of God because of Pointless Evil:
1. If God exists, then pointless evil does not exist.
 2. God exists
 3. Therefore, pointless evil does not exist.
 - a. Cumulative Case approach favors the probability that God exists.
 - b. We are not in a position to claim pointless evil does exist.
 - c. Theologically:
 - 1) Purpose of life is not happiness but knowing God.
 - 2) Depravity of humanity because of sin.
 - 3) God's purposes spill over into eternal life.
- F. God Himself suffered with us; God did not spare Himself from experiencing evil.