

WHY HAS GOD NOT KILLED THE DEVIL?

Many people, have, over the years, been intrigued by the fact that though the Almighty God is Omnipotent, He has allowed the devil to continue to exist. They ask: "Why should mere mortals be left to the whims and caprices of a mighty spirit being like the devil?" "Why should people be held to account for falling victims of satan's wicked devices?" "When will the devil be put away so that mankind will have peace eternally?"

These are no doubt questions of great moment which cannot be wished away. We thank God however that the answers are in the Holy Bible. To begin with, we have to know who the devil is, his origin and character and how he came to be directly opposed to God Almighty.

It would be recalled that God Almighty created Lucifer and gave him charge over the earth, to direct mankind to the worship of God Almighty. He was "the anointed cherub that covereth". (Ezekiel 28:14) But in course of time he developed pride and the inordinate ambition of coveting the honour of worship, which is the exclusive preserve of God Almighty. Therefore, "iniquity" was found in him. (Ezekiel 28:15) His ploy has been to use the fear of death to browbeat the human race into worshipping him. He also exploits the weaknesses of human beings - "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" - in order to turn them against their Maker: and into certain destruction. See Genesis 3:1-6; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Hebrews 2:14,15.

The Devil's Boast

From the record of Job it is clear that satan had boasted that no one will remain faithful to God when exposed to harsh conditions. This is evident from the response of the devil when God told him about the integrity of Job. The divine record states: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my

servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." It is clear therefore that the devil cannot harm anyone who enjoys Jehovah's protection. (Job 1:6-12) However, the devil believes that if God removes the shield He has put around Job, he would renounce his faith in the face of sustained afflictions. God Almighty then told the devil, "...Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD." - Job 1:6-12.

What followed was that the devil began a series of harassments which he believed would make Job to curse God: his servants were killed by Sabeans; fire came from the sky and burnt up the sheep and the servants tending them; the Chaldeans came and carried away the camels and slew the servants; and lastly, a great wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, killing the seven sons and three daughters of Job. (Job 1:13-19) Rather than blaspheme, "...Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." The Bible adds that "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." - Job 1:20-22.

On another occasion, Satan came again to afflict Job with sore boils such that he had to use a potsherd to scrape himself even as he sat among the ashes. Thereafter, Satan harassed Job through his wife, urging him to "curse God, and die" - but she received a sharp rebuke from him instead. (Job 2:7 - 10) Through Job, God proved that contrary to the devil's boasts, at every stage in history, there would always be people on earth who would be faithful to His service in spite of adversity.

Another sincere worshipper of God who stood firmly on the side of righteousness in the most trying of circumstances, contrary to the devil's boast, was Moses. He forsook the privileges of royalty in the palace of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and fought for righteousness, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season". (Hebrews 11:25) When God sent Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, Pharaoh the king of Egypt was arrogant and disobedient. He even blasphemed God and refused to allow the children of Israel to go. Addressing Pharaoh, who represented satan the devil at that time, God declared: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16. See also Romans 9:17) In spite of Pharaoh's boasts, he was compelled by divine force to allow the children of Israel to leave after he and his people suffered series of plagues that had never been seen before in the land of Egypt. Eventually, he and his hosts were destroyed in the Red Sea. As Pharaoh and his army perished in the Red Sea so the devil and his followers would be destroyed by God when He fully manifests His powers at the battle of the Great Day, or the Battle of Armageddon. Thus, God has not killed the devil because he had given him time to prove his boast before he would be destroyed in the last day.

In addition, in the days of Elijah the prophet, satan used Jezebel to turn the nation of Israel to baal worship. Even, Elijah thought he was the only faithful person left in Israel until God told him, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him". (1 Kings 19:10, 18) Thus, despite all his efforts, the devil did not succeed to intimidate all the Israelites and lure them from the true faith.

Knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the person God will use to destroy him, the devil started persecuting the devil right from birth. He eventually used his agents to kill Jesus Christ but God raised him from the dead. hence St. Paul states in his letter to the Hebrews, . But those who are wicked, meaning those who persist in opposing righteousness over time, will be destroyed in due course. The Bible says, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." (Proverbs

16:4. Also Nahum 1:2; Job 21:29, 30, etc.) Moreover, David the prophet declares, "Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." - Psalm 83:17, 18.

