

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Did the reading of Ezra and Nehemiah contribute anything to your picture of God? Would we be just as well off without these two small books? Do you remember any “key texts” from Ezra or Nehemiah?

Ezra, a priest and a descendant of Zadok through Phinehas, was the leader of a group of Jews (about 1,700 men not counting women and children) that returned from Exile leaving Mesopotamia in May, 457 BC and arriving at Jerusalem in August, 457 BC. (Assuming Ezra is using the Jewish calendar in Ezra 7:8) Ezra was well educated and was probably the first of the order of “scribes” or interpreters of the Law mentioned so frequently in the New Testament. When he reached Jerusalem, Ezra instituted a thoroughgoing series of reforms.

Nehemiah (the name means “Yahweh has comforted”) was the wine steward for King Artaxerxes I of Persia. One day the king noticed that he was looking sad and asked what the problem was. He sent a quick prayer to heaven and then explained about the news he had just received from Jerusalem. The King appointed him to be the Governor of Judea and gave him gifts and the necessary authority to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. He traveled quickly to Jerusalem in the year 444 BC and secretly assessed the situation. Then he put into action a plan that thwarted their enemies and in a short time the wall was rebuilt. Nehemiah instituted significant social reforms forbidding the rich to charge interest for money they lent to their poorer brothers. He remained as Governor of Judea for twelve years before returning to Susa and his work for the King. Later he returned to Jerusalem for a second term and found that the people had once again fallen into very evil practices. He worked with Ezra to enforced the separation of foreign wives from their Jewish husbands and began enforcing the strict observance of the Sabbath by closing the gates of the city and forbidding anyone from doing business on that day.

In ancient Hebrew Bibles Ezra-Nehemiah was a single book named “Ezra.” Later, when the Greek-speaking Jews translated the Bible into Greek producing the LXX (*Septuagint*), the book of “Ezra” was placed after another book that we now call 1 Esdras (Protestants now consider 1 Esdras to be apocryphal), divided into two books and named 2 Esdras (Ezra) and 3 Esdras. When the Roman Catholic scholar Jerome produced the *Latin*

Vulgate, he called these two books Ezra and Nehemiah. They remained as one book in Hebrew Bibles until 1448 AD. Ezra and Nehemiah are a continuation of the Jewish history that was started in 1 and 2 Chronicles and both books were almost certainly written by Ezra. They provided virtually our only historical account of events in Jerusalem after the exile and before the coming of Christ.

Ezra

History had not treated the People of Israel well and they were in decline. A superpower military machine, Babylon, had battered them and then, leaving their city and temple a mound of rubble, hauled them off into exile. Now, 128 years later, a few Jews back in Jerusalem had been trying to put the pieces back together decade after weary decade. But it was not going well at all. They were hanging on by their fingernails. And then Ezra arrived.

This is an extreme case of a familiar story, repeated with variations in most centuries and in most places in the world. Men and women who find their basic identity in God, as God reveals himself in Israel and Messiah, don't find an easy time of it. They never have. They never will. Their identity is under constant challenge and threat—sometimes by hostile assault, at other times by subtle and smiling seductions. Whether by assault or seduction, the People of God have come perilously close to obliteration several times. We are never out of danger. Because of Ezra, Israel made it through. God didn't leave Ezra to do this single-handedly; he gave him substantial and critical help in the rescue operation in the person of Nehemiah, whose work providentially converged with his. (Important details of the Ezra story are in the memoirs of Nehemiah, the book that follows this one.) The People-of-God identity was recovered and preserved. Ezra used Worship and Text to do it. Ezra engaged them in the worship of God, the most all-absorbing, comprehensive act in which men and women can engage. This is how our God-formed identities become most deeply embedded in us. And Ezra led them into an obedient listening to the text of Scripture. Listening and following God's revelation are the primary ways in which we keep attentively obedient to the living presence of God among us. Ezra made his mark: Worship and Text continue to be foundational for recovering and maintaining identity as the People of God. (Intro to Ezra, *The Message*)

Nehemiah

Separating life into distinct categories of “sacred” and “secular” damages, sometimes irreparably, any attempt to live a whole and satisfying life, a coherent life with meaning and purpose, a life lived to the glory of God. Nevertheless, the practice is widespread. But where did all these people come up with the habit of separating themselves and the world around them into these

two camps? It surely wasn't from the Bible. The Holy Scriptures, from beginning to end, strenuously resist such a separation.

