

Living With Hope

Presentation 4: Great Controversy

Just Desserts

Last Revision: 6/12/2009



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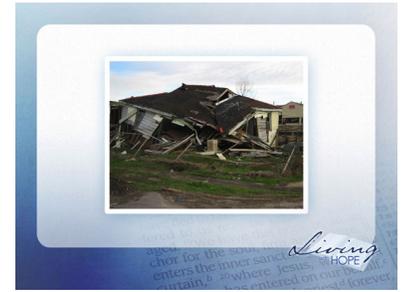
As a kid I loved watching cartoons. ► My favorite was the Road Runner. Why? Because the Road Runner always won, and Wiley Coyote always lost. You remember what happened when Wiley set up spring loaded boxing gloves intended for the Road Runner? It backfired and Wiley got punched. Do you remember that Wiley was always trying to drop an acme anvil on the poor Road Runner, but somehow, despite the laws of gravity, the anvil always landed on him instead? Or do you remember Wiley's fiendish preoccupation with TNT, but somehow it always blew up in his face?



Wouldn't it be nice in the real world if evil got its just deserts? Why is it that only in the cartoons do bad guys like Wiley Coyote have their evil plans come back to bite. In the real world it seems like evil goes unchecked. Is it just me, or do you too feel that life isn't always fair? Do you ever feel that even when you are doing the right thing, somehow you get your lights knocked out, the anvil falls on your head, and the TNT blows up in your face?

It happens on a macro scale as well which tend to eat away at our hope. Questions: Why is there human induced suffering? Why is it that drive by shooters remain at large? How can rapists continue to stalk neighborhoods? Why are politicians able to line their pockets with bribes? Why do the CEO's of corporations make off with riches even when the company is going down? Why can't it be like in the cartoons where the good guys win and the bad guys lose?

▶ Why are there natural disasters? Why are there hurricanes and tornadoes that inflict enormous loss of life and property? Why are there earthquakes, mudslides and tsunamis that bury people alive? Why do wildfires destroy forests, homes, and people?



Why is there disease? Why do people die of HIV, malaria, cancer, heart disease, influenza and other epidemics? How can we have hope in the midst of these catastrophes?

Why doesn't God stop suffering?

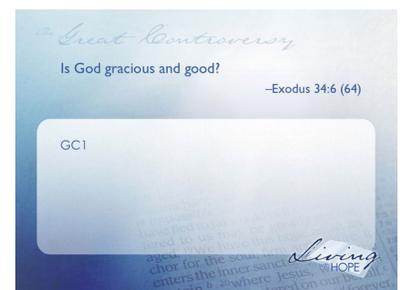
A woman stood shivering on the street in the rain. Next to her stood an insurance investigator with a clipboard. A live wire sparked in the front yard. Splintered wood hung precariously from the eaves. Wet droplets fell freely to exposed wall to wall carpet. Her living room had been split in half by a fallen oak tree.

“Well, ma’am,” the insurance man said, “I think it’s an act of God.”¹

It’s funny how God gets the blame for all the bad things that happen. Yet if you’ve ever been through one of those tragedies first hand there is a moment when you look up to heaven for some answers--Answers to such questions as “why are there natural disasters?” “If there is a God why doesn’t He stop the hurting?” And “what kind of a God gets His kicks out of hurting people?”

Where is God in all the suffering? Why doesn’t He do something about it? If God is God the almighty, how can He be good? If God is good, how can He be God the almighty?

