

Does God Create Evil?

Isaiah 45:7 is one of the most controversial, misunderstood verses in the King James Version of the Bible. Over the past five decades, I have been questioned many times about its true meaning by those who were confused by the wording. God spoke through his prophet, saying:

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”

What? Did I read that correctly? God creates “evil”? If that translation is right, would it not be sufficient evidence to indict Yahweh, not Satan or Adam, with the crime of introducing evil into this world and perpetuating its reign? But how could that be, considering the Scripture also insists that God’s “work is perfect; for all His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deut. 32:4, MEV)?

For something or someone to be labeled “evil,” normally, that characteristic would proceed from a source that is itself “evil”—wicked, corrupt, immoral and ungodly. How could God Himself be ungodly? That’s impossible!

From time to time, New Agers, or those who embrace a far eastern worldview, have used this verse to try and prove to me that the Bible upholds the “yin-yang” view of the nature of ultimate reality—that God is both darkness and light, both evil and good. This concept is based on the idea that the universe is not a creation but an emanation of God—so both the evil and the good in this world are a manifestation of the divine nature (a doctrine called “pantheism”—meaning “All is God and God is all”). Yet I contend that this erroneous view robs God of His integrity. The correct stance is this—that instead of God “being” the universe, He exists “apart from” the universe (both the terrestrial and celestial aspects).

That way, His absolute holiness is not marred by the uncleanness that is so rampant in this world and the conflict that goes on between angels and demons in the spiritual world.

James 1:13 very plainly states that, "God cannot be tempted with evil; neither does He tempt anyone." Yet Isaiah 45:7 seems to be supportive of an opposite view. So how do we properly interpret this controversial passage and refute this flawed interpretation?

Dissecting the Details

There are four main ways to dissect the details of this issue and arrive at the core truth:

1. Find other passages in the KJV that wrongly use the word "evil."
2. Examine the context; discover what Isaiah really intended to communicate in that passage.
3. Examine other ways the original Hebrew word is translated in the KJV.
4. Compare the KJV to other translations of the same passages.

The word translated "evil" in Isaiah 45:7 is translated from the Hebrew word *ra'* or *ra'^a'h* (pronounced rah or raw-aw'-which are the male and female form of the word). This word is rendered "evil" 440 times in the KJV, sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly.

For instance, the following is, in my estimation, a grossly incorrect translation of the word:

God had just spoken the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai and after that, Moses spent 40 days on the mountain receiving more detailed revelation. When he came back to the camp, much to his shock, the children of Israel had completely backslidden. They were dancing around a golden idol, indulging in a

demonically-infested orgy of lust in the name of worship. Moses was furious, and so was God—so much so that God was minded toward wiping out the whole nation. However, Moses interceded for them, and the King James Version describes what surprisingly happened:

“The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people” (Ex. 32:14, KJV).

What? Evil? Is it “evil” for a just and righteous God to administer righteous judgments to those unrighteous persons who deserve them? Also, does God actually “repent”? Though that word simply means “a change of mind,” in our modern-day vernacular, it also implies remorse over wrongdoing. Since God does no wrong, He has nothing to be remorseful about. Of course, at times, He has changed his mind on a matter, but there are far better ways of describing that shift in opinion than the word “repent.”

Once again, a false representation of the true meaning of the passage is the direct result of the questionable and inaccurate KJV translation. The Modern English Version of Exodus 32:14 says far more precisely, “The Lord relented of the harm which He said He would do to His people.” The words “repent” and “relent” and the words “evil” and “harm” are much different in meaning and, undoubtedly, the MEV rendering conveys what that passage is saying much more effectively.

The MEV translation of the main verse in question (Isa. 45:7) also helps to clear away the fog:

“I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.”

When taken in context, the “calamity” that God intended to “create” was the collapse of the Babylonian empire through an attack from Cyrus, king of Persia, who was anointed of God to release the Jewish captives and commission them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple. That is far

different than blaming God with the existence of all the evil that abounds in this world.

For an even more complete study of this controversial Bible verse, listen to this episode of Mike Shreve's *Revealing the True Light* podcast on Charisma Podcast Network. You can also visit his comparative religion website for the complete article [here](#). While you're there, be sure to download Mike Shreve's free testimony booklet, *The Highest Adventure: Encountering God*, that tells the story of his conversion from far eastern religions and yoga in 1970 to become a follower of Jesus. {eoa}

Mike Shreve *has taught on the spiritual identity of believers for over 30 years. This powerful revelation is featured on his weekly podcast on and a weekly TV program on It's Supernatural Network—both titled Discover Your Spiritual Identity. It is also the theme of his Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. A product of the Jesus Movement Era, Mike has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic.*

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