

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS THAT PUZZLE SOME BELIEVERS

1. Why is there suffering in the world?

- a) The first thing to be said about suffering is that most of it comes about because of the activities of a powerful supernatural being called Satan, or the devil. He delights in hurting man and in trying to turn man away from God. Very often people blame God when they suffer, but is it God's fault? Satan takes great pride in seeing God gets the "credit" for his misdeeds.
- b) Suffering is also caused by man's rebellion against God and by the evil in men's hearts.
- c) You might say that suffering is a result of choice. God has given man a certain amount of choice. If man were merely a robot, an automaton, then God could always force him to do what is right. But God gives man the choice either to love and obey him or to rebel against Him. When man rebels against God, he hurts not only himself but also his fellow man. Often, the same people who criticize God for not solving all the problems they feel are important to them would resist if God enforced His will on their lifestyles. They want free choice for themselves.
- d) Something else to remember about suffering is that God set up certain natural laws to govern the universe. If it were not for the law of gravity, we would all go floating off into space. But that same law is going to cause pain to people who jump from the tops of tall buildings. We can either go along with natural forces and accommodate ourselves to them, or we can ignore them and be hurt by them.
- e) Much sickness, too, is man-made. Some of it is because of improper nutrition, and people ignoring the natural-realm laws.
- f) The technological state of our society contributes to suffering too. If there were no airplanes, there would be no deaths and injuries resulting from air catastrophes. All of these things are part of the price we pay for our state of civilization. If we do not want to pay the price, we can go back to a

more primitive society. In today's world, our lifestyle is a large contributor to sickness and disease.

- g) There are other forms of suffering that men bring on themselves. Consider, for example, such diseases as gonorrhoea and AIDS. These all result from a conscious lifestyle that is opposed to God's word and breaks God's laws. God did not send gonorrhoea. It is a natural consequence of immorality. When it spreads, it becomes an incurable disease affecting millions of people.

Why does God allow this to happen? When we ask this question, it brings us back to the statement that God has created man with free choice - free even to the point of ruining much of God's creation. God has sent preachers, prophets and other holy men to warn the people to change their ways but most will not listen. Yet, we all feel the pain.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 1 Corinthians 12:26

- h) Suffering, if we allow it to, does have a way of purifying us. Many people have had to suffer in order to turn to God. Until they had their material things stripped from them, and often their health taken away, they had no desire for spiritual things. God's purpose for us is spiritual wholeness, and not just our personal happiness.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Acts 5:41

If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 2 Corinthians 1:6

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, Philippians 4:2

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. 1 Peter 4:19

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. James 5:10

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Hebrews 2:10

All suffering is temporary. It will all pass away when Jesus Himself returns to the earth.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Revelation 21:4

2. **Will there ever be a cure for all diseases?**

Remarkable advances in science have led to the cure of such dreaded diseases as polio and tuberculosis. But because much of the disease and illness people experience is caused by sin and by ignoring principles of healthy living, there will never be a cure for all disease until Satan's power is done away with. Our bodies are only a part of what makes us human beings, we also have souls and spirits (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The body is the physical part of our nature. The soul corresponds to the mind. The spirit is that part of us that sets us apart from the animals, that stamps upon us the image of God. If the spirit in us is not in tune with God, then you do not have access to the source of healing.

- a) Some disease is caused directly by sin. Much sickness is the result of deep-rooted bitterness and uncontrolled stress. When people refuse to forgive or when they let themselves be "stressed out" by the pressures the world puts on them, that frequently leads to sickness. Those who live harried and hurried lives frequently develop ulcers, arthritis, high blood pressure, asthma and similar ailments. Alcohol and cigarettes are also great contributors to disease because they weaken the human body.
- b) Another reason for disease is that much of the food we eat contains poison and unhealthy additives. Sugar, salt, white flour and harmful substances weaken our bodies when used in excess.
- c) There will never be a decrease in diseases until people learn to eat properly, exercise properly, treat their bodies properly, and stop ingesting chemicals and other foreign substances that hurt their bodies. Nor will disease decrease while people continue polluting the water and air with carcinogens and fighting wars that destroy vegetation, uproot whole nations, and bring about famine. All these things are contributors to disease - and disease, because of infection and contagion, has a way of growing.