God of order

It should be remembered that after the devil had lured Eve into violating the law of God in the Garden of Eden, as a result of which Adam also fell, the sentence of death was passed on him. God declared: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15) The "woman" in the text refers to God's organization (Galatians 4:26) while the "seed" of the woman is Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:16) The "enmity" stated in the passage refers to the conflict, disagreement or hostility between God's Organisation and Satan's Organisation. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 29:27; James 4:4) A bruise to the head is a fatal blow which would lead to death. The seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent prefigures the killing of the devil by Jesus Christ, the antitypical seed of the woman. The serpent bruising the heel of the woman means that the devil would persecute, afflict and oppose the people of God with the mind of killing them but cannot prevent them from having life in God's Kingdom fully established. (Matthew 10:28; 1 Peter 5:8,9) Speaking through Ezekiel the prophet, God Almighty declared, "...therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire." - Ezekiel 28:16.

Thus, one of the reasons why God has not killed the devil is that some time must be given for the "seed of the woman". the perfect man, Jesus Christ, to be born into this world to pay back the perfect life lost by man in the Garden of Eden, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:15) By his earthly advent, our Lord Jesus Christ brought grace and truth and inaugurated a new era in the relationship between God and men. - John 1:17; 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

Another reason why God has not destroyed the devil is that sufficient time must be given for people of goodwill to hear the gospel, realize their follies and come out of satan's captivity to serve the living God. St. Paul stated, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31) The truth is now being preached round the world as a witness against the nations and the sheep are being separated from the goats. The people are being given enlightenment and sufficient warning so that they will all have a full and fair opportunity to decide which side of the **great divide** they want to stand before the fierce anger of the Lord comes upon the earth. (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 16:13,14; 20:1,7-9) Our Saviour stated, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. - Matthew 24:14. See also Acts 3:19-21.

The period given the devil to make him see the futility of his actions in working in total opposition to God is also proof of Jehovah's absolute justice. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." - Deuteronomy 32:4. Compare Isaiah 45:21.

Destruction of the devil

The period we are now living in, known as the last days, are the final years of Satan's existence. (Revelation 12:12) Any time within this age, the devil will be killed. (Romans 16:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) "But of that day and hour knoweth no man...". (Matthew 24:36) The point is that God cannot be pushed or rushed as He has time for everything. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; See also Exodus 12:40,41; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10) But until that time comes, the Almighty will continue to restrain the devil while enlightening the people and giving shelter, succor and deliverance to His children everywhere. See Ezekiel 21:25-27. Thereafter, the people of God will enjoy perfect peace on earth. The truth is that no matter what the devil does there will always be men and women on earth

who will remain faithful to God. - Isaiah 1:9; 2 Kings 19:10,18; Zechariah 13:8,9; Romans 11:4-6; Revelation 7: 9,10,13-15.

In due time God Almighty will kill satan the devil and his hosts through His Chief Executive and Field Marshall, Jesus Christ, hence it is written, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20:1-3) The angel that came down from heaven is Jesus Christ. The bottomless pit is a picture word meaning the grave. A key is used to open and to close a lock, thus, a deciding factor. Jesus Christ has been given the power to kill and to make alive. (Revelation 1:17, 18; John 11:25; 17:2) He will therefore use this power to kill the devil and cast him into the grave where he will remain for a 1000 years after which he would be raised to life again to see how beautiful the earth is and how vain had been his boast that no man would remain alive to serve God. He would not repent but would want to deceive the nations once more. But the anger of God symbolized as fire would destroy him for ever. - Revelation 20: 7-9.

All these bespeak the longsuffering and justice of God Almighty. St. Peter declared, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." - 2 Peter 3:9. See also Ezekiel 21:25-27.

Exhortation

Although in the eyes of mortal man it may seem as if God had left the devil for too long without killing him, we must realise that the ways of God are not the ways of men. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) For instance, what God counts as a day is with human beings about a thousand years. (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8) Having therefore understood God's written judgment against all wickedness, we must give ourselves to doing the will of God by

resisting the devil at all times by God's grace. We should look to Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation, who "**was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**" (Hebrews 4:15. Compare Hebrews 2:17, 18) All those who are determined to do the will of God will certainly be helped by Him to stand in the hour of temptation and to overcome his wiles. - Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; 22:28 John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Revelation 3:10.

We pray God Almighty the Preserver of spiritual Israel to continue to protect His sheep everywhere and to help His children to avoid the wiles of the devil so as to be steadfast in doing His will unto the end by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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