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## The Perennial Question

Despite all the popular propaganda to the contrary, Christians have very logical and rational reasons to believe in God. Though assured by some of the “best and brightest” that the evolutionary concepts of “natural selection” and “random mutation” can explain the complexity, wonder, and beauty of life, many people don’t buy it and logically so. And despite the latest “scientific” pronouncements that the universe arose from “nothing,” most people find the idea of an eternally existing God, as opposed to “nothing,” the more logically satisfying explanation for Creation.

And yet, even with logic and reason firmly on our side, there’s still the ever-present problem of evil. And thus the perennial question: *If God exists and is so good, so loving, and so powerful, why so much suffering?*

Hence, this quarter’s study: the book of Job. How fascinating that Job, which deals with the perennial question, was one of the first books of the Bible written. God gave us, early on, *some* answers to the most difficult of all issues.

*Some* answers, but not all. Probably no one book of the Bible could answer them all; even the Bible as a whole doesn’t. Nevertheless, Job pulls back a veil and reveals to the reader the existence of a reality beyond what our senses, even those aided by scientific devices, could show us. It takes us to a realm that, while far removed from us in one sense, is incredibly close in another. The book of Job shows us what so much of the rest of the Bible does too: the natural and supernatural are inseparably linked. Job is

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a portrayed drama of the principle and warning that Paul expressed ages later: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*).

Though mostly about one man, the book of Job is the story of us all in that we all suffer in ways that often seem to make no sense. And even the story of the four men who come to him reflects our situation too, for who among us hasn’t tried to come to grips with the sufferings of others?

Yet, we’d miss a crucial point about the book of Job if we limited it only to suffering humanity’s attempts to understand suffering humanity. The story appears in a context, that of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which is portrayed here in the most literal of terms. And that’s because it’s the most literal of battles, one that began in heaven and is being played out here in the hearts, minds, and bodies of every human being.

This quarter’s studies look at the story of Job, both close up, in the immediate drama of the narrative, and from a distance, in that we know not only how the book ends but also the bigger background in which it unfolds. As readers, then, with the knowledge not only of the book of Job but of the whole Bible, one crucial issue for us is to try and pull it all together. We try to understand as much as possible, not only why we live in a world of evil, but more important, how we are to live in such a world.

Of course, even after we study Job, even in the context of the rest of the Bible, the perennial question remains. We are assured, though, of the perennial answer: Jesus Christ, in whom “we have redemption through His blood” (*Eph. 1:7, NKJV*)—the One through whom all answers come.

*Clifford R. Goldstein is the editor of the Adult Bible Study Guide. He has been at the General Conference since 1984.*

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An English-speaking Adventist church was founded 20 years ago in Vienna, Austria, by a few members with a vision of reaching foreigners. Today this young, mission-minded group has grown to nearly 200 and is in desperate need of a new place for worship.

A young Adventist group in Ragusa, Italy, faces a similar situation and is waiting for our help.

In Paris, France, believers are hoping to establish a

Judeo-Adventist Center to reach the nearly 700,000 Jews living there.

This quarter your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will make a big impact for mission across Europe. For stories, video, and more, visit our secure website.

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