

## WHY? THE FINAL CHAPTER ... PART (COVID) 19

In my recent Bonus Corona Perihelion, I promised an article this time on why a loving God would allow this pandemic. I wrote that ahead of schedule because it swept the country so quickly ... and now things are changing so rapidly and catastrophically that a worldwide pandemic is NOT even the top headline anymore. I long for the good old days when we were simply afraid of our groceries! I fear that by the time this reaches you, the pandemic and racial injustice will be totally forgotten as we brace for the huge asteroid that is plummeting toward our planet!!!

### 2) Theodicy?

I recently read 4 books on theodicy. I am a seminary grad with a master's degree and prior to this, I had not even heard the word! Theodicy is explaining how an all-powerful God of love could allow evil, pain, and suffering in this world. A quick rhetorical question for those who have or will have children: "Why did you decide to bring life into this world knowing your child would experience evil, pain, and suffering?" Of course, this does not answer the question raised with theodicy but it might give us some insight into our existence. At some point, you and God both decided that life with pain and evil is going to be better than no life at all.

As for theodicy, if a parent saw his young child drowning after slipping into the deep end of a pool, he could say he did not cause this travesty (only allowed it) so he is not culpable (guilty). Yet if he had the power and love to save the child, shouldn't he choose to do so? Doesn't God have this same kind of love and power to save us?

Most of my theodicy response is in my previous article, "WHY?" located on the [www.Larrybubb.com](http://www.Larrybubb.com) website (hit the *Articles* link and then the *Archives* link). It's been my most requested article, having even been reprinted in other publications. In today's brief article, let me just add one dimension I did not cover in the previous article.

### 3) Who is on first?

When you read the first 2 chapters of the book of JOB, who is on trial? Is it Job, the Devil, or God? Traditionally, I assumed it was a test or trial of Job to see if he would remain faithful even if all those bad things happened. BUT ... Satan is accusing God of showing favoritism and protecting Job to ensure he will follow God. There are other Biblical references to a Heavenly trial. God is actually on trial as Satan accuses Him of protecting Job (and indirectly the rest of us for following God). If God does swoop in and keep bad things from happening to Job (and us) it defeats the purpose of God to show that Job is faithful to serve and follow Him even when things are not going his way.

### 4) Rules of Engagement

The new principal I discovered from my recent reading (*"Theodicy of Love"* by John Peckham) is the concept of the "rules of engagement." In the opening passage in Job, there are certain conditions or rules the Devil must adhere to, and that God chooses to adhere

to, as well, to prove His innocence in this Heavenly trial. If God does stop the evil the Devil is causing, it proves the Devil's case that God is protecting Job and that is why he follows God. We do not know all those rules, but there are many times where God has chosen NOT to intervene or overcome evil and suffering. He is still able to do miracles and we should continue to pray for God to intervene, but much of the time God will not, as we see in Job.

I assure you that God is *not* causing this pandemic to teach us a lesson or because we have been "ungodly" (see Luke 13:1-5), but rather as Jesus explains in the parable of the wheat and the tares ... "an *enemy* has done this" (Matthew 13:28-29). Unfortunately, we cannot forcibly take out this evil (tares), as the disciples wanted to, because then damage can also be done to the wheat. Using violence to stop violence only perpetuates violence. It's like trying to stop a fire by throwing gasoline on it! A wise sage once said that whoever lives by the sword (weapons) will die by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Jesus does not go into great detail or explanation but He does inform us that there is an "enemy" wreaking havoc on our planet.

Sometimes, as *C.S. Lewis* states, pain is God's megaphone to get our attention. I hope and pray that during this pandemic many are seeing their frailty - that we are not as strong and self-sufficient as we thought we were. We need to call on God and keep our eyes on Jesus in the midst of the storms when we are tossed to and fro and our previously stable world is rocked. Jesus did promise we would have troubles and sorrows in this world but also that He had overcome the world (John 16:33). God does allow Satan to inflict pain and suffering and because of the rules of engagement, often does not step in to prevent them. But as the *Master Chess Player*, He is more than able to bring good out of these evil situations! May I remind you of the greatest evil perpetrated in history (Jesus on the cross) and how that turned out?