▶ **GC1** Is God gracious and good? **Exodus 34:6 (64)**



▶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

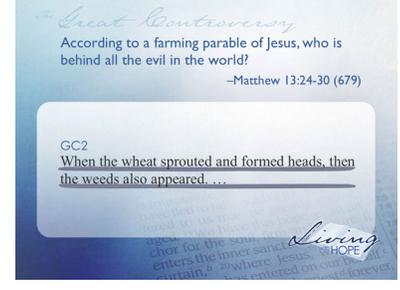
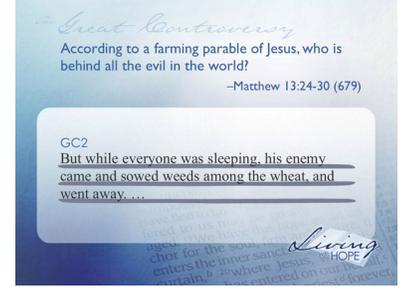
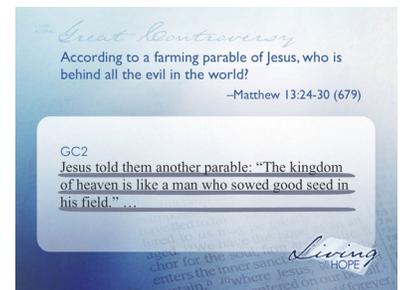
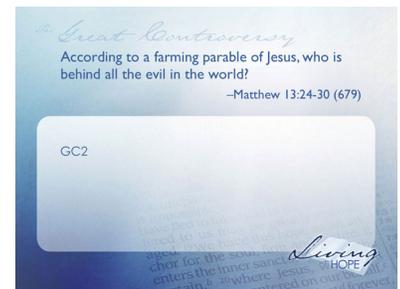
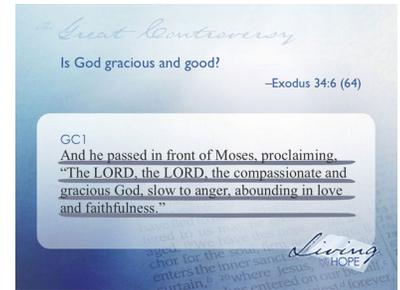
The Bible clearly teaches that God is the source of goodness, graciousness and love. Somehow there has been a mistaken identity. If God is not to blame, then where does evil come from?

▶ **GC2** According to a farming parable of Jesus, who is behind all the evil in the world? **Matthew 13:24-30 (679)**

▶ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

▶ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

▶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.



▶▶ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

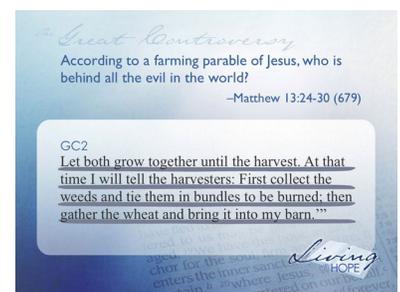
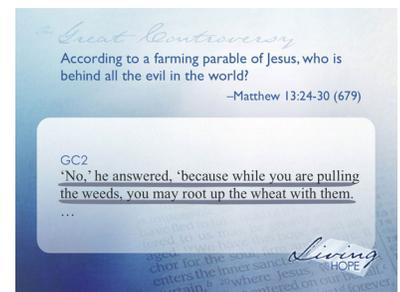
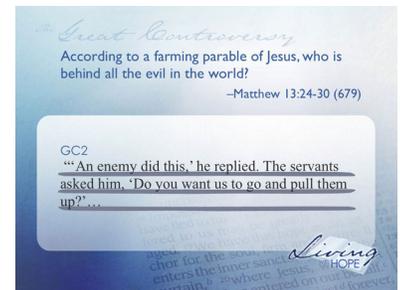
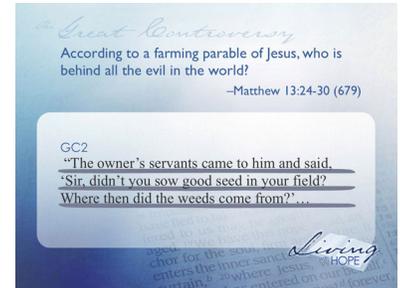
▶▶ " 'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

▶▶ " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

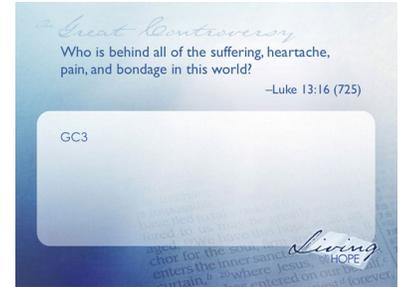
▶▶ *Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "*

The parable teaches that there is a malicious power bent on destruction. Unfortunately evil is insidious and like the weeds, it takes time to mature until everyone can see its identity. Only then can it be eradicated. More on that later.

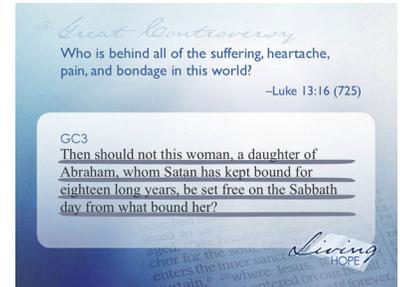
Jesus had several encounters with evil. In each one we begin to see the powerful spiritual battle going on in the cosmos.