The damage to life is most obvious when the separation is applied to daily work. It is common for us to refer to the work of pastors, priests, and missionaries as "sacred," and that of lawyers, farmers, and engineers as "secular." It is also wrong. Work, by its very nature, is holy. The biblical story is dominated by people who have jobs in gardening, shepherding, the military, politics, carpentry, tent making, homemaking, fishing, and more.

Nehemiah is one of these. He started out as a government worker in the employ of a foreign king. Then he became—and this is the work he tells us of in these memoirs—a building contractor, called in to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. His coworker Ezra was a scholar and teacher, working with the Scriptures. Nehemiah worked with stones and mortar. The stories of the two men are interwoven in a seamless fabric of vocational holiness. Neither job was more or less important or holy than the other. Nehemiah needed Ezra; Ezra needed Nehemiah. God's people needed the work of both of them. We still do. (Intro to Nehemiah, *The Message*)

2. The first conquest of Jerusalem by **Nebuchadnezzar** took place in **606/605 BC**. The return of the first group of exiles under **Zerubbabel was in 536/535 BC (70 years later)**. More than **80 years** passed until the times of **Ezra (457 BC)** and **Nehemiah (444 BC)**. Did the exiles apparently learn anything from their experiences? **Was there any significant difference between the behavior of these exiles and the behavior of their ancestors just before the exile?** If their behavior hadn't improved any as a result of the exile, why did God bother bringing them back to Jerusalem? If God knew they would reject and crucify His Son, why did He continue to work with them?

We have no record of what the Jews did about their religious practice during the time they were in captivity. Did they persist in their love of some of these heathen ceremonies? **It is quite apparent from reading Ezra 9 & 10 and Nehemiah 5 & 13, that the people who returned to Jerusalem quickly returned to the same heathen practices that had been their downfall before the exile. (Compare Hosea 4:13,14) But under the watchful eyes of Ezra and Nehemiah they made an amazing change in their practices. They gave up the heathen practices and almost immediately fell into the practice of Phariseeism as we see it in the New Testament.** There were never again idols in Jerusalem, or fertility cult religions openly practiced in the surrounding hills. **How different might things be if Jesus had come in the days of Isaiah or Jeremiah or even in the early days after the exile?** Instead, Ezra and Nehemiah used various methods to lead the people to reform their ways. **They became quite strict in how they observed the rituals of the temple and**

very legalistic in their condemnation of those who weren't following the rules as closely as they thought they should. But incredible as it may seem Jesus apparently states that these people, as wicked as they were in our eyes were more savable than the Pharisical people of His day!(Who are very much like us!) See Matthew 10:14,15; 11:23,24.

3. **Why do you think the people began almost immediately to intermarry with the surrounding nations? (Ezra 9 & 10; Nehemiah 13) Were these heathen nations even supposed to be alive at this time in history? (Exodus 23:20-33; 34:11-16,24; Leviticus 18:24; 26:6,7; Deuteronomy 4:38; 7:1-26; 9:1-6; 11:23; 12:29-31; 20:16-18; 31:3; 23:3-6; Joshua 1:1-9; 10 & 11; 23:4,5; compare Judges 2:11-23)**

Note that these nations giving so much trouble to Nehemiah were the same nations that were supposed to have been driven back or eliminated hundreds of years before his day. If Joshua and his associates had done their job as they were supposed to have done it soon after their exodus from Egypt, these nations would either have been converted by the powerful evangelistic thrust of the children of Israel or they would have been driven out by God's "hornets" or perhaps even eliminated. But they were so much like the Israelites that their customs were apparently irresistible to them.

The part that is difficult to understand is that suddenly, somehow in Ezra and Nehemiah's day, when the children of Israel (now know as the Jews and consisting primarily of descendants of Judah, Levi and Benjamin) no longer had their independence, they managed to completely change their culture and religious customs and these enemies that had troubled them for so long faded away! By the times of Jesus they were not a problem for the Jews any longer. **What happened to all these nations that we read so much about in the Old Testament?**

4. As a result of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people appeared to change their behavior and as far as we know historically, they never went back to "idolatry" and "fertility cult worship" again. (Did Jesus have to speak out against "golden calves" or images of Dagon, Molech, Baal or Asherah?) Instead they became very strict about keeping the law and eventually the priests and leaders became the Pharisees and Sadducees of the New Testament. What do you think caused this tremendous shift in thinking and behavior for the entire group? Were the Pharisees and the Sadducees much more "religious" than the peoples in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah? Were they more "righteous" in God's eyes? Were they actually more "savable?" (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 10:13-15)

