

Preface

Literal Lenses: Book 2 stands on its own; its subject is the complete and satisfying solution to the Problem of Evil, which God revealed in the literal Bible. Book 1 helps by examining a number of Bible passages with Literal Lenses; important Bible subjects are seen more clearly using Literal Lenses. Additionally, Book 2 summarizes some Book 1 subjects such as Jonah, Job, God's direction, and the two-solution gospel; they are seen still more clearly in this Book.

It is important to repeat that the only complete and accessible answer to the problem of evil is found in the Bible, read literally. Average thinkers, who believe all of God's Word literally, can know why the Good God exists with evil, and why He does or does not prevent evil from striking our world and why He does or does not fix the problems evil causes.

Five truths are required for this complete answer to the problem of evil. Each of the five require a literal read of God's revelation. Never has any noted person or group believed all five.

This book describes all five: the first two in Part 1, the next two in Part 2, and the last one is in Part 3. The five are:

1. The origin of Evil: where did it come from? and when?
2. God's definition of Evil: what is it?
3. Humans are entirely responsible for 'bad' evil.
4. Humans are entirely responsible for the condition of the earth.
5. Humans can live in God's house, entirely safe from all 'bad' evil.

God Himself created this reality for us, and describes it in His Own words, but we must believe His revelation literally. There is much more in God's revelation, of course, but this book concerns the five listed truths - God's solution to the problem of evil. Again, each truth is found in God's Bible revelation read literally.

Our teachers have taught us wrong. Religious or secular, all humans have defined evil as it has existed in our world since Adam's sin, but this has always been an incomplete definition. Our God-created reality has evil, but the evil in it is different than any person has thought ... so, this read must contain new ideas.

Evil existed in the perfect Garden of Eden before Adam sinned. The existence of this evil did not corrupt God, Adam, or any of the earth. God's Theodicy, His solution to the problem of evil, is His complete explanation of how evil could exist on earth, while He remains Good and Almighty. God revealed the answer, and it is a fully satisfying answer.

For 1000s of years God's people could have seen this reality; we only needed to take God at His Word. Despite that failing, God's people believe that God created all things, and have not made the fatal error of rejecting God as Creator.

Literal Lenses help us see the evil in our world, as God created it.

1. Evil's origin and definition, and its description and responsibilities (Part 1),
2. Authority in God's created reality (Part 2), and
3. The practical solution to the problem of evil (Part 3). We need God's solution, because we know that He does not stop all 'bad' evil from hitting the earth.

God's words are neither difficult nor technical; they do not require complex philosophy or metaphysics, which few could follow. God's words make sense rationally, spiritually, and practically to average thinkers. When we see God's created reality, our difficult questions change to practical ones, such as, "Now that I know what evil is and why it is here, what can I do about it?" Evil is neither mystical nor unstoppable.

Yet, God's description of reality in the Bible is a new idea; considering reality as a place in which evil is not perplexing requires reorientation, and that is not easy. When we accept what God literally says, we accept truths that seem to contradict parts of His character ... but we learn that they do not.

God's revealed reality does not fit with what is currently understood about evil, nor with anyone's perspective of evil ... it does not fit with what is believed about God's activity. All of this was a challenge to me ... and now it is your challenge because God's reality does not fit into what you currently know. Reading all of God's words literally, requires changing, even abandoning, some deeply ingrained ideas about evil, about earthly authority, and more.

The Bible and God and religion have been entirely rejected by those 'in the know,' especially since the mid-19th century. Yet, no religion or notable believer has accepted the entire Bible literally, so the Bible has never been rejected on its own merits, and neither has the All-Wise Creator Who revealed what He did. Rejecting the Bible was really rejecting religions that attempted to enforce their understanding of certain parts of the Bible. Religions may include ideas unacceptable to earthly thinkers, but they should not teach ideas that are in conflict with God's truth and reality. For example, fixity of species is not true; it should never be taught, but adaptation is true, and it is often described well by scientists, philosophers, educators, researchers, and others. Believers must see God's created reality accurately; His people must believe the Bible literally.

This book is not promoting a religion - it is promoting the Bible. Only God's literal revelation in the Bible answers or resolve the problems we thought we had with a good God co-existing with evil ... and much more.

About the Author

A friend from decades ago and I are reconnecting. He read Book 1, and graciously said that he appreciated its information about the author – examples from my early years in Chapter 22 and other details shared after that – but said that he would have liked to have known those details before he read the book. Therefore, the information, largely from Book 1: Appendix 1, is shared here.

I was raised in a supportive middle-class home, neighborhood, school, and church in a single small city. The area culture was Protestant with a strong work ethic. At church, I learned to appreciate the Bible. I graduated college with a Math / Science teaching degree, but took work as a factory laborer. I was not driven and did not take all the responsibility I could have. Moving from home, I transitioned to work as a computer programmer in large cities.