Sickness and disease will be a part of life on this planet until Jesus comes back. When He comes, He will set things properly in order, and there will be no more sickness and no more death. That is the promise we have from God. In Revelation 22:2, we are told that the heavenly city of New Jerusalem will contain a tree whose leaves "were for the healing of the nations." We are reminded in Revelation 21:4 that when we dwell in the presence of God, "There will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

3. What is evil?

Evil is the opposite of good and has a broader meaning than "sin", though sin is evil. "The Hebrew word comes from the root meaning 'to spoil', 'to break in pieces': being broken and so made worthless. It is essentially what is unpleasant, disagreeable, offensive. ...all evil must be punished..." When people violate God's laws, they experience the repercussions of their actions. (*The New Bible Dictionary*, Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1962, p.400). Evil is the very opposite of God's nature.

4. Why is there evil in the world?

First of all, God is separate from all evil and does not cause it; He is against all evil. Evil is a result of the abuse of the God-given free-will by two major forces:

- a) The first force is a being named Satan. There is a spiritual being who is the enemy of mankind. He is malevolent, very powerful, and he wants to destroy God, so he seeks to destroy men and women, who are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Much of the trouble that is in the world is a direct result of the evil that Satan himself causes.
- b) The second source of evil is the human heart. "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" God knows that there is a great deal of evil lurking in men's hearts. Because of the evil in their hearts, they hurt one another; and we have war, crime, injustice, racism, and all sorts of pain and heartbreak.

There is evil, then, because of Satan and because of man's nature - and evil has a tendency to multiply itself. The more evil men there are, the more society as a whole begins to take on an evil nature. If God did not give men the chance to be evil, there would be no freedom. What would happen if every time a man cursed God his tongue rotted out? God could do that but then He would be ruling the universe through fear. God is not a dictator. He wants men to choose to love and serve Him and to do what is good. The other side of that choice is that men may decide not to serve God and to do what is evil.

Giving man the freedom to choose between good and evil has been God's policy since He created the first man, Adam. Although we have a predisposition toward sin and evil, we can turn away from sin and turn toward God. God wants us to resist evil. He is willing to help us in the battle. But it is a hard one. Even Jesus Christ Himself was genuinely tempted to sin. It is indeed regrettable that there is evil in the world. The real news though, is that there is a way to overcome evil. And that way is through the Son of God - Jesus Christ.

5. Will there ever be lasting world peace?

Absolutely! We will have lasting peace on earth when the Prince of Peace returns. Jesus Christ has told us, and the Bible assures us, that He will come back again. When He comes several things are going to happen. First, the rebellion of man against God is going to be put down. For a thousand-year period, God will restrain the evil that is in man and will not allow nations to fight one another (Revelation 20:3-6). When that happens, men will take the tools of war and turn them into tools of peace. Isaiah 2:4 says that men will beat their swords into plough shares and their spears into pruning hooks and that people will not learn war anymore. With Satan out of the way, and man restrained, there will finally be peace. When this prophecy is fulfilled, when Satan's final rebellion is crushed, there will be permanent peace. God will put away, out of His kingdom forever, everything that offends. He will take Satan and his followers and put them permanently into a place of captivity. From that time forward there will never again be war. Until the earthly reign of Jesus comes, however, men will continue to fight one another. Jesus said there will be "wars and rumours of wars" right up until the time of the end (Matthew 24:6).

6. Will man ever love his fellow man?

There will always be people who love their fellow men, people of goodwill who want to live in peace. Those who truly follow the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, always want to live in love and harmony with others. Granted, there are people who are not Christian believers who strive for peace, and there are Christian believers still filled with selfishness and hate. But in the final analysis, outside of the love of Christ, there is no hope for true peace. Until those who make the world's decisions are followers of the Prince of Peace - and until Jesus Christ Himself returns to earth - there will never be true love among men. There will be rivalries, racial hatred and difficulties of all kinds - and men will not love their fellow men as God would have them to do. Remember, though, that Jesus Christ is coming back to reign on this earth. In that day there not only will be lasting love and fellowship among the people of the earth but also, according to the prophet Isaiah, among the animals as well!

