

MORIEL ZULU MISSION (/COMPONENT/CONTACT/CONTACT/3.HTML)[SERMONS BY OTHER AUTHORS \(/SERMONS-BY-OTHER-AUTHORS.HTML\)](/SERMONS-BY-OTHER-AUTHORS.HTML)

Sermon in English, Scripture: Mark 1:12-14

(<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Mark%201.12-14>)

Introduction: The Temptation of Jesus and the Dominion of the Earth

The topic of consideration for this study is the question "Why does God allow evil to continue?" Anyone can look around them or pick up a newspaper and read about the violence, anger, lying, stealing, murder, pain and death that takes place on a daily basis throughout the world. When a mother and father lose their only son in an accident, when a loved one lies sick with disease for months before death, when a person is seriously injured and comes away in pain and physically handicapped; what are Christians to make of these events and others that indicate that the all-powerful, loving God does not have the ability to stop bad things from taking place. Why doesn't he just bring it all to an end and stop the suffering Mankind lives with? Doesn't He care? Doesn't He have the power?

These are the questions that many people around the world ask; Christians and non-Christians alike. The Bible gives 3 reasons in answer to this question of why evil continues on the earth. Each one will be dealt with in turn but first some background is needed to make it clear how Mankind came into this desperate state in the first place. Let us understand how Man lost his dominion over the world.

Mark 1.12 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Mark%201.12>)-13, "And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Him."

The exact name for this area of Biblical study is called "The Problem of Suffering". To understand the problem of suffering the temptation of Jesus must be understood as well. Here in Mark 1.12 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Mark%201.12>)-13 it describes Jesus being driven or led up into the wilderness by the Spirit of God. While there He is tempted or tested by Satan for 40 days. And in the end He is with the wild beasts. Mark is trying to show Jesus as the 2nd Adam. The 1st Adam was tempted in the Garden of Eden and was with the animals and here in Mark 1 Jesus is tempted by Satan and is with the animals. Adam, with Eve, gave into Satan in their temptation, but Jesus did not. He succeeded in overcoming the wicked one and did not commit sin.

Mark 1.12 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Mark%201.12>) states that Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted. The temptation lasted 40 days. This is an important point to understand. Jesus spent a long period of time in the wilderness. When the Bible shows any of God's

people going through a test or a trial then the test will always take one of two forms. It will be either a 'wilderness' trial or a 'valley' trial. This is one way of understanding hardships and struggles. Is it a wilderness or a valley? God will allow people to go through either a wilderness or a valley in order to draw a person closer to Himself in some way. Perhaps for salvation or a strengthening of the faith. The wilderness will take a long time to get through with multiple struggles along the way. Like the nation Israel after they left Egypt. They refused to enter the 'Promised Land' the first time so the Lord took them through the wilderness for 40 years. But a valley is a short struggle. Daniel, because he wanted to worship God alone, was put into a den of lions for one night by the king. God saved Daniel from the lions and the next day he was out of the den. This is a valley. A one off struggle that is over relatively quickly, where a wilderness goes on for a long time.

While Jesus was in the wilderness He was tested in 3 ways. The one that is related to this study is found detailed in Luke 4.5 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Luke%204.5>)-8, "And the Devil, leading Him up into a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said to Him, All this power I will give you, and the glory of them; for it has been delivered to me. And I give it to whomever I will. Therefore if you will worship me, all shall be yours. And Jesus answered and said to him, Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"

In this temptation Satan offers Jesus, the Creator of the earth (John 1), all the kingdoms of the world if only He would worship him. Satan makes the claim that he has had the kingdoms of the world delivered to him (the authority over them and their glory), and he can give it to whomever he wishes.

How can Satan make this claim? Who delivered all of these kingdoms to him? Jesus never denies this statement of Satan, so it appears to be true. He only corrects Satan on Who is worthy of worship not on who has authority of the kingdoms of the world.

So how did Satan acquire dominion over the world? The answer lies in Genesis 3.1 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%203.1>)-24. When God made Man He put him in the Garden of Eden and gave him dominion over the creation (Genesis 1.28 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%201.28>)). God's desire was to share with Man what He had created and for him and to obey the Law of not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But Satan came and the 1st Adam fell from God's grace in the Temptation. Adam chose to serve another who was not the true God. Now Mankind has lost his dominion over the world and Satan has

become the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4.3

(<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor%204.3>)-4). His goal is to keep Mankind from believing the gospel of salvation, and to keep God's children from fully following and obeying Jesus.

Therefore for the problem of evil to be understood it must be made clear that when bad things happen, when people are oppressed, when men fight or hate, when sickness and death occur the 'god of this world' must be blamed (Satan). Jesus said that the 'god of the world' is like the thief who only comes to steal, kill and destroy. He is the one to blame. The God of the Bible wants all men to be saved from their sins. What is said in Job 9.24 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Job%209.24>) is a truth. The world has been given into the hand of the wicked and it was Man himself who did it.

