

The Conflict

The Story of Humanity

Creation was “good,” but was given the choice whether or not to remain that way.

The first humans, and every human since, had the opportunity to live out their lives in tune with the heart of God. God is good, and his ways bring life. But each of us since the very beginning have at some point chosen to go our own way rather than God’s.¹ The first choice to go against God introduced evil into creation. Choosing something other than God’s way is called sin, and sin is evil and brings evil into God’s good world. In addition, we became aware that there are some spiritual forces that tempt us toward sin. Satan, also called the accuser and the father of lies, is our enemy in life.² He desires to make us out of tune with our Creator.

The results of sin and evil doing are death, disease, distrust, and disharmony. These evils have been experienced by all of mankind from the beginning.³ As humanity made evil choices we became increasingly out of tune with the goodness of God. We even turned away from him as God and began to worship other created things. These things could be idols, the earth, other people, ourselves, or even ideas and feelings like “pleasure.” Worship is what we give our hearts to—what we devote ourselves to. God, the source of all life and love, is the only being worthy of this devotion. To worship other things is itself an evil with terrible results. When we worship a created thing we live an “out of tune” life that can never experience the goodness we were made for.

Despite these choices by humans, God never abandoned us. God’s plan, that we live in relationship with him, continued to reveal his heart of love and desire. Living in tune with God implies a relationship. God is not an impersonal force, but instead he is the ultimate personality. The good life, which each of us was created for, involves a loving relationship between ourselves and our Creator.⁴

God set in motion a part of his plan that can be read in the Old Testament. In it we find the pursuit of God to be in relationship with a specific people though whom he

¹See Isaiah 53:6.

²See John 8:44.

³See the New Testament book Romans (chapters 1-3, 5) for an in-depth look at the effects of sin on humanity.

⁴See Ephesians 1:4-6.

chose to reveal his heart to the world. God chose one man, Abraham, to become the father of a nation that would re-introduce the world to God in a most unexpected way.⁵

God established Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel, by an act of power when he saved them from slavery in Egypt. This famous story, called the Exodus, revealed the heart of God to Israel and to the world. The God of Israel was the One and only God, who had the power to save.

The history of the people of Israel is a story many will identify with. Although Israel was unique, its roller-coaster relationship with God is typical of most humanity. God created a nation who would stand out to the world as the people who follow the One and only God.⁶ God showed them how to live in tune with his ways. They eventually agreed to live in this relationship with God, a choice that resulted in blessings. But gradually they chose to go their own way and forget God, which resulted in misery and death. At a low-point they cried to God for mercy, and God came in to redeem and restore them, only to start the cycle all over again.

At one point God gave this people a written code, which they simply referred to as "the Law."⁷ The Law revealed much of the heart of God and many rules that would make the Israelites stand out among the other nations. The Law in itself was good, but it did not aid Israel in living in tune with God. Instead, it revealed more clearly how addictive sin and evil had become in the world.⁸ Israel's story became a story of desperation. Humans could not live in tune with God by their own choices, this had become clear. They needed rescuing from the choices they had made, and power to live a new way of life, one in tune with the Spirit of God. This predicament is also the story we find ourselves a part of.

⁵Abraham's story can be found in Genesis 11-25. The story of his descendants continues to this day. However, the rest of the Old Testament specifically focuses on his descendants during the time before Jesus.

⁶See Deuteronomy 6:4-6.

⁷"The Torah" is the Jewish name for "The Law." It encompasses the first five books of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures). Specific written commandments are concentrated toward the end of Exodus, and throughout Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

⁸See Romans 7.