▶▶ **GC3** Who is behind all of the suffering, heartache, pain, and bondage in this world? **Luke 13:16 (725)**

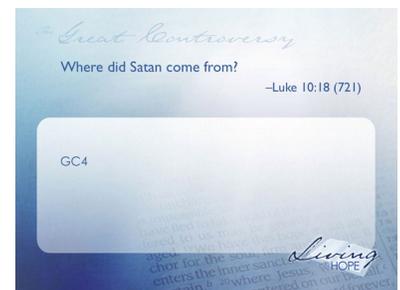


▶▶ *Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"*

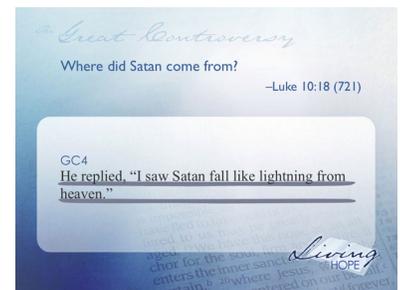


The Bible gives many names for the evil one including the name Satan, Lucifer, the dragon, and the devil.

▶▶ **GC4** Where did Satan come from? **Luke 10:18 (721)**

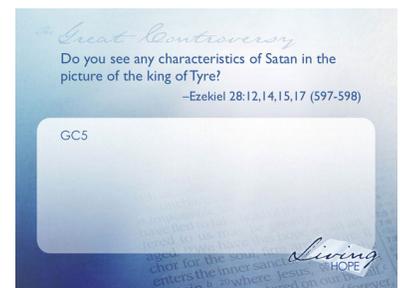


▶▶ *He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*



Its amazing that Satan had his start in heaven. Did God create the devil? Was he always a devil? We get some hints at his history by overlaying his story against the kings of Tyre and Babylon.

▶▶ **GC5** Do you see any characteristics of Satan seen in the picture of the king of Tyre? **Ezekiel 28:12,14,15,17 (597-598)**



▶▶ "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

" *You were the model of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

▶▶ *You were anointed as a guardian cherub,
for so I ordained you.*

*You were on the holy mount of God;
you walked among the fiery stones.*

▶▶ *You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found in you.*

▶▶ *Your heart became proud
on account of your beauty,
and you corrupted your wisdom
because of your splendor.
So I threw you to the earth;
I made a spectacle of you before kings.*

▶▶ **GC6.** Do you see any characteristics of Satan seen in the picture of the king of Babylon? **Isaiah 14:12-14 (485)**

Great Controversy
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GC6

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▶▶ *How you have fallen from heaven,
O morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth,
you who once laid low the nations!*

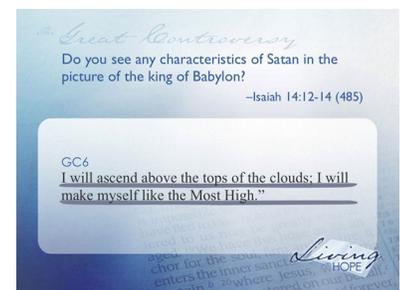
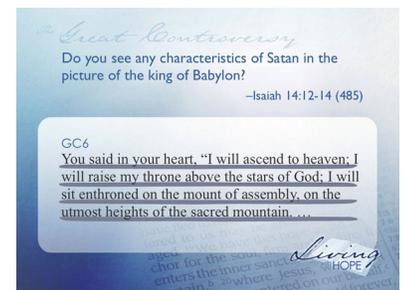
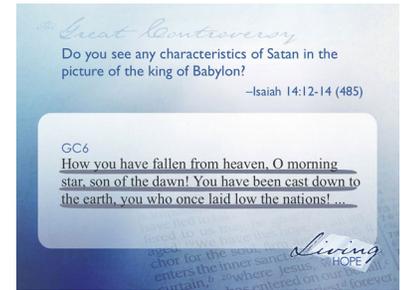
▶▶ *You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.*

▶▶ *I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High."*

The devil was not always a devil. He was a beautiful, talented, creative angel. Yet through pride he thought that he was far too important to be a servant of God. He desired his own kingdom. The urge was so strong that he would do anything to be able to fulfill his narcissistic desires.

Why didn't God stop sin when it first arrived?

