

## Dear Phil

### DID GOD CREATE EVIL?

***I have two questions. If it is God's will that no man perish, why did He create evil (Isa. 45:7)? I used to believe that Lucifer created evil, but while reading Ezekiel 28:11–19, I noticed that he says Lucifer was perfect in his ways until iniquity was found in him. Somehow evil entered into Lucifer. How? —Darrell***

Dear Darrell,

The answer to your second question is in James 1:13–14, which says that “every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own desires.” There are only two conditions necessary for any being, including angels, to experience temptation. The first is the capacity to want something. The second is the lack or absence of something that is desirable.

The reason God cannot be tempted with evil is that He does not lack anything that is desirable. Our Triune God is completely satisfied within Himself. He did not create angels or men to meet a need. Lucifer, on the other hand, did not possess the glory, honor, and power that God possessed; and like all angels, Lucifer had the capacity to desire.

Notice also that James says that “every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own desires and enticed.” Enticement does not have to come from the outside. Enticement is experienced when a person becomes aware of something he lacks, sees something that will satisfy his lack, and feels the desire to have that something.

Lucifer could have experienced his lack, seen God's glory and power, and desired to have it without any external prompting.

In verse 14, James tells us, “When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin.” The key question is when does lust conceive? The best answer that I know is that lust conceives when will unites with desire, and a person chooses to try to satisfy that desire in a way that is contrary to God's will.

This means that God did not have to tempt Lucifer in order for him to sin. Thus, the first sin in the universe was committed by Lucifer alone in his heart. God did not create evil.

Your first question comes from Isaiah 45:7, which says, “I form the light and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” I commend you for having looked up the word “evil” in Strong's exhaustive concordance. Many people do not even attempt to find out what the original Hebrew or Greek means.

An additional way in which you can gain access to the meaning of the original text is *translation comparison*. If you look up Isa. 45:7 in

conservative modern translations, you will find that none of them translate the word *ra'* as “evil.” Here are the words modern translations use in this verse: “*calamity*” (NASB, ESV, NET, NKJV), “*disaster*” (NIV, HCSB). When you look at the NASB, NKJV, ESV, NIV, and HCSB, you are looking at the considered opinion of hundreds of scholars who have spent large portions of their lives studying God's Word in the original languages and who believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Obviously, neither their scholarship nor their commitment to the inerrancy of God's Word makes them infallible in their translation. However, the fact that these conservative translations translate the word *ra'* with an English word other than “evil” should at least cause you to question whether the word *ra'* means evil in this context or not.

I think there are good reasons to accept the modern translations of this Hebrew word. First, notice that God contrasts *ra'* with “peace.” The primary meaning of the word “peace” (*shalom* in Hebrew) is “a condition in which all is as it should be.” Evil is not the opposite of a condition in which all is as it should be. However, calamity or disaster are opposites or antonyms of *shalom*. Second, contextually Isaiah 45 is part of a section in which God is providing hope for His exiled people and promising judgment upon their Babylonian captors. The blessing of God is peace. The judgment of God is calamity. As the sovereign over nations, God declares Himself ultimately responsible for both peace and calamity.

Blessings,  
Philip Brown

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