First Reason for Evil: Sin

God said to Cain (Genesis 4) that sin's desire is for him. It seeks to corrupt all the human race and it can be highly seductive in its quest to do so. For a person who is an unbeliever in Jesus Satan may give them riches and health in order for them to think that they have life. But this life Satan gives is a lie. In Job 21.7 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Job%2021.7>)-13 it is clear to Job as he thinks about the life of the wicked that on the outside they look like they have everything going well for them. "Why do the wicked live? They grow old and become mighty in power. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are in peace, without fear; nor is the rod of God on them. Their bull mates and does not fail; their cow calves, and does not cast her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They lift up voice at the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the flute. They spend their days in good, and in a moment go down to the grave." (Job 21.7 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Job%2021.7>)-13) On the outside everything looks beautiful but Job knows that on the inside they are not ready to meet God. Verse 13

says that in an instant they can die and go into the grave; then is the judgment of God. Unbelievers then have no hope at all once they enter death. Luke 19.19

(<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Luke%2019.19>)-31 gives a very clear picture of life after death for both the wicked man and the believer. Job was able to find hope and encouragement in the future resurrection. Job 19.25 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Job%2019.25>)-27 "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall rise on the earth at the last; and even after they corrupt my skin, yet this: in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not a stranger's; though my heart be exhausted in my bosom."

Therefore for the unbeliever they will be judged for their sin because they never repented and trusted in the living God for their salvation. But for the Believer there are times when evil comes and he must understand what the reason is so that he does not become despondent in his faith.

God's desire for every believer is to grow in faith and become more like Jesus every day. And because a man becomes a child of God by faith, God will correct that person because He loves him and so that the person will run to God for help. Remember that an unbeliever will be judged for his sin but a believer will be judged by his sin. This can be seen in 1 Timothy 1.19

(<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Tim%201.19>)-20, "holding faith and a good conscience, which some have put away and made shipwreck as to faith. Among these are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme." These two men were in a very bad way in their spiritual walk. They had blasphemed and Paul says that he delivered them to Satan in order for them to learn not to do that. A similar act was carried out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5.4 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Cor%205.4>)-5, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, with my spirit; also, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ; to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." He commands this church to gather together and deliver a sinning man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. Why? That his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Does it sound cruel to hand a man over to Satan? It must be understood that the Lord is willing for a man to waste away in the flesh by the sins he is committing in order for him to be corrected in his wicked way; and then the soul of the man will be even more pure and holy than ever before. Hebrews 12.5 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%2012.5>)-11 makes this point clearly: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For truly they chastened us for a few days according to their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now chastening for the present does not seem to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it." (This issue of correction for a Believer can be understood more fully in the study on Church Discipline.)

1. Corinthians 10.13 says: "No temptation has taken you but what is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but with the temptation also will make a way to escape, so that you may be able to bear it." God will not allow a Believer to be tempted more than God knows that they can bear. Therefore whenever a Believer sins, who is to blame for that sin?

There are always two parties at fault: 1) The Believer who chooses to give into the temptation, like Adam and Eve, and sin. But also, 2) Satan, who is the one God is allowing to do the testing. This leads into the second reason why evil continues on the earth: Satan the Accuser.

Second Reason for Evil: Satan

Many of the people in the Old Testament are pictures or examples of Jesus Christ. Their lives show us things about Jesus based on the Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament. Job, in some aspects of his life, is like Jesus Christ. One of the ways he is like Jesus is that he was accused by Satan before God. The name Satan means 'Accuser' and he will even tell lies in order to get a person to sin and fall away from God. The work of Satan in the life of a Believer will be looked at more fully shortly.

Since Mankind fell in Genesis 3 Satan has had almost free reign over the earth. But even with the power that he has he is still a created being who is subject to the will of God. And he is always seeking ways to keep Man from following the will of God. Mankind was originally made in the image of God but since the events of Genesis 3 Satan has been working to make Man into his own image.

God used the Jewish people to write the Bible and the Bible is therefore written within a Jewish cultural context. It is worthwhile to understand how Judaism views Biblical things to understand the Bible better. A knowledge of Judaism is a wonderful tool to be used in Bible study but the Bible itself must always be held as the only book for God's final word on salvation and faith.

