

DOES GOD CREATE EVIL?

This may seem a silly question, but the Bible says it is so, *"I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things."* Isaiah 45:7. This is one of many passages taken by Bible detractors in an attempt to use it against itself and thus "prove" that the Bible is a flawed document unworthy of serious consideration.

The problem, as such, occurs from our understanding of the word evil, today, as opposed to its use in earlier times. The word translated "evil" in our text can indeed mean moral evil or wickedness, but not exclusively.

In the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 854, we read,

The root can have either a passive or active connotation: "misfortune, calamity," and "wickedness" respectively. It can occur in profane contexts, "bad" "repulsive," and moral contexts, "evil" "wickedness."

W.E. Vine notes even more variety. An honest student must see that context is a major key to understanding which meaning should be attached to this word.

The text begins in v. 1 where God addresses Cyrus, directly, as his instrument. God is behind Cyrus' victories. God is over all even though Cyrus does not know him, v. 4

In v. 7 God says that he creates darkness and light. These are two opposites. The second phrase of God creating peace and evil should be viewed as opposites similarly, thus evil is the opposite of peace. Certainly, God creates a moral peace, Romans 5:1. But moral evil cannot be separate from sin and God did not create sin. The definition of "calamity" or "woe" instead of wickedness (moral evil) must then be used to maintain Bible harmony and yet be legitimately defined.

Again, look at the overall context. Cyrus, king of Persia is addressed by God and given power over his enemies. Yet it is God who is ultimately in control. The calamity and woe Cyrus' enemies suffered ultimately came from God, who held Cyrus' right hand v. 1.

This view is held by the translators of our more modern versions of the Bible. The word translated "evil" in the KJV and ASV is translated variously as "calamity" and "woe" in the newer versions. The English word evil, had a much more varied usage in earlier times than now. There is no "gotcha" in this passage to give comfort to Bible critics. As usual more study and less criticizing will yield more profitable results.