

Acting Against God

Meaning of Resisting God

It is impossible to fathom the terrible depth one falls into when rebelling against God. Its mystery deepens when one ponders that it's inception was with the created being highest in rank and closest to God – Lucifer. The Bible says that he was *perfect* in his beauty and actions “till iniquity [*awe!*] was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:12-15, 17).

The Hebrew word used there for *iniquity* is used in several ways to describe how God can be resisted. It refers to:¹

1. Deviating from a right standard
2. Behavior contrary to God's character
3. Together – self becomes the new standard

This contrasting concept describes a created being competing with his Creator.

“So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state. There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures.”²

Created beings were given the freedom to choose. James had keen insight into this when he called it the “law of liberty.” He even went on to say that “*whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*” (James 1:25).

In heaven as well as on earth, exercising that free choice consistent with God's character and standard brought harmony, peace and happiness. When the choice is against God and towards pleasing self, a scapegoat is sought after to transfer guilt elsewhere. For Lucifer, it was Christ.

“Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says, ‘Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.’ Ezekiel 28:17. ‘Thou hast said in thine heart, ... I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will be like the Most High.’ Isaiah 14:13, 14. Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to

¹ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1980), vol. II, pp. 652-653.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.

power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.”³

Rebellion against God began with a desire. It grew into feelings of resistance. Then Lucifer began to act in a way that undermined the order of heaven.

“The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable. Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; for a time he had feared to express the workings and imaginings of his mind; yet he did not dismiss them. He did not see whither he was drifting.”⁴

Consistent with God’s character, He sought to bring understanding to Lucifer and the angels as to where rebellion would lead. Tragically, a revolt followed. *“And there was war in heaven”* (Revelation 12:7-8). It actually says that the two sides “fought.”

Lucifer, now Satan, entered the next phase of his resistance movement. He had to bring others to defy God also. This was step two in trying to pacify guilt. First blame, then recruit.

In the Garden of Eden an objective standard was made. A tree was not to be touched. Adam and Eve were educated regarding Satan’s devices and given a special law:

1. Eating of that tree would lead to death.
2. That process would start the moment of indulgence.

Eve, as with Lucifer, indulged self. It began with the spirit that she could “do it alone” and ended with a desire to be elevated like God. She believed in another law of possibilities because it pleased self.

“Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God’s word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.”⁵

God’s Response to Apostasy

From the Garden to the end of time, God has used various methods to convince mankind how serious rebellion is. The outcome is always (1) death and (2) desolation of assets. Those are God’s irrevocable responses to apostasy, now known as “sin.” But – and this is the creature’s first appeal to return to Him, He is patient and longsuffering. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (II Peter 3:9).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

God chooses three ways to educate sinful man (Romans 5:12-21) that sin has a negative outcome:

1. By God-directed punishment
2. Negative consequences man would experience
3. Verbal or written predictions of what the results would eventually lead to.

The generation that lives just prior to Jesus' return, and that is us, has a unique vantage point. The history of how God deals with sin and its consequences is fully revealed from the world's history. There are fascinating waymarks in that story. Each has a unique mission, and thus is a reference point God wants understood.

These events include (but are not limited to):

1. Adam and Eve losing paradise
2. Loss of human life with Cain's murder
3. Destruction of apostates (death) and desolation of the earth at the flood by an act of God (representing the finality of resistance)
4. Israel's repetitive experiences of bondage, loss and pain through apostasy. Their captivity in Babylon became a metaphor for apostasy in the end of time. People are captive to falsehood and tradition.
5. A suffering Savior taking the consequences of sin for man. This revealed the ultimate willingness of divinity to suffer to reclaim a rebel.
6. Dark annals of history revealing the nature of satanic control over the human heart.
7. Prophecy – one of God's great acts of mercy – that reveals in great detail how the conflict between right and wrong will conclude.
8. God's final response to sin – death of all apostates, desolation and, finally, annihilation of the earth.
9. Recreated earth with promised peace and harmony once again.