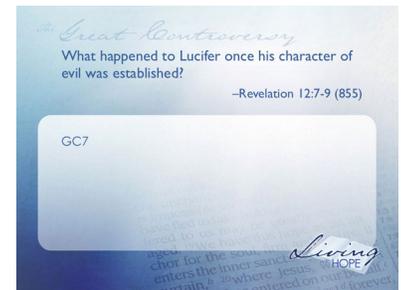
It seems so obvious. God had the power to exterminate sin. Why didn't He swat it like a fly? By the way, its amazing how sometimes beautiful, lovely, sweet, generous, kindly people like you and me are turned into cold blooded killers at the sound of a fly. Dr. Jekyll, meets Mr. Hyde. Our smiles tighten, eyebrows drop, our jaws stiffen, our muscles tense up, and our eyes squint, like a tiger ready to pounce upon its prey. We move deftly to the closet, pull out a lethal weapon and begin to stalk our victim with a singular focus. Our eyes and ears track our quarry like high tech radar. We lock onto our target



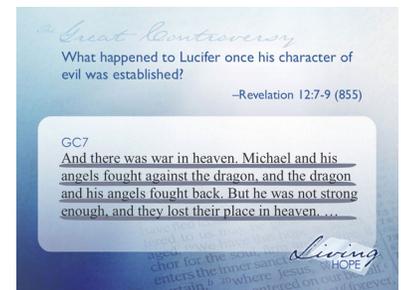
and as fast as lightning our hand swings our weapon and smashes our enemy into a black and blue pulp. Victorious we stand over our prey. We dance a war dance and celebrate! Another house fly killed!

Why didn't God kill Lucifer instantly before the disease of sin spread throughout the universe? There can be one of two answers. Either God was not strong enough to do the deed, or he was very strong--strong enough to let evil play out its course. He desired that the heavenly beings respected him not out of fear but out of love. If God would have squashed Satan like a housefly you can be sure that everyone would be respecting God thereafter not out of love but out of terror.

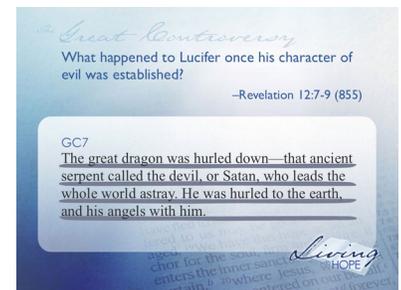
▶▶ **GC7** What happened to Lucifer once his character of evil was established? **Revelation 12:7-9 (855)**



▶▶ *And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.*



▶▶ *The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*



There are two beings in the universe that each make the same claim about the other. If each could speak they would say the exact same thing about the other:

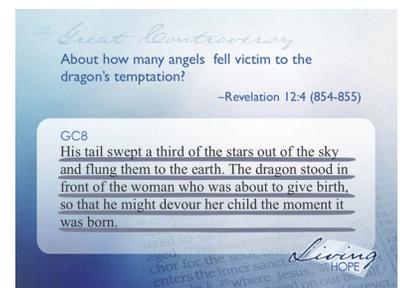
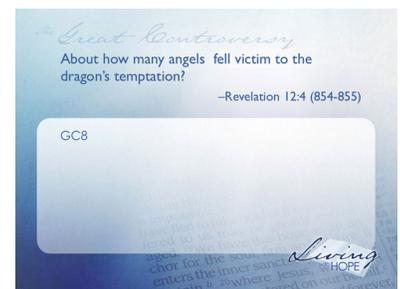
- He is against freedom.
- He is against personal expression.
- He is anti-fun.
- He is power-hungry.
- His subjects serve Him out of greed and /or fear.
- He is unforgiving.
- He is unfair.
- He will torture you if you don't agree with Him.
- He cannot be trusted.

Did you ever watch that old TV show entitled To Tell the Truth? Three individuals all claimed to be the same person. After a series of questions the audience could vote and then at the end of the show, the real person would stand up. It's to tell the truth time. One is telling the absolute truth and the other is an imposter, lying through his teeth. The audience is making their votes. Some have already voted.

▶▶ **GC8** About how many angels² fell victim to the dragon's temptation? **Revelation 12:4 (854-855)**

▶▶ *His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.*

According to Revelation 3:1 stars represent angels. We deduce that Satan was able to persuade a third of God's angels to become demons.



