1. How are we to understand Satan’s responsibility in evil, or in making man choose evil?

- Some preliminaries: A “theology” of Satan

Satan is...

- ...real

  Matthew 12:26  “And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?”

  Matthew 4:10  Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

- ...a fallen angel

  Jude 6  And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

  Jude 9  But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

- ...subject to God

  Job 1:6 (cf also 2:1)  Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

- ...an Adversary - this is the meaning of the Hebrew word ‘Satan’

  1 Chronicles 21:1  Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

  Luke 8:12  The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

- ...cunning

  Genesis 3:1  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’?”

  2 Corinthians 11:3  ...Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning...

  2 Corinthians 11:14b  ...Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.
### ...a Liar / Deceiver

- Genesis 3:4  
  "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

- John 8:44b  
  "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

### ...a Tempter

- Matthew 4:1  
  Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

- 1 Corinthians 7:5  
  Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

### ...an Accuser - this is the meaning of the Greek word ‘Diabolos’, normally translated ‘devil’

- Zechariah 3:1  
  Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

- Revelation 12:10  
  And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

### ...an Oppressor

- Luke 13:16  
  "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?"

- Acts 10:38  
  ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

- Revelation 2:10  
  Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

### ...powerful, the head of the kingdom of darkness and death

- Hebrews 2:14  
  Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil

- Revelation 2:13  
  "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."
Questions on evil and suffering

Going Deeper, Hillview

Tom Chevis, 21st June 2020

•  ...father to those who do evil

  John 8:44a  You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.

  1 John 3:8-10  He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

•  ...able to be anywhere

  Job 1:7  The Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.”

  1 Peter 5:8  Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

•  ...able to be resisted

  Ephesians 4:27  and give no opportunity to the devil.

  Ephesians 6:11  Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

  James 4:7  Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

•  ...defeated by God

  Romans 16:20  The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

  Revelation 12:9-10  And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

  Revelation 20:10  and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
Conclusion: Satan’s role in evil = significant, but not so much that we cannot be held responsible.

- Satan is one part of ‘the world, the flesh, and the devil’. Each are significant reasons why a person may sin.
  
  - For example, Judas sinned perhaps because of the outer pressure of the world (such as fear of persecution, or of being thought well of by the Jewish religious authorities), certainly because of the inner temptations of the flesh (desire for financial gain – see Matthew 26:14-16 and Mark 14:10-11), and also certainly because of the influence of Satan (see Luke 22:3 and John 13:2 & 27).

- However, neither the world, the flesh nor the devil force a person to sin, but merely ‘tempt’ a person to sin.
  
  - James 1:14-15  
    
    but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

  - Genesis 4:6-7  
    
    Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.’

- As Christians, we always have a choice not to sin, to resist the devil’s temptations, and to choose instead to do good. After all, as those indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, we are no longer enslaved to sin and the devil.
  
  - Romans 6:12-14  
    
    Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

- Therefore, we will all be held accountable for our choices and our actions.
  
  - Romans 14:10b,12  
    
    For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ... So then, each of us will give an account of themselves to God.

- So in the meantime, when it comes to Satan, be aware of his ways – ‘Forewarned is forearmed’!
  
  - 2 Corinthians 2:11  
    
    ... in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.
2. Why are direct punishments for sin not seen today as they were in the Bible?

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- Perhaps they are...

  Acts 5:5, 10-11  
  "When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what happened. ... At that moment [Sapphira] fell down at [Peter’s] feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."

  1 Corinthians 11:29-30  
  "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

- If adversity of any kind is a direct punishment, then we cannot know, for we are not God.

  Romans 11:33  
  "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

- What we do know:
  
  o **God is in control of all things, even evil and suffering**

    Isaiah 45:6b-7 (KJV)  
    "I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."

    Amos 3:6b  
    "When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?"

  o **Such adversity is meant to (1) warn of coming judgment and so (2) lead to repentance**

    2 Chronicles 7:13-14  
    "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

    Jeremiah 5:3  
    "Lord, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than stone and refused to repent."