This is all amazing! Man can, if – and here it is again – he chooses, understands the meaning of being at variance with God. And that's why these articles are being written. The Bible especially describes the consequences of resistance and God's eventual response. The Christian world has lost interest in educating the "populace" relative to what sin is. This is a consequence of many factors. A few being:

1. Growing guilt among those claiming to be Christians because of sin. The bar of what is right is being repetitively dropped.
2. Salvation is being redefined from a psychological perspective to appeal to a humanistic view of love.
3. A serious misapplication of what God's love means. Love does not excuse sin. It will conditionally forgive it.
4. A dismissal of the urgency of the hour we now live in
5. A trend towards a humanistic worship that pleases more than it convicts.
6. A refusal to accept a progressive understanding of prophecy and the Scriptures.

Sin is more than a mistake. Sin pollutes the sinner and offends God. Its root is rebellion against Him (Romans 7:7-25). Its meaning has not changed since Lucifer's first claim to honor self. It will remain an offense to God to the moment the earth is destroyed by fire. God hates sin, and anyone who wants a loving friendship with Him will too (Proverbs 8:13).

Hebrew Reminders

In a fascinating Hebrew trilogy God chose to define behavior that circles outside the borders of His wishes. In the special word for “iniquity” (*awe*), that we discussed at the beginning of this article is one of His expressions. But there are three special words that make a statement as to what breaks the marriage covenant – what causes a “divorce.”

In beautiful typology, the seven sacred feasts of Israel, told a story of the plan of redemption. That plan calls for deliverance from sin and restoration to the Promised Land when we possess characters just like Jesus. That deliverance occurred once per year in symbol and, for them, in reality, on the Day of Atonement. The removal of all confessed sins from the sanctuary record was the last act in that day’s drama.

This is how God instructed the High Priest (who symbolized Jesus) to carry that out:

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send [him] away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:21).

There’s the trilogy – transgression, iniquity and sin. God is not repeating Himself simply to emphasize a point. Each expression contains a separate message about apostasy. All three were to be removed from the sanctuary, out of the camp and forever banished!

During Israel’s slide farther away from God, Isaiah lamented in graphic language how hideous their rebellion was. Then he said: *“We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them”* (Isaiah 59:11-12).

Though used individually and in couplets in numerous Old Testament passages, when the action surpassed God’s boundaries, he drew all three together. If His people would repent of these, then true deliverance would come. Indeed, in covenant language those divine cries are followed by beautiful deliverance promises: *“So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 59:19-20).

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:2).

What are those three words?

Transgression (*peshah*) – means rebellion or revolting. It is a breach of a relationship. Allegiance is destroyed. This is especially apropos to the covenant ties God had with His people (Ezekiel 2:3, Hosea 8:1). Behavior goes beyond the limits of His law, functioning independent of God (Amos 4:4). It can be summarized by rejection of God’s **authority, covenant and law**.⁶

Sin (*chatlam*) – means sinning or willful disobedience. It denotes acts that are known to be at variance with God’s will, which may produce guilt. It usually is associated with sins directed against man or God. It is considered outright “disobedience.” Its remedy could come only through God’s forgiveness and mercy. Restoration to a new life without sin was His provision.⁷

Iniquity (*avon*) – It is a collective word encompassing all perverse behavior and misdeeds. It may even refer to the consequences of those actions.⁸

Together these can be simply described as rebellion against God’s authority, His covenant and His laws – purposefully disobeying His specific commands and acting at variance with His will. They encapsulate all behavior, thought and being, which is at variance with God’s elevated ideals of excellency for man. God wants everyone to be just like Jesus. The harmony of the universe depends on it. Anyone who resists the opportunity to change, which is wide open to every person, will be lost. That is what God in a thousand ways is trying to illustrate. Apostasy is a foreign element that would be in conflict with His loyal friends.

A dramatic vision came to Daniel towards the end of the Babylonian captivity. God gave His people a specific probationary period to – and here is an amazing lesson – cease *transgression*, terminate *sins* and make reconciliation for *iniquity*. Israel’s history was one of rebellion and apostasy. They were in captivity for over a generation because of that. A final chance to reconcile the past and come into harmony with God was given. Daniel 9 represents a prophecy distinctly apropos to God’s final church.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people [all those written in the Lamb’s book of life (Daniel 12:1)] and upon thy holy city [God’s church], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24).

This is God’s response promises to bring in everlasting righteousness, bring to an end all opposition and, once again, cleanse and make holy His sanctuary – His church.

If we are to know God and be part of His family, it is of utmost importance to understand what pleases Him and what He will reject coming into His household.

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⁶ Harris, R. Laird; *Op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 741-742.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 650-651.