Returning home, I gradually began writing projects. It was never my goal to write, but, as God directed, I sought to fill in details of what I saw to be rarely communicated Biblical teachings, and of Biblical ideas that I have worked to understand, including some ambitious subjects like the origin and nature of evil. God's revelation in the Bible moves us beyond our current understandings to complete answers and explanations.

About my perspective: I am not widely read, but various men have captured my interest over the years, beginning with Oswald Chambers during my college years. Watchman Nee, Frances Schaeffer, and many Charles Spurgeon sermons gained my interest as well. I was drawn to Puritan authors and theologians, but did not read them much. More recently, the difficult theology of P.T. Forsyth, whom Oswald Chambers quoted, caught my attention; I was amazed by the way P.T. Forsyth brought every issue, every subject, every personal and world conundrum to the cross of Christ for its resolution. It spurred in me a desire to learn more about the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. I thought that I would promote P.T. Forsyth to make his deeply theological works more widely accessible, but God gave me new objectives.

Now I listen to and watch presentations, processing the thoughts of others, hoping to shape my perspective Biblically. Many of those are secular courses on history, philosophy, and science that contain good information, with many clear facts and intelligent ideas, but contain also disparate human explanations, often using personal experience, even offering guesses and scattered speculations, which, to me, need a Biblical basis for the facts to fit and to make proper sense.

About the Author

Through the years, I have listened to radio, TV, and preaching and teaching from the internet and podcasts by those who believe the Bible to be entirely true, inspired, and accurate. Many messages, from little known to exalted ministers/teachers, challenge me ... especially when they express Biblical teachings different from mine. So I ask, "What does the Bible say?" Big subjects such as Law and Grace, good and evil, sovereignty and responsibility, sin and forgiveness, and more grab my attention and drive me to the Bible.

I hope the perspective I share matches the Bible's, as do most Biblical teachers and writers who have helped me. In pursuing that, I have honestly considered many varied points of view, which have broadened my knowledge, deepened my understanding, and aided my expression of the truths of the literal Bible. Bible reading and memory inform me directly of the Bible's perspective. To claim even to want God's perspective seems presumptuous, but that too is my desire and I seek Him for greater understanding, asking the Holy Spirit to guide me into all truth as Jesus declared He would.

Specifically about Book 2, it took me about two decades to understand how the Bible, believed literally, shows God's created reality. Then, from 2018, organizing the subjects and expressions in Books 1 and 2 took another three years ... and I continue to learn and update. Exchanging established Bible-based understandings for these literal understandings was hard work, and I continue to work for clear and consistent Biblical understandings and expressions. Careful readers can be thankful that they will not need so many years to understand God's new-to-us descriptions of His created reality.

(The "Being Bolder" menu option on www.literallenses.org/book2 expands on this more directly.)

A friend is graciously enduring a labored reading of Book 2. We each believe and read the Bible literally. Yet, on Day 6 of Genesis 1, we disagree: he sees one of God's acts to hold only for redeemed believers in Christ. The eight chapters of Book 2: Part 2 describe this act. Reading carefully and critically, my friend sees necessary passages left out or not explained 'properly'. (Chapters 8 and 10 have responses to questions that build upon and explain most of these ideas ... other explanations will be on the website.) While having much to learn, I believe that God's act in Genesis 1 has always applied to all. My friend's labored reading demonstrates that some ideas in Book 2 will not fit with what a reader currently knows. I appreciate my friend's honesty; we discuss his difficulties ... but readers who begin to struggle should consider a non-stop read. They can then re-read the book having a more complete knowledge of God's created reality which is described there. Again, this took 20+ years to process and organize.

Introduction

The human Problem of Evil is solved! God revealed the solution - literally!

Yet everyone has wondered how a good God and bad evil could co-exist, or how the Good and Powerful God could allow evil upon the earth.

Two reasons we still wonder are: 1) the Good God and 'bad' evil should not mix, and 2) Since 'God is in control,' He should not allow any evil to hit the earth. Those are good reasons to wonder ... but neither reason is true. The first assumes a wrong definition of evil, and a literal read of Genesis 1 corrects the second.

Three reasons we stop wondering are: 1) we rightly say that Christians have had the best explanation of evil, even though it has never been complete, or 2) we may say that "only God understands" and so we cannot understand, or 3) we may say that it is impossible: God and evil cannot exist together.

To live in this confusing world, Christians often embrace #2: not knowing. Unbelievers embrace #3; they reject a Good and Powerful God that has anything to do with this earth. From atheist to agnostic, with varying levels of focus or intensity, unbelievers say that no God is needed or desirable in our world.