7. When will the world end?

The Bible says that the time will come when God will create a new heaven and a new earth, where there will be no sin, no sorrow, no crime, no tears, no disease, no tragedy - none of the evils we know now (Revelation 21:1-5). This will be the beginning of a new order. Following this, God's judgement will come upon those who have rebelled against him. People who have lied and robbed and cheated and stolen must pay for their evil deeds. Then, Jesus Christ will come back and establish His thousand-year reign of righteousness. This will be a transition period where we will see how this world would be if there had never been sin - if man had not fallen away from God and Satan had never gained a foothold in this world. We will see what it would be like if men lived together as brothers. Even in the midst of Christ's reign, however, the seeds of rebellion will remain. Satan will still be able to find a foothold at the end of this thousand-year era of peace (Revelation 20:7-10). At this time, God will finally do away with the present earth to create a new heaven and a new earth. 2 Peter 3:10 says, *"The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."* Revelation 21:1 adds, *"I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."* God will cleanse the universe totally and take out of it everything that does wickedness and everything that rebels against Him, and from then on the righteous will shine like stars in the kingdom of their father forever (Daniel 12:3). The question is still, "When will all this happen?" The answer is that the end of this world as we know it will be one thousand years after the present age comes to a conclusion with the return of Jesus Christ to earth. And I believe that Christ's return could be very soon. It could be in just twenty or thirty years.

8. What does the future hold for me and my family?

Your future depends on your relationship with God. For those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and who love God, the future looks very positive. First of all, there is going to be a tremendous spiritual awakening. It is described in Joel 2:28. It began on the day of Pentecost, but it will intensify as this present age draws to its conclusion. For people who are part of this awakening, there will be prosperity and joy. God's people, Jews and Christians, will no longer be the butt of jokes by those who are in the world. For God's people, there is going to be security, peace and tremendous prosperity. For those who do not know the Lord, the future does not look very positive.

The Bible speaks of a time of judgement on the ungodly. There will be wars, revolutions, economic failures - possibly even a terrible economic collapse in our world-wide monetary system. There will be an invasion of the nation of Israel by the Soviet Union, as described in Ezekiel 37-39. We can expect wars in other parts of the world. Jesus said that there will be wars, rumours of wars and earthquakes in many places (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7). There will be famines and, sadly, many people will starve. Millions of people

will be out of work, and there will be revolution and upheaval. None of this will lessen until God's final judgement comes.

The future depends on where you stand in relation to God. If you know the Lord and follow His principles, the future is very, very positive. If you do not know the Lord, the future looks very dangerous. To understand what it will be like, consider what happened in Egypt under the Pharaohs when Israel was being held in captivity. In that day, God sent a series of plagues upon Egypt. Even while the plagues were devastating Egypt, the land of Goshen - which was inhabited by God's people, the Israelites - was prosperous. The plagues did not affect the people of Israel, only the people of Egypt. When the first-born children of the Egyptians died, the Israelites were untouched (Exodus 12).

In summary, your future depends entirely upon your obedience to God. If you listen to the Lord, you can prosper. If you fail to listen to God and go your own stubborn way, then you are going to run into insurmountable problems. It will be as described by the prophet Malachi. He says the day will come when:

To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet Malachi 4:2-3

The best thing you can do, then, to prepare for the future, is to be sure you are in a proper relationship with God.

9. Is there life after death?

Yes! Emphatically, there is life after death for all people. How you will spend your life after death depends upon your relationship with God now. Jesus Christ said:

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. John 11:25-26

The whole message of Jesus Christ was that He broke the power of sin and death, because death was the consequence of sin. Jesus said, "Because I live, you will live also." (John 14:19). That is the hope of the world - resurrection. Not only is there life after death, but God is going to give us new bodies, better than the ones we have now. We are not going to be disembodied spirits. Those who believe in Jesus are going to have bodies just like the resurrection body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). The Bible says that there will be a resurrection of the good and a resurrection of the evil. Some will arise to honour and some to shame (Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:11-15). Those who have lived for God will be with Him forever in glory. Those who have not lived for Him will be

in a place of torment and punishment. Yes, there is life after death, but the quality of that life depends upon how we spend our days in this "life before life."

Often, the question arises whether a loving God could really send anyone to hell.

Remember that God is always calling people to Himself. Those who absolutely refuse God and who want no part of His kingdom are given their wishes. Such people do not want to be part of God's kingdom, and so God says, "Your will is to be apart from Me and I am going to let you have it the way you want it." Apart from God there is everlasting darkness. It is a horrible thing to contemplate, but it is not God's choice to send anyone out into that darkness. Instead, He reluctantly allows people to have what they have shown Him they want. The Bible talks about everlasting fire and eternal darkness when it describes hell. (Matthew 8:12; 25:41) When we die, we either go to heaven or hell. We will join those loved ones who have gone to the same place as we have. Until then, the living are forbidden to attempt contact with the dead. So-called ghosts, or spirits that speak through mediums, are really demons masquerading as the spirits of dead human beings. If you let them, they will deceive you. They will try to lead you away from God, and - if they can gain a foothold in your life - they will do their very best to take control of you.