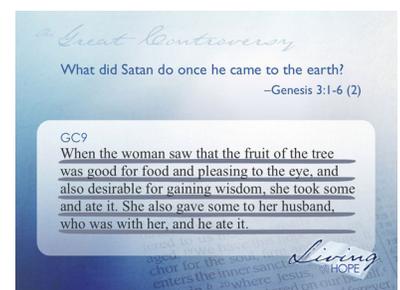
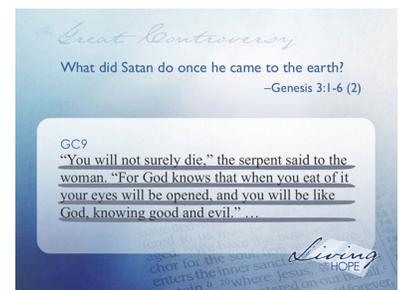
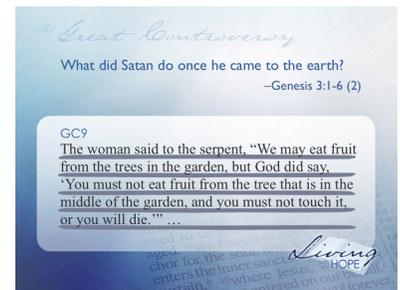
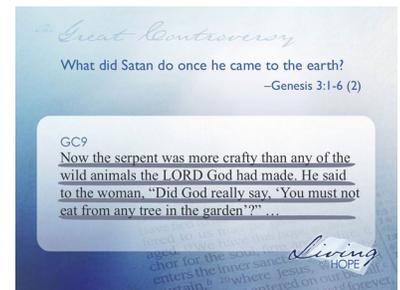
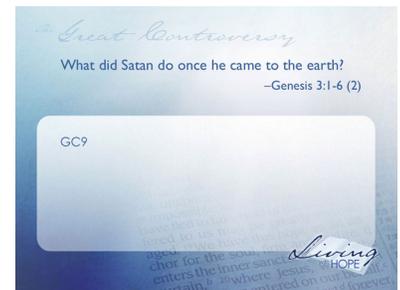
▶▶ GC9 What did Satan do once he came to the earth?
Genesis 3:1-6 (2)

▶▶ *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

▶▶ *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "*

▶▶ *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

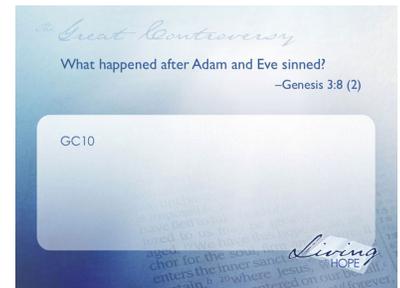
▶▶ *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining*



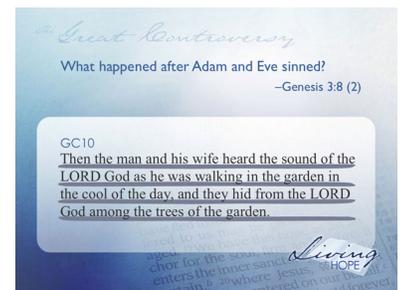
wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

So it is that two more voted for Lucifer as the truth teller and God as the liar.

▶▶ **GC10** What feelings did Adam and Eve have about God after they sinned? **Genesis 3:8 (2)**

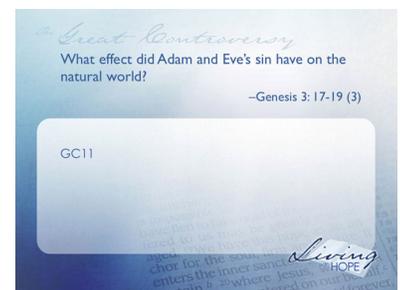


▶▶ *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

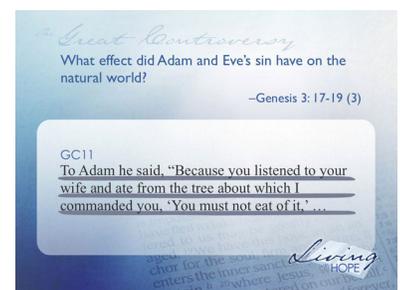


It is clear who the truth teller was and who was the imposter as the story of Genesis continues. After they sinned Adam and Eve didn't want to be around God anymore. They were afraid and ashamed that they had been deceived.