    "Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.""
Revelation 9:20-21  
*The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

Revelation 16:9b  
*...they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.*

**Conclusion: Repent! For this is why God is patient with us, delaying His judgment.**

Proverbs 1:23  
*Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make known to you my teachings.*

Ezekiel 18:32  
*For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!*  

Matthew 4:17  
*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

2 Peter 3:9  
*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Revelation 2:16  
*Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*
3. Where does “God’s disciplining of us” come in? How does that shed light on suffering?

Job 5:17-18  
Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.

- The Lord’s Discipline = a form of correction by God, whereby he inflicts suffering on us, in order to:
  
  (i)  
  remind us of who He is – the Lord Almighty – and who we are – “but a breath” (Psalm 39:11)
  
  (ii)  
  remind and warn us of future judgment (Leviticus 26:18, 23-24 & 27-28)
  
  1 Corinthians 11:32  
  Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

  (iii)  
  bring about repentance and thus change of behaviour
  
  Jeremiah 31:18  
  I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God.'
  
  Revelation 3:19  
  Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

**Summary:**

Deuteronomy 8:5  
Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

- The Lord’s discipline is not to be despised, but to be endured, and valued, even cherished, as a sign of our adoption as children of God, and as the way to holiness and life.

  Proverbs 3:11-12  
  My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

  Hebrews 12:5-11  
  And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,
  
  "My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."

  Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

**Summary:**

Proverbs 15:32  
Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.

Proverbs 6:23  
For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,
4. How do we answer someone who refuses to believe in a deity that could allow 5 million children worldwide to die each year before the age of 5?

Romans 12:15b  Mourn with those who mourn.

- What to do (and remember) when with a questioner who seems stubborn in their refusal to believe
  - God is Truth
  
  John 14:6  *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

  - Therefore, you are standing on solid rock; they are standing on shifting sands.

  Matthew 7:26  *And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

  - Therefore, they are in grave danger and need your prayers. So pray!

  1 Samuel 12:23  *Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.*
Then gently and subversively try to chip away at their sandy foundations, so that they see the instability of their position, and how faith in Christ would in fact be better for them.

- **What they think they have over you, but don’t:**
  
  i. A greater horror of death. “How could God allow 5 million children to die every year?”
  
  ii. A better reason for doing good. “Surely being human is enough? Why do you have to be told to do good / to care for others?”
  
  iii. A clearer view of what God is really like. “Given all the suffering in the world, God must be at best weak, but more likely malicious, even evil.”

- **Subversive answers to these false assumptions:**
  
  i. “Your horror of death isn’t strong enough. It’s a horror that anyone dies. Death itself is a horror that demands explanation.”

  “But there is no question of death or life for any of us; only a question of this death or of that - of a machine gun bullet now or a cancer forty years later. What does [calamity] do to death? It certainly does not make it more frequent; 100 per cent of us die, and the percentage cannot be increased. It puts several deaths earlier; but I hardly suppose that that is what we fear. Certainly when the moment comes, it will make little difference how many years we have behind us. ... Does it decrease our chances of dying at peace with God? I cannot believe it. ... Yet [calamity] does do something to death. It forces us to remember it. The only reason why the cancer at sixty or the paralysis at seventy-five do not bother us is that we forget them. [Calamity] makes death real to us. ... All the animal life in us, all schemes of happiness that centred in this world, were always doomed to a final frustration.”

  C.S. Lewis

  ii. “Your sense of anger and injustice imply you believe human life has intrinsic worth. But where do get this from? How does your worldview support this?”

  “I was at that time living like many atheists; in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with him for creating a world.”

  C.S. Lewis

  “Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear.”

  C.S. Lewis

  iii. “The God you don’t believe in, I don’t believe in either.”

  John 4:10 *Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”*
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• Things we know which are relevant, but may not necessarily answer their question directly:

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

C.S. Lewis

Principle No.1 – Take them to the Bible

o The Bible is realistic about the horror and pain of evil and suffering, articulating our confusion, despair, and rage against injustice.

Psalm 119:153a  Look on my suffering and deliver me...
Jeremiah 12:1 I would speak with you about your justice: why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

Principle No.2 – Take them to Jesus

o We have a God who hates suffering

John 11:33-36 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’

o We have a God who relieves suffering

Luke 7:12-14 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out – the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

o We have a God who knows suffering

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Principle No.3 – Talk of the hope that we have

o We have a God who has defeated death

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

o We have a God who will put an end to all suffering

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.