Most Christians believe the unBiblical idea that 'God is in control' (Part 2); that makes any solution to the problem of evil impossible. The idea that the Almighty Creator of all must have direct control over all the earth is an upside-down view of reality, and it is not Biblical.

There are actually two problems of evil:

1. The macro-problem: How can God co-exist with evil?
2. The micro-problem: Why did 'that' particular evil event happen?

This book describes God's revealed answer to the macro-problem. (The micro-problem(s), those 'bad' events which trouble our lives, are usually personal. Part 3 gives God's trusting people Biblical information needed to help them deal with the micro-problems, the particular evils that could happen and their effects.)

God defines evil and describes the reality in which He has co-existed with evil since He spoke to Adam in Genesis 2:17. To wonder: "Why does God let evil happen?" shows a serious misunderstanding of reality. The truth: God cannot stop 'bad' evil from happening. An honest question, "What will help me live with less experience and influence of evil?", is answered in Part 3 of this book.

Part 1 requires Isaiah 45:7 and Genesis 1-3 to be understood as literally and historically true. Foundational facts – Bible facts – declare the origin of evil, define evil, and explain its impact. This definition does not need to categorize, describe, or explain those ‘undesirable’ situations, which are all **Post-Fall**.

The Bible’s definition and description of evil

- ♦ fit the real world that God created before Adam’s sin,
- ♦ ring true inside, and
- ♦ are accessible to average thinkers.

Part 2 of this book (Chapters 3 – 10) describes and expounds a reality that God speaks in Genesis 1, a reality that resolves the ‘unresolvable’ theological issue of God’s Sovereignty with Human Responsibility. These two truths have been thought to be parallel ... never coming together ... understood only by God.

They are, however, ‘resolvable’ when we believe the Bible literally. God’s words in Genesis 1 ‘resolve’ them; His words are confirmed throughout the Bible, and clearly describe this part of reality. This literal view affects all of life on the earth, but it can be difficult, so the eight chapters of Part 2 describe many facets of this reality.

Part 3 of this book is largely application. Seeing God’s created reality, described in Parts 1 and 2, solves long-standing philosophical and theological problems. Part 3 then provides practical answers for life, such as when we embrace God’s Bible-revealed reality literally, we are able to live victoriously in this world. We can both fix the ‘bad’ evil in our world, and be protected from it.

This book offers some brief ‘side explanations. In Chapter 1, they describe the Bible as sufficient, and why we do not need to delve into most of the technical concepts and ideas of philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, etc. To understand God’s solution to the problem of evil is not technical for those who believe what God literally said; God’s words should satisfy.

God’s revelation in the Bible must be believed entirely literally for answers to be seen. Through the centuries of the Bible being translated, printed and accessible to an ever growing portion of the planet, people and religions have embraced the parts of the Bible that are special to them. God revealed so much that is good and helpful that most are okay with skipping or re-interpreting the hard parts. Literal readings have been subjugated under accepted theology, dominant science, and even under common experience. God’s revelation in the Bible holds the answers we need, but it has never been believed entirely literally. In this book, every verse is read literally. Its first focus is Isaiah 45:7, one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to believe literally.

PART 1:
Evil: its Definition
& its Responsibilities

Chapter 1:

The Origin and Definition of Evil

Our Reality: Evil exists in our world and we wonder why.

We all experience evil, and at times choose it. Most of us hate evil, but a few embrace it and even call it good. Others believe that there is no real standard: what is called “evil” is no better and no worse than what is called “good”.

Why does evil exist? and How is it defined? and How is God involved? Answers are clear in the Bible, when it is read and received as literally true, including why a Good God apparently does nothing about evil, and does not seem to care about the tragic ways it strikes us and our world. The Bible, read literally, completely answers the problem of evil: God’s Theodicy.

The Biblical Reality: Evil exists and we know why: God created it.

God Himself says: “*I create evil*” in Isaiah 45:7. Here is the entire verse, more precisely from the Hebrew: “*Making light and creating darkness; making peace and creating evil. I Yahweh doing every one of these things.*”

Notice how God immediately emphasized that He Himself is doing these things; no one can dismiss this as the message or opinion of a human prophet.

God’s creation of evil is not figurative language. The Hebrew verb “to create” is used six times in Isaiah 45, three of which refer to events of God’s initial creation of our universe, the earth, and all life, described in Genesis 1, which has five uses of the same verb “to create”. Both God’s activity in Genesis 1 and His declarations in Isaiah 45 are literally true. If we start by believing that the good God creates evil, we can *think of evil more foundationally* ... instead of thinking of evil’s manifestations, such as ‘undesirable events’ that corrupt our world.