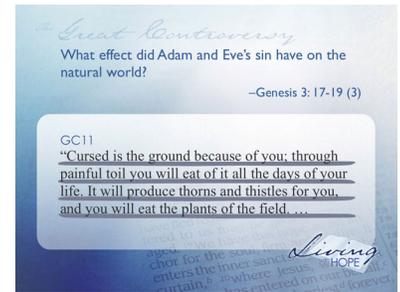
▶▶ **GC11** What effect did Adam and Eve's sin have on the natural world? **Genesis 3: 17-19 (3)**



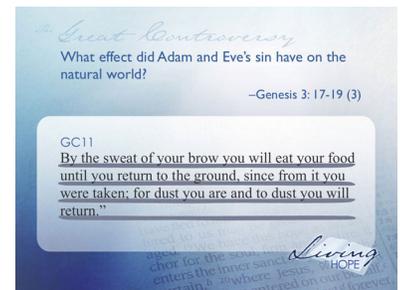
▶▶ *To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'*



▶▶ *"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.*



▶▶ *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*



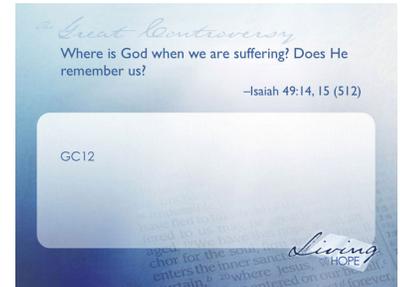
Why are there natural disasters? God is not to blame. Sin is to blame. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned the world has begun to unwind, like a top beginning to wobble, the earth and the natural balance of things in the earth have begun to wind down, to become unstable.

Evil is a mystery. Sometimes I ask people, "What if Satan and his legion died today? Do you think all suffering would stop tomorrow?" Sadly they shake their heads "no". Human evil would still exist; We would still be free to cause distrust and pain, the product of a lifetime of habits. We must be radically changed from the inside.

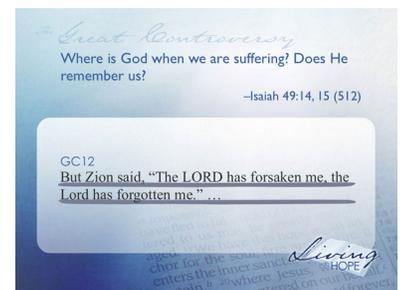
Adolf Eichmann organized anti-Jewish persecutions during World War II, in particular, the loathsome concentration camps. Captured by U.S forces in 1945, he escaped until in 1960 Israeli agents found him living in Argentina and smuggled him into Israel for trial. During the trial one of the witnesses entered the courtroom and looked for the man who had put him through so much misery. When his eyes landed on Adolf Eichmann, the witness fell to his knees, broke down and wept. When at last he stood, he told the

hushed room why he had cried. He wept, he confessed, because at that moment he knew that within himself was the same tendency to evil that was in Adolf Eichmann.³

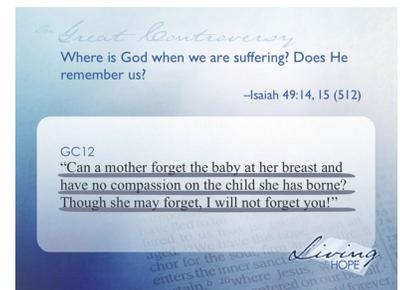
▶▶ **GC12** Where is God when we are suffering? Does He remember us? **Isaiah 49:14, 15 (512)**



▶▶ *But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."*



▶▶ *"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"*



God doesn't always get his way. God would love to stop every gun from going off, every murder from taking place, every tornado from touching down, every earthquake from ravaging villages, but he doesn't for two reasons.

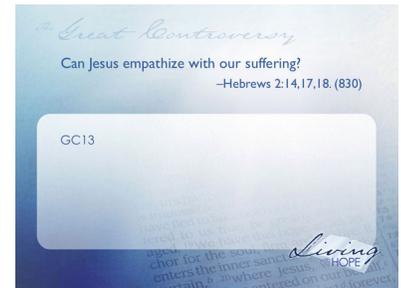
First, because the infection of sin has to run its course for the universe to be inoculated. If we are going to be safe throughout all eternity we have to hate sin with such a passion that it will never rise again. Every time I face life's injustices I'm being inoculated against sin. Sin leaves such a distasteful aftertaste in my mouth that I don't ever want to see it again. If I didn't understand how evil sin was, then evil might have a chance of rising again.

The second reason God seldom steps in to avert disaster is because as much as he values life and happiness he values freedom more. He respects our freedom to make choices—even when we make bad choices.

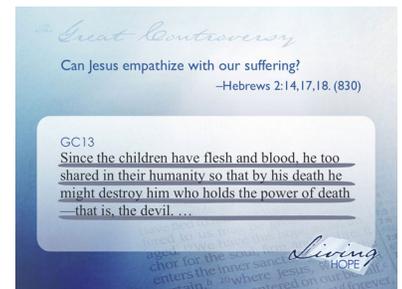
That may sound like a far away God who looks at earth like some kind of a laboratory where a disease is allowed to run its course, while He sits up in sanitized clouds looking down like the television producer in the movie The Truman Show.