Now, because Satan is seeking to make Man into his own image the question must be asked: How much of a part does Man play in becoming like Satan? In the days of Jesus and the apostles Judaism believed that Man had a propensity to do two things. Man had a propensity to do good

and a man also had a propensity to do evil. These are the day to day choices of Man, whether to do good or to do evil. In the years when the Second World War was being fought in Europe, Hitler and his Nazis were capturing millions of Jewish people and putting them to death. The Nazis built different camps for the sole purpose of killing all the Jewish people in Europe. Some of the Nazi officers who oversaw the killing and slave labour of these camps were also family men with their wives and children living in a house within the camp. The amazing thing about the man who operated the death camp is that after a day of cruelty and murder he could go into his home and play with his son or daughter and show fatherly love and compassion.

After World War II many people looked on these men as wicked individuals. But others began to realize that in truth all Mankind is like that. Each and every person on earth has the ability to do good and the ability to do evil.

God knows this and Jesus was aware of these possibilities within Man when He said, 'to whom much is given, from him much will be required.' (Luke 12.48 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Luke%2012.48>)) For the Believer this is a serious statement. A Believer and follower of Jesus Christ has more knowledge and experience of the truth than a nonbeliever, therefore they will be judged more strictly for any good or evil they commit. God is much more concerned about the sin in the life of a Believer than of an unbeliever. For Peter says judgment

must begin in the house of God (1 Peter 4.17 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet%204.17>)) and a graphic example of this can be found in Jeremiah chapter 9.

Satan is always looking for an opportunity to make the Believer choose the evil way. The Bible shows all of the tricks of the devil which the Believer must be aware of and look out for, and Satan the Accuser is a serious challenge for the church.

Satan, is the Accuser in two ways. First, he is the accuser of Man before God. Second, he is the accuser of God before Man. Here are some examples:

-Accusing Man Before God-

In Job 1.8 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Job%201.8>)-12 Satan is standing in the presence of God and God asked Satan if he had seen His servant Job. God describes him as blameless and upright, one who fears God and shuns evil. Satan, at this point, begins his accusation. He accuses Job of being faithful to the Lord only because he has been blessed with safety and prosperity. Essentially, Satan accuses Job before God of having selfish motives for his obedience.

But unlike Satan, God knows the heart of each and every Man. He knows that Job's motives are pure and honest. God will also never allow temptation to come from Satan that the person will not be able to overcome. 1 Corinthians 10.13

(<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Cor%2010.13>) "No temptation has taken you but what is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but with the temptation also will make a way to escape, so that you may be able to bear it."

After this conversation between God and Satan, Satan departs and begins to systematically destroy all of Job's possessions and relatives. His animals are stolen, all of his children die and all of his servants are killed, yet he never curses God, and never sins.

Again, Satan and God meet in Job chapter 2. This time Satan accuses Job again of having false motives for being obedient to God because he still has his health. God again allows Satan to go and test Job and again God knows the heart of Job that he is pure and honest and will not fail this attack from Satan.

This time Job is struck by Satan with painful boils on his skin but again Job does not curse God and he does not sin.

Satan is the accuser and he accuses Man of anything that he thinks he can use to get him to fall into sin. All that Satan said about Job was not true and God knew it to not be true because he can look into the heart of Man and know the inner most thoughts of him.

This kind of test that Job went through is called affliction. It is not correction as if Job had sinned. He had not sinned. This was affliction designed to test Job's faith and bring him closer to the Lord. Most of the time nobody will know why a Believer is going through affliction until it is all over. But in

Job's case he is never told why he was afflicted, he just came out all the better for it in the end.

This same scenario can be seen in Zechariah 3. Here Satan is again accusing a man before the Lord. He is accusing Joshua. Satan is always doing this with Believers because it is his character. He does it all the time because he wants Man to fall into sin and he wants God's name to be ruined on the earth.

-Accusing God Before Man-

In addition to Satan accusing Man before God, he will also accuse God before Man. In the Garden of Eden God gave a command to Adam and Eve that they were not to eat off the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil lest they die. But then Satan arrived and said to Eve that she would not die. He twisted God's words, contradicted Him and promised her something that God did not intend for her to have.

Just as he did with Job in his conversation with God, he made Eve believe that God was working with a hidden motive in mind. Adam and Eve believed this lie and the world has never been the same since. It has been full of sin and evil and wickedness.

The events that take place on the earth are a reflection of what happens in the spiritual world. Major wars, like World War I and II or the wars in the Middle East around Israel, and the battles within the lives of Believers are all reflections of what is taking place in the spiritual world. This is seen clearly in the book of Job with the events in Heaven having repercussions on earth. But also in Revelation 12. Read verses 7 to 9, "And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels warring against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels warred, but did not prevail. Nor was place found for them in Heaven any more.

And the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent called Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." A war began in Heaven between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. But what happens to Satan? He did not win, but was cast down to the earth. What happens in Heaven is reflected on earth.

