

The Bible teaches that there is only one God. The belief in a separate 'god of evil', which had become part of everyday language by New Testament times, is used by Bible authors to personify the real source of evil, which comes from within ourselves.

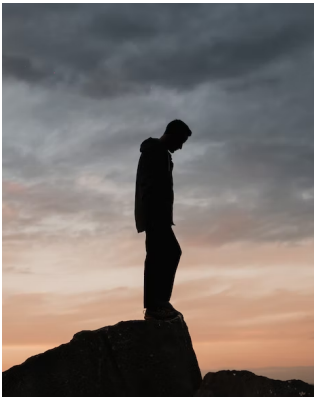
WHERE DOES EVIL COME FROM?

In the beginning God created a beautiful world and he called people to trust him and to be loving and kind like him. Unfortunately, people rejected God's wisdom and we have all given into our natural inclinations to put ourselves first. The result is the world we see around us, full of corruption and violence (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12, James 1:14-15, 4:1).

"For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."
1 John 2:16-17

The desire to sin comes from within ourselves.


"each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."
James 1:14-15



"There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him...

from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts... wickedness, deceit... pride, foolishness."
Mark 7:15-23

WHO IS THE DEVIL?



The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
Jeremiah 17:9

THE BATTLE WITHIN

The real battle that we face is to choose God's way rather than our own way.

"For I know that in me nothing good dwells... for the good that I will to do, I don't do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise..."
Romans 7:13-25

"sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."
Genesis 4:7

To capture this very real struggle, the New Testament writers use false gods of darkness to personify our inner temptations and those who hinder our walk with God (Matthew 4:1-11, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 3:8, James 4:7, Eph 2:1-5, 6:11, Rev 12:9).

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."
Ephesians 4:26-27

Hebrews describes Jesus as destroying the devil by his death. It is difficult to understand how a literal devil might be destroyed by Jesus' death, but if the devil is being used symbolically it makes more sense. Jesus did overcome his inner temptations, even to the point of death, and was then raised to life free from sin.

"Through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil"
Hebrews 2:14 (cp Hebrews 9:26, James 1:15).

CAREFUL READING

The words *satan* and *devil* themselves do not refer to one particular being. *Satan* simply means 'adversary' and *devil* means 'false accuser' or 'slanderer'. In many instances they are actually translated as such and used to refer to:

An angel (Numbers 22:22)
David (1 Samuel 29:4)
Enemy Nations (1 Kings 11:14, 23)
God (2 Samuel 24:1 cp 1 Chronicles 21:1)
Widows (1 Timothy 3:11)

GOD - THE ONLY GOD

In Jesus' day, demons and devils were used to describe some illnesses (Matthew 12:24-28, 9:32, Mark 1:32, 7:26). Jesus simply showed God's greater power to overcome and called people to follow him. We can trust in God and have no need to fear any other power (Deuteronomy 32:17).

God has made it explicitly clear that he alone is the one true God, who is in complete control:

"I am the Lord and there is no other; there is no God besides me. . . I am the Lord and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity, I the LORD do all these things."
Isaiah 45:5-7