That is not the case at all. God jumped into the lab—got down and dirty with the disease of sin and exposed Himself to it and eventually became a victim of it.

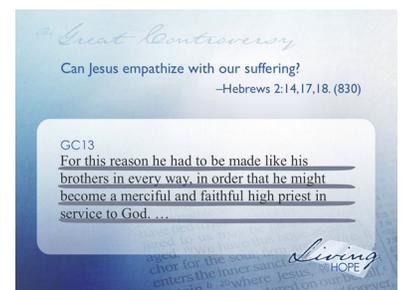
▶▶ **GC13** Can Jesus empathize with our suffering? **Hebrews 2:14,17,18. (830)**



▶▶ *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil...*



▶▶ *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God,*



▶▶ *and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

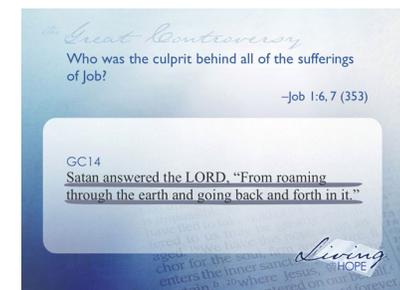
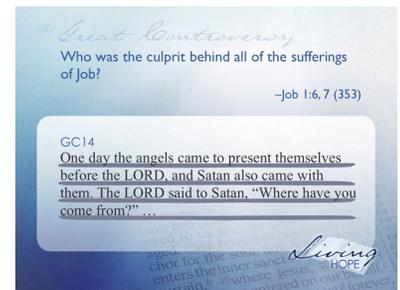
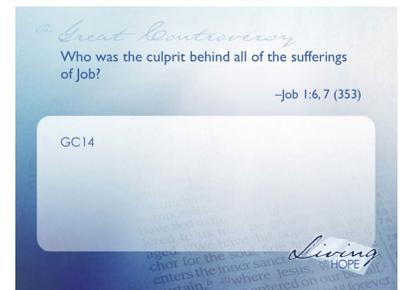
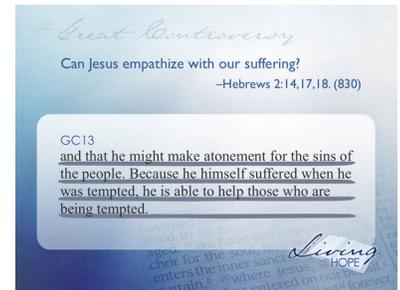
And so today, as the end of 'To Tell the Truth' comes to a conclusion we begin to see who the real truth teller is and who the imposter is. The Bible spells it out time and again.

▶▶ **GC14** Who was the culprit behind all of the sufferings of Job? **Job 1:6, 7 (353)**

▶▶ *One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"*

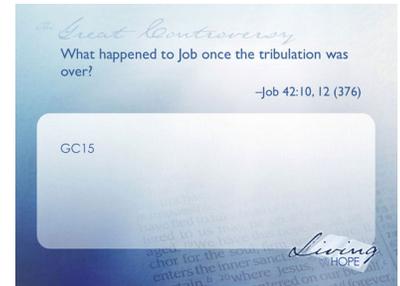
▶▶ *Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."*

The story continues to unfold as Satan heaps disaster upon disaster until Job is left with nothing; not even his health. Yet Job, like many who have suffered through injustice survived with a faith that was stretched but not broken.

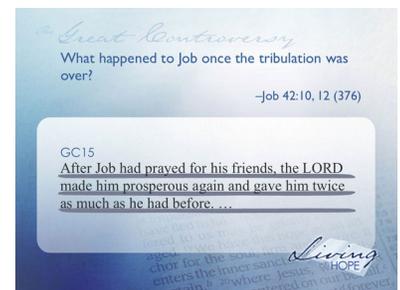


What will happen at the end of the show? When God stands up, when the truth is known, what will happen to those who have been skewered by Satan with his sword of sin?