Believing Isaiah 45:7, we know with certainty the ‘origin of evil’: God created it. Even so, the intuition may shout: “No! How could the Good God create evil, which is not good? We must reject that as logical nonsense, even if the Bible literally says it.” Yet, not believing Isaiah 45:7 is a major reason we do not understand the evil in our world. Also, we must define evil as God created it. We ask about the responsibility for evil effects: “Why is the Good God not responsible?”

Religious people object to God’s creation of evil for various reasons, including one or more from the following list:

- ♦ Some who say they believe the Bible literally do not believe these words at all. They say that “create” really means ‘allow,’ and some even erase the text,

declaring: "God doesn't create evil." It is more palatable for them to say that God 'allows' evil ... a statement which reflects the incorrect assumption that He could prevent it, if He desired. The error in this assumption will be addressed, especially in Part 2.

- ◇ Others interpret the word "evil" to mean "calamity". They believe the Bible and prefer to say that God creates calamitous events. This interpretation honors the Bible since the Hebrew word for "evil" is widely used, and its broad meaning includes "calamity" and many similar words, as well as many synonyms for evil. My response is yes and yes. I have a 'both - and' approach to the truths of the Bible, and am confident that God creates both evil and calamity and everything else meant by this Hebrew word.

If we narrow the meaning of the Hebrew word so that it makes sense to us, or if we try to fit God's words to our understanding, we lose meaning. Since its message is clear just as written, we take a deep breath and believe what it says: Isaiah 45:7 is true, and it is good ... as we shall see.

- ◇ Some separate "evil" and "calamity," and deny that God created "evil". They say that "calamity" describes God's necessary judgments upon sin, upon sinners, and upon the evil in the world.
- ◇ Some focus on another part of creation, so God is not creating evil. This could be His creation of people in His image, which includes free choice, which must include the freedom to sin or do evil, which would then explain the truth that God created people with the potential to do evil, without creating them evil. But this idea slanders God if it makes God responsible for the evil that humans choose to do. God did create humans with the freedom to choose from options, but more is needed to define the evil that God created.
- ◇ Some say that evil describes the absence of God or of the good. Since all that God created is good, what He did not create is 'not good' or evil. This could be a person forgetting the good graces of God, or rejecting a good potential or being deprived of good (privation), etc. We ask: "Why is anything 'not good'?"
- ◇ Some refuse to accept that an entirely Good and Holy God would ever create evil or have responsibility for it, either as evil or as calamity.
- ◇ Many put the full responsibility and blame for evil's origin and continued existence upon Adam and/or upon fallen humans and/or upon Lucifer.

Responding to error is hard because parts of most objections are true to the Bible - they are only partly in error. Solving the problem of evil requires believing that all of the Bible is literally true. If someone speaks some truth, it does not mean that the other parts of the doctrine or worldview attached to

the teaching or to the speaker are true. Yet if the Bible expresses it, we receive it just as written ... including God's declaration that He is the One creating evil.

Reading the Bible Literally:

As an aside, most do not know the Bible well enough to believe it literally. Some people, and religions, latch onto one or several passages or truths and do not realize other contexts or truths that are also literally true. For example, some read Genesis 1:28 literally and oppress people and abuse the environment while dominating and subduing as the verse says. They forget or do not know that God opposes the oppressor (Psalm 10), and that His people produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5). The whole Bible is literally true, but it includes many facets of God's truth; it is one reason we listen to and learn from the studied perspectives of others. Primarily, though, we learn God's entire Biblical revelation well, and submit to all of it. It is good to hold interpretations loosely, even literal statements, because we always need to learn more.

(Book 1: Appendix 2 describes ways that I read and believe the Bible completely literally. These ways are summarized on www.literallenses.org)

It is difficult for Bible believers to settle on an explanation of Isaiah 45:7. For instance, we assume that if God created or originated the evil in our world, then He would be responsible for the it ... but that assumption is wrong. Since the Bible declares them, we believe all of these seemingly contradictory truths.

We must believe all three ...

1. God is entirely good. (Psalm 100:5 and many others.)
2. Isaiah 45:7 is true: God is the "*One creating evil*."
3. God is not responsible for any of the evil in our world. From Adam's sin in Genesis 3 to God's judgment in II Corinthians 5:10, and in many other passages, people are held responsible, not God.

We do not need to understand ... we need to believe all of these.

The second truth is most difficult. Few believe it, but understanding it is harder still ... yet it is God's declaration. Evil is impossible to explain unless we believe God, Who declares that He is the "*One creating evil*". How could anyone reject God's declaration, and expect to understand His truth? When we believe all three declarations above, God's truth about evil will be accessible to us.

It is Biblical and true that the entirely Good God creates evil. Even if it makes no natural sense, we can and we must believe it.

We do not abandon thinking; nor do we give up on finding a solution. Our love for logic and reason is good, and these are good tools to help us make sense of our world. But we pause, and realize that God thinks much better than we do,