

| Creation and The Problem of Evil | | ✓ |
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| The Creator | All Christians agree that God caused the universe to exist. | |
| Genesis 1 - The Story of Creation | The Spirit of God brings life into the world and over six days, through the power of His Word, God commands the creation of everything. Everything He creates is described as 'good', and when creation is complete it is 'very good'. Nothing in creation is bad or evil, and God has authority over creation. Humans are created as distinct from the rest of creation, in God's own image or likeness and they are given the purpose of ruling over the creation and looking after it as stewards. | |
| Genesis 2 - Adam & Eve | <p>This is a second account of the creation of humans - Adam from the dust of the earth or clay, and Eve from Adam's rib. God breathes life into Adam (breath or spirit). The 'Breath of God' is one of the names of the Holy Spirit. 'Adam' means humanity and 'Eve' means beginning.</p> <p>In this account God is given human qualities to help people understand Him e.g. He forms Adam from clay and breathes into his nostrils. Giving something which is not human, human qualities is called anthropomorphism.</p> | |
| Genesis 3 - The Fall | <p>The only rule given to Adam and Eve was not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, humans are given Free Will - they may choose to obey or disobey God. Eve was tempted by the serpent to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, and shares the fruit with Adam. Adam and Eve are punished for their disobedience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are cast out of the Garden of Eden • women must suffer the pain of childbirth • men must work to bring food from the earth | |
| HOW DO CHRISTIANS VIEW THE GENESIS CREATION STORY? | | |
| All Christians agree that God created the universe, that He acted out of love and goodness, that He cares for His creation, even in it's broken and sinful state, and that human beings are made in God's image but are sinful and lack His perfection. However ... | | |
| Literal Interpretations: Creationism | Christians who are CREATIONISTS believe that the universe was created by God in six days. By working back through events in the Bible, YOUNG EARTH CREATIONISTS believe that the universe is only approx. 5700 years old. They believe that the Bible is absolute truth. | |
| The Creation Story as a Myth | A myth is a story which is not supposed to be taken literally, but does convey important truths. i.e. God is the powerful creator. Some Christians believe in THEISTIC EVOLUTION - the process of evolution was started by God and it is how He brings about life. | |
| The Creation Story as Compatible with Science³ | Other Christians think that the 'days' in Genesis 1 <u>don't</u> need to be taken literally. They say that God's time is not the same as our time. Each 'day' could represent a much longer period of time, maybe even billions of years. This interpretation makes the Creation Story more compatible with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific evidence about the age of the earth • Scientific theories about the development of life on earth i.e. Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution | |
| Evil | The word evil is used to describe everything that is opposite of good. Some thinkers have said that evil is good gone wrong or a complete lack of goodness. In the Bible, evil is personified in the form of the devil or Satan. | |
| Original Sin | <p>The first sin or 'original sin', committed by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, broke the perfect relationship between humans and God.</p> <p>'...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.' (Romans)</p> <p>The suffering caused by death is therefore a direct result of original sin, and when humans continue to disobey God their sin is seen as causing more suffering in the world.</p> | |

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| Satan / The Devil | Satan was expelled from heaven by God when he sinned. (Isaiah 14:12) He acts to tempt people and lead them to disobey God, leading to evil and suffering in the world. He leads a host of demons to help him in his attacks against God's people. (Ephesians 6:11) Whilst Christians believe that people can resist the devil, as Jesus did in the desert, he still causes suffering that may test their faith. | |
| Natural Evil | Suffering created through no direct fault of humans. This includes all natural disasters e.g. earthquakes, floods and tornadoes. | |
| Moral Evil | Suffering caused by the actions of human beings e.g. torture, murder, war, genocide (the Holocaust) | |
| Mackie's Inconsistent Triad | If God is omnipotent and doesn't stop suffering, maybe he isn't omnibenevolent. If God can't stop suffering, then maybe he isn't omnipotent. Augustine said; <i>"Either God cannot stop evil or he will not; if he cannot, then he is not all-powerful, and if he will not, then he is not all-good."</i> | |
| The Irenaean Theodicy | Irenaeus argued that God allows evil and suffering to exist. He made humans different from animals (in the <u>image of God</u>) and gave them the gift of free will. God wants people to choose him but if he forced them to choose him they would be like robots, programmed to obey God. By giving humans free will, however, God knew that some would <u>choose</u> to not choose Him! He also knew that some would <u>choose</u> to do evil in the world, but that they will learn from it and choose a better path in future. As long as they are open to learning from their actions they can get into heaven. | |
| The Augustinian Theodicy | Augustine offered an alternative explanation (theodicy) to the problem of evil. He said that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God made a perfect Creation - no evil. (Genesis) • Evil is the absence of goodness - when something good becomes corrupted and is no longer perfect. • Evil entered Creation when Adam and Eve made a bad use of their free will. (The Fall) • The Fall means that all humans inherit a sinful nature. (Original Sin) <p>God offers salvation and eternal life through the sacrifice of His son Jesus Christ, and humans remain free to accept or reject it.</p> | |

Christian Beliefs about The Problem of Evil

Christians believe that humans fell from a relationship with God when they used their free will to choose to disobey Him in the garden of Eden. When the relationship between God and humanity broke, evil was allowed into the world and disasters and evil took hold. Christians believe that this is all part of God's plan and that he sent Jesus to take the punishment humanity deserved. Now humans are again able to use their free will to choose to be brought back into relationship with God.

Some conservative Christians see suffering as a natural result of the sinful nature of humans. (i.e. Augustine)

Others see the world as a test - they must resist the temptation to do 'evil' deeds and should follow the teachings of Jesus. They believe that natural disasters provide the opportunity to demonstrate Agape - care and compassion for others.

Others believe that suffering has a purpose and is part of God's plan, which is not fully understood.