10. What is heaven like?

Heaven is where God is. He is the light of heaven, the joy of heaven. As you mature in your understanding of the Bible, you realize there is no material concept of heaven that will do it justice. The Bible talks about streets of gold as clear as crystal and walls made out of precious stones (Revelation 21:18-21). All sorts of images immediately come to mind when we mention heaven. More than anything else, heaven is a spiritual condition where one spiritual being is in touch with another spiritual being, and there is total communication and fellowship. Whatever we consider to be a joy here on earth will be heightened millions of times beyond anything we can conceive when we get to heaven. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Being in God's presence will bring an intensity of delight that will far exceed anything we could know here on earth. Furthermore, in heaven there will be neither death, nor sorrow, nor sickness, nor poverty.

He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Revelation 21:3-4

The Bible also talks about crowns and thrones in heaven, so we do know that heaven is not just a hugh democracy where there is no differentiation of function (Revelation 4:4-11). There will be different functions and different levels of responsibility assigned to different people. For there will still be levels of order and structure throughout God's universe. We do not know for certain what tasks we will be performing in heaven, but there will obviously be an ongoing, functioning universe. We will be God's messenger-agents in ordering and running it. We do know that we will be able to recognize our loved ones in heaven and we will experience great joy over being reunited with them. (Luke 23:42-43; Hebrews 12:22-23) Your real self will live on in heaven, not some shadowy part of you. You will never feel so alive as when you enter into the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, God has prepared for the saints.

What is heaven like? It is better than anything any human being could ever imagine when he tries to picture the best thing that could ever happen to him. Beyond that, there is not much else we could say!

11. How can I be a better person?

The only way we can truly be better people is to give our hearts to God, because every good work a man does by himself is tainted with pride and self-will. The Bible says:

There is none who does good, no, not one. Psalm 14:3

This seems to be a rather dismal view of humanity, but that is the way it is. Unconverted man may try to do better but he is ultimately doomed to failure. You can gloss over some of the evil tendencies in your heart by attempting to control them, but inside, the heart of man is *deceitful and desperately wicked* (Jeremiah 17:9). If the heart is against God, there is only one way that a person can truly become better - and that is by surrendering the heart to Jesus. If you want to be a better person, you must be joined to Jesus. You must have the attitude that, "I am going to come to You, Lord, and I am going to accept Your salvation by faith. Not because I am better or have improved myself. But I am going to come to You in faith and let You be my Saviour and wash me of all the things I've done that are wrong." When you turn your life over to Jesus, you are not just a better person, but you are identified with a perfect Person - One who never sinned. At that point, you ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life, so He is not just the Saviour but the Lord too. When He comes in and places His Spirit inside you, you will be transformed into a new creature.

Perhaps the change will not come rapidly, but it will come, as you are yielded to Jesus. When you have Jesus in your heart, He is living through you. That means that He is loving through you, keeping God's commandments through you, and perfecting you. In

an ongoing process, you are becoming a better person. More than better, in fact; you are becoming a holy person because Jesus Christ is forming Himself in you.

Another thing that has happened is that the tendency to break the law has been taken away. God has given you a new nature. The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"

(2 Corinthians 5:17). The Lord does not say He is going to make us into little gods who are impervious to problems. What He does say is that He will give us the weapons and ammunition to overcome problems. The weapons will not do us a bit of good if we refuse to use them. Even Christians can be overcome by problems if they let it happen.

The evidences are overwhelming. Jesus Christ is exactly who He said He is - the Son of God. He will do exactly what He said He would - reach out to you with His love, granting you assurance of life at its fullest, beginning now and lasting throughout eternity. The only way you will ever determine if all this is true is to find out for yourself. If you have not done so already, ask Jesus to take over your life. In your own words, just surrender control to Him and tell Him you are sorry for the sins you have committed. Tell Him that you resolve to do things His way from now on and that you will turn away from your sins with His help. Then commit yourself to following Him wherever He may lead you.

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