There will be a time in the future when God will see to it that all of the accusations Satan has made throughout history will be proved wrong. How will God prove them all wrong? Through Jesus Christ! God's Son will be the ultimate Judge of all the living and the dead. He will vindicate

God and the true people of God when that day comes. (Revelation 20)

Satan has always caused great trouble for the people of God. He is one of the reasons why evil still continues in this world but believers in the saving work of Jesus Christ can have hope that God still has control over him and will never allow him more freedom than is necessary. God will not allow the devil to test His people beyond what they can physically or spiritually bear. He can be thanked and praised for His care and protection of His Church. And His Church can always run to Him for shelter from the storm and strength to endure.

This now leads on to the 3rd reason why evil still exists and why God allows it to continue.

Third Reason for Evil: The Price of It's Removal

Sin and Satan have been shown to be major causes of the evil in this world. Destruction, sickness, hatred, murder, drunkenness, perversion, fighting, wars and death all stem in some way from the sin of Man and Satan. None of this was God's original intention for Mankind. The way Man lived in the Garden

of Eden is how God wanted Man to exist. Moral neutrality or, in other words: Innocence. God wanted Man to stay free of the pain and suffering which Satan sought to make Man live in.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ won the victory over sin on the cross. He paid the penalty for sin to God to offer salvation to Mankind. Man can now be free from the bondage of sin by faith in Jesus Christ and by walking in the Spirit of God. But what about Satan? He is still the accuser of the brethren and still seeks to steal, kill and destroy. Why doesn't God get rid of him? This is a valid question. Let the Bible answer it.

In Matthew 13.24 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%2013.24>)-30, Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and the tares. The explanation of this parable is in verses 36-43. Jesus says that the field is the world, the wheat is the sons of the kingdom of God and the tares are the sons of the

wicked one (Satan).

As Jesus' explanation unfolds His disciples discover that He is talking about the end of the world as we know it and that in order to preserve the wheat intact for God's use, He must, in this age, allow the tares (the sons of the wicked one) to live and grow along side the sons of the kingdom of God. God is waiting for the harvest time to come before he removes the tares from the world. And what will God do with those tares after they are removed? Verse 42 says they will be cast into a furnace of fire to be burned up (hell).

For the sake of God's people He will not remove Satan's people lest the Believers are uprooted to their harm. He is waiting for both to come to maturity. A maturity of righteousness and a maturity of wickedness.

2. Peter 3.9 - The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
1. Timothy 2.4 - Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

These verses make it clear that God is giving Man a chance to repent and come to Jesus for salvation lest they are sentenced to hell for eternity.

2. Timothy 2.24-26 says that many have been taken captive to the devil to do his will. Those in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ are held captive by Satan and serve him, not God. The Lord wants all Men to come to salvation by Jesus and Jesus alone. He makes salvation available to all (1 Timothy 4.10 (<http://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Tim%204.10>)).

The Bible teaches that the Day of the Lord is coming, and when it comes all men, living and dead, will be judged according to God's standard found in the Bible. He is patient and His timing is perfect.

Therefore the final reason why God has not removed the evil in this world is because He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. If God removes Satan then the other guilty party in the introduction of evil into this world must be removed as well. This other guilty party is

Mankind himself. A time is coming, and is near, when the Lord Jesus will return to this earth leading an army of His saints, and then Satan will be bound for a thousand years and the enemies of God will be slain by Jesus Christ (Revelation 19-20). These events will come to pass and all those who are not ready

will be the tares Jesus speaks of in Matthew 13 and their final destination will be in eternal fire. Thus evil will be finished on the earth.

Conclusion

It is not a difficult thing to realize that evil events take place on the earth; that bad things happen to people. How to understand this state of affairs is another matter. From a human perspective destruction, decay, sickness, hatred, lying, murder, hopelessness, death and all other terrible things that happen to people is impossible to understand. And how can it be understood. Man is limited and often finds these bad circumstances are beyond his control. So how can he understand?

God has given us the Bible so that we may learn about Him, ourselves and the world around us. In the Bible, as has been taught in this article, the Lord shows that Man lost what was given to him by God; that sin came into this world and it seeks to destroy Mankind; that Satan is always on the attack against God's people to draw them away from Him; and that God is waiting for the proper time, because He wants all men to repent and find salvation in Jesus Christ before He destroys the cause of evil, which is Satan and rebellious Man together.

If you know that you have never committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul from sin and death, then today can be the day of your salvation. The Lord is seeking out men and women who will follow Him and He gives them the Holy Spirit as a teacher and encourager in these dark times.

Do not wait. When Jesus returns He will bind Satan in prison and all those who are not sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise will find themselves in that furnace of fire. Come to Jesus and be saved. †††

This article is produced by: Moriel Zulu Mission