See answers to #2 and #3 just above. It should be very clear that they had not become "saints" from the words that Jesus said about them:

Matthew 10:14-15: ¹⁴ "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake

the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” (NIV)

¹⁴ “Any city or home that doesn’t welcome you—shake off the dust of that place from your feet as you leave. ¹⁵ Truly, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off at Judgment Day than they.” (TLB)

Matthew 11:20-24: ²⁰ Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.” (NIV)

²⁰ Then he began to pour out his denunciations against the cities where he had done most of his miracles, because they hadn’t turned to God. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin, and woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in your streets had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon their people would have repented long ago in shame and humility. ²² Truly, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on the Judgment Day than you! ²³ And Capernaum, though highly honored, shall go down to hell! For if the marvelous miracles I did in you had been done in Sodom, it would still be here today. ²⁴ Truly, Sodom will be better off at the Judgment Day than you.” (TLB)

Luke 10:12,13: ¹² “I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ¹³ “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” (NIV)

¹² “Even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a city on the Judgment Day.

¹³ What horrors await you, you cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did for you had been done in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, their people would have sat in deep repentance long ago, clothed in sackcloth and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse.” (TLB)

Why is it that these Jews were willing to live in the “gutter” on each side of the “road” to salvation but they generally were not willing to soften their hearts and truly

turn to God? They seemed to rush to the hills and shady groves to worship the fertility “gods” and got involved in all the immorality and promiscuity that characterized those services. Later, they were ready to condemn anyone who even dared to touch a Gentile or allow one in his house or who entered a Gentile’s house. It is too bad we don’t have records of what the people were saying about this question in Malachi’s day! They certainly must have known what their recent ancestors had been doing, and suddenly they seemed to be so different.

What did the angels think when they saw this apparently sudden change? Is it possible that Satan suddenly changed his tactics? Did he decide that instead of pressing for idolatry and immorality he would push for legalism and an emphasis on law?

5. **What do you think of the demand by Ezra and Nehemiah that the Jews separate themselves from their foreign wives and the children of these wives? (Ezra 10:1-17; Nehemiah 13:1-3,23-27) Should Ezra and Nehemiah have been so hard on these strangers? (Ezra 9:12) Why didn’t they treat them as “new converts?” (Numbers 15:14-16) Weren’t the Israelites and later the Jews given the responsibility to spread the gospel to all around them? How can one “banish” someone and “convert” them at the same time?**

In New Testament times Paul told the Christian women of Corinth not to leave their “pagan” husbands because they might be able to win them. (1 Corinthians 7:12-14) Why was the message different in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah? There are some clues in the story itself. Notice Nehemiah 13:23,24. Children learn languages very readily. If these children had been around any other Hebrew or Jewish children they would have learned the language. The fact that they did not speak the Hebrew (Aramaic) language suggests that these people were getting almost no exposure to the Hebrew people or their culture, including their religion.

It is also significant to note in **Ezra 10** where the separation of the foreign wives is discussed in detail, that **considerable time was spent in considering each case.** This tells us that this was not just a wholesale dismissal of anyone who came from some other nation, but a careful evaluation of those who had really decided that they wanted to become Jews and those who did not. (See Ezra 10:16,17) **Hopefully, even those who were sent away were treated in a very humane way as suggested by the laws in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.** (See #6 below)

6. **Shouldn’t Ezra and Nehemiah have had a “camp meeting” or an evangelistic series to convert these people who had already decided to “join” the Jews? (Compare 1 Corinthians 7:12-14) After these women were sent away, what do you think happened to them? Do you think God authorized this apparently harsh treatment of**

these foreign wives and their children? Do you think Jesus would have done it? Could such harsh treatment of sinners only take place in the “old dispensation” (Acts 5:1-11; compare Revelation 14:10-11)? How do you think the individual cases of the foreign wives were actually handled (Ezra 10:16-17)?