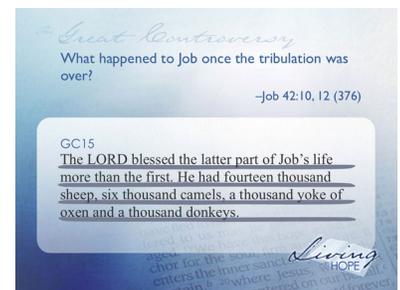
▶▶ **GC15** What happened to Job once the tribulation was over? **Job 42:10, 12 (376)**



▶▶ *After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.*

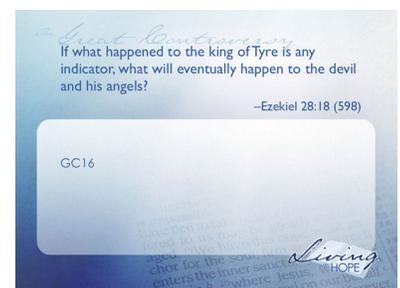


▶▶ *The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.*



At the end of the show Job's life was given back to him, better than before. And at the end of the show what happens to the imposter?

▶▶ **GC16** If what happened to the king of Tyre is any indicator, what will eventually happen to the devil and his angels? **Ezekiel 28:18 (598)**



||► *By your many sins and dishonest trade
you have desecrated your sanctuaries.*

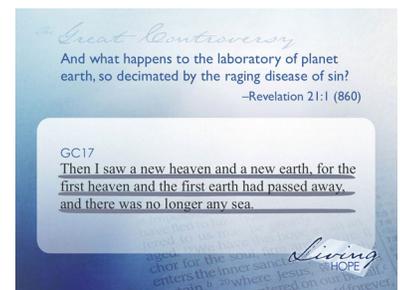
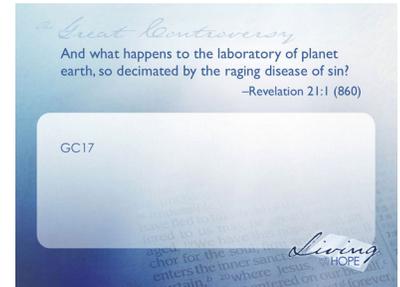
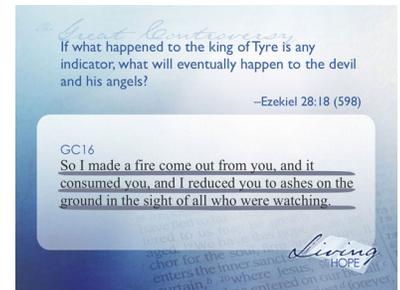
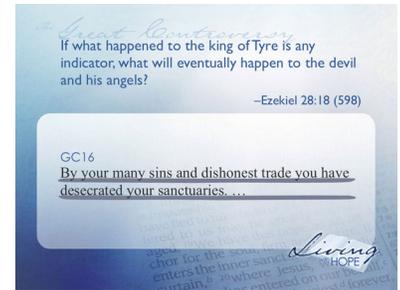
||► *So I made a fire come out from you,
and it consumed you,
and I reduced you to ashes on the ground
in the sight of all who were watching.*

||► **GC17** And what happens to the laboratory of planet earth,
so decimated by the raging disease of sin? **Revelation 21:1** (860)

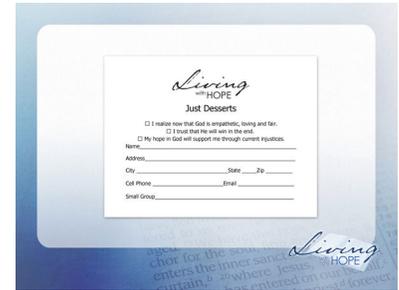
||► *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven
and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any
sea...⁴*

In the end the devil and his angels are destroyed, sin is eradicated and the earth is recreated to reflect its original pristine shape.

It may be in the short run Wiley the Coyote is winning. But we hope for a day that he will get his just deserts. It may not be today, or tomorrow, but soon, we will be free of his devilish schemes. We will live in a world free of sin and the results of sin. Our hope will be fulfilled. We will be free to serve God with no distractions. Freedom is not free. But it will be worth it.⁵



- I realize now that God is empathetic, loving and fair.
- I trust that He will win in the end.
- My hope in God will support me through current injustices.
- I would like to be baptized.



###

¹ *Act of God* is a [legal term](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_of_God) for events outside of human control, such as sudden [floods](#) or other [natural disasters](#), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_of_God

² Stars represent angels in the book of Revelation. See Revelation 3:1

³ Chris Blake, 93

⁴ This subject is explored further in the lesson entitled 'Hope Mortuary.'

⁵ Here is the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the subject of the **Great Controversy**:

"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)