

NATURAL EVIL VS. MORAL EVIL

When talking about evil, theologians make a distinction between Natural Evil and Moral Evil.

1. Moral evil refers to the sinful actions of human beings like deceit, murder and theft.
2. Natural evil refers to natural disasters in our world like disease, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. As human beings we struggle with why God would allow natural evil to happen.

A study of the opening chapters of Genesis is helpful in thinking about this question:

1. God formed man (Hebrew: Adam) from the Ground (Hebrew: Adamah). There is an intimate connection and a pleasing relationship between the man and the ground.
2. God formed woman (Hebrew: Ishah) from the man (Hebrew: Ish). There is an intimate connection and pleasing relationship between the woman and the man. (Gen. 2:23-25) Also, the name of the woman Eve (Hebrew: Chavah) is related to the word for "living" and indicates that central to her existence is the idea of giving birth to new life (Gen. 3:20 'Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.')

When humans sinned, their hearts filled with pride, shame, and guilt.

1. Pride says: I can make it on my own. I don't need God.
2. Shame makes me want to hide from God and cover up.
3. Guilt causes us to want to avoid God. God has a problem with me. I owe Him a debt I cannot repay. This makes me want to run from Him.

The cumulative effect of these three is a huge willful separation from God. Separation from the source of life is death. But God is loving and was not content to let this separation be final. So, after sin entered the world, God added frustrations or curses to cause us to realize that we cannot make it on our own.

Representative Frustrations

The curses listed in Gen. 3 are representative of all natural evils and strike at the core of who Adam and Eve are.

1. To Adam, the ground is cursed. There will be a struggle with the ground. Thorns and thistles will be produced. And Adam is doomed to return to the ground.
2. To Eve, her relationship with her husband will now be filled with frustration, and childbearing will happen with great pain.

The purpose of these evils is that humans be overwhelmed and realize that we cannot make it on our own. When we are overwhelmed by the frustrations of life, we are driven back to God