A considerable time was spent in reviewing each case before any action was taken. If we assume that the total population of Judea was at least as large as the number who returned from Babylon under Zerubbabel 80 years earlier, then **the percentage that had been involved in this transgression was approximately 0.3 %**. It was of more than usual danger, however, because **a very disproportionate share of the priests and Levites were involved.**

We can assume that the fact that some time was taken in the investigation of each case suggests that this matter was not done casually or with little thought. (See note under #5 above)

- 7. Does their treatment of these “foreigners” suggest that in order to maintain the purity of His select group of people, God is willing to treat all others as “disposable”? (compare Jonah) Is it any surprise that the Jews later began to feel so much superior to others?**

It is quite possible that they began to feel this way, but it should be noted that similar “ethnic cleansings” are recorded in Rome where Patricians were not allowed even to marry Plebians before the year 445 B.C.! Pericles enforced a similar purging in Athens where the “purged” individuals (some five thousand) were actually sold into slavery because they could not demonstrate that they were “pure” Athenians.

Anyone who carefully reads all of the Old Testament would have a hard time thinking of the children of Israel as being especially “pampered” by God. Unfortunately, all of us tend to prefer people’s good statements about us rather than His condemnations! For this reason, they probably didn’t spend much time dwelling on all of the passages that point out their sins!

We need to note that several books in the Old Testament are written almost exclusively to other nations: Jonah, Nahum, Obadiah.

- 8. Didn’t Ezra apparently think that this harsh treatment was necessary and that God was even merciful in His “punishment”? (Ezra 9:13-15)**

Ezra and later Nehemiah recognized the evils that had arisen in the past because of such intermarriage. (See Nehemiah 13:23-27) Unfortunately, even after Ezra’s dealing with this issue in the early years of their administration, it appears that it arose again during Nehemiah’s second term as governor which occurred sometime around 430 B.C. or thereafter. **Ezra appealed to God to cleanse the city and nation from this evil, but Nehemiah took more forceful steps and pulled hair out of their heads and beards!**

(Nehemiah 13:25) This resulted in public disgrace. It apparently worked—perhaps better than even Nehemiah could have imagined! They never again, as far as we know mixed freely in this way with the surrounding nations. Some have suggested that this is the reason the Jews are still around and all of their neighbors of that time have faded into history, having intermarried and blended into other nations.

9. Do we have any other Biblical accounts that would suggest that even when God sends foreign wives away, He goes along to care for them and their children? (Genesis 21:9-21)

The obvious case that comes to mind is **Haggar and Ishmael**. Did God deal with them fairly? It sounds very bad when you just read the story as presented in Scripture, but we need to remember that Ishmael's descendants became a rich and powerful nation. Thus, although we don't have any of the details, it is fair to say that God went with them, despite their rebellion against Him, and made them into a great nation.

10. **Is it possible that the Jews were actually so weak and so feeble in their service to God, that they literally could not survive spiritually in the presence of these idolaters? (Nehemiah 13:26)**

Unfortunately, history seems to bear out this sad commentary. The idol worship and the fertility cult ceremonies were designed—probably by the Devil himself—to maximize their attractiveness to human passions and weaknesses. The Hebrews never seemed to mature sufficiently to recognize the dangers of this type of involvement.

11. **What do you think the Universe looking on thought of the events of Ezra and Nehemiah?**

This is a thought question, but it would seem that once again they were wondering what God could possibly do with these rebellious people. They must have been amazed to see what God did do about four hundred years later! Is there evidence in these two books that anyone, even Ezra or Nehemiah understood the kind of friendship relationship that God really wants with His people?

12. **What would we think today if someone, learning of some terrible thing that had happened, reacted as Ezra did? (Ezra 9:3-5) Compare Nehemiah's reaction when he learned of their sins! (Nehemiah 13:25)**

This is another example of the fact that we are dealing with a different time and a different culture. Putting on sackcloth and throwing dirt or ashes on one's head are not considered rational things to do in our day, but they were appropriate because of the meaning they had to the people of that day. (Compare Jonah 3:5-10)

13. **What do you think was the reason for the great revival that took place under Ezra and Nehemiah? (Nehemiah 8; compare 2 Chronicles 34:14-33) What do you think the Levites who were assisting Ezra were actually doing? (Nehemiah 8:4-12) Since the**

Bible so far had been written in Hebrew (except for short sections in Daniel and Esther which were in Aramaic) and the common people had stopped speaking Hebrew when they were taken to Babylon, it was necessary to translate the passages into Aramaic so the common people could understand them. Couldn't we think of this as the first "modern speech translation" of the Bible?

Notice the *The Living Bible* and the *Good News Bible* translation of several passages:

Nehemiah 8:1-3: Now, in mid-September, all the people assembled at the plaza in front of the Water Gate and requested Ezra, their religious leader, to read to them the law of God, which he had given to Moses. So Ezra the priest brought out to them the scroll of Moses' laws. He stood on a wooden stand made especially for the occasion so that everyone could see him as he read. He faced the square in front of the Water Gate and read from early morning until noon. Everyone stood up as he opened the scroll. **And all who were old enough to understand paid close attention.** (*TLB*)

8:2,3: "So Ezra brought it to the place where the people had gathered—**men, women, and children who were old enough to understand.**³ There in the square by the gate he read the Law to them from dawn until noon, and they all listened attentively." (*GNB*)

8:7-9: "As Ezra read from the scroll, Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites went among the people and explained the meaning of the passage that was being read.⁹ All the people began sobbing when they heard the commands of the law..." (*TLB*)

8:8,9: They gave an oral translation¹ of God's Law and explained² it so that the people could understand it.

⁹ When the people heard what the Law required, they were so moved that they began to cry..." (*GNB*)

Footnotes: ¹ TRANSLATION: *The Law was written in Hebrew, but in Babylonia the Jews had adopted Aramaic as the language for daily life. Because of this a translation was necessary.* ² They gave . . . explained; or They read God's Law and then translated it, explaining.

8:12: "So the people went away to eat a festive meal and to send presents; it was a time of great and joyful celebration **because they could hear and understand God's words.**" (*TLB*)

8:12: "So all the people went home and ate and drank joyfully and shared what they had with others, **because they understood what had been read to them.**" (*GNB*)

It seems clear from these passages that the critical point to be made is that the people understood the word of God clearly, maybe for the first time! God seeks to communicate with us in a language that is familiar and comfortable for us. The only obvious reason for this is so we can gain a clear understanding of what is meant and think about Him.

This is not the only time that extraordinary things were done to get people to understand in their own languages. See Acts 2:5-12.

14. **What portions of the “Law” would you have read to the people if you had been in Ezra’s place? (Exodus 23:20-33; 34:10-26; Leviticus 26:1-13; Deuteronomy 7-9; 10:12-22; 11:1-8; 12:29-31; 28-30) When the people first heard the reading of the “Law” they wept, but with encouragement from Ezra and the Levites they turned it into a great celebration, feasting and giving gifts (Nehemiah 8:9-12). Why do you think there was such a response from the people?**

It is very likely that Ezra read those portions of the writings of Moses which clearly explain what would be the result of turning away from God and getting mixed up with idolatry, etc. **The predictions are so uncannily accurate that it must have shocked them. Some who read the Bible today think that these passages must have been added to the writings of Moses later in order to be so accurate in their descriptions of what happened later. But this is just another proof that the omnipotent, omniscient Yahweh that is our God can clearly see events in the future as if they had already taken place.**

When they began to recognize that God was not going to punish them, but instead was giving them an opportunity to change their ways, it was a clear reason for celebration. This was God’s message just for them and they could not fail to recognize the appropriateness of it and the need for it.

15. **Who do you think had been keeping the copies of the “sacred scrolls” since the time that Moses began to write them approximately 1000 years prior to this time?**

Up until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the primary copies of the scrolls were apparently kept in the Temple and its storerooms. (See Chronicles 34:14-21) Apparently at that time, trusted Levites were given the copies of the scrolls that were still available and these were kept with their personal belongings during their journey to and stay in Babylon. These were brought back by the various groups that returned to Jerusalem.

We owe a great debt of appreciation to Ezra who was probably the first of the “scribes” and the one who collected together the books of the Old Testament as we know it and began copying them as a “Bible.” Prior to Ezra’s time each book or small group of books was on a separate scroll.

16. Why do you think that the “feast of tabernacles” had been ignored or improperly celebrated for all those years? (Nehemiah 8:13-18)

It is clear from elsewhere in the Bible that this was not the first time it had been celebrated since the days of Joshua. (See Ezra 3:4; 2 Chronicles 7:8-10; 1 Kings 8:65) In the days of Solomon it was celebrated for a full week. Apparently Ezra felt that this celebration was better or perhaps more in keeping with the intended meaning of the Festival of Shelters than at any time previously. **Considering all that the children of Israel had been through in recent years they may have felt that they understood the real meaning of the festival that was intended to remind them of their years as slaves or exiles.**

17. **What do you think of Nehemiah's treatment of Sabbath breakers? (Nehemiah 13:15-22; compare Numbers 15:32-36) After such experiences is it any surprise that the Pharisees were so strict about Sabbath-keeping? What about tithe-paying? (Nehemiah 13:10-13)**

Once again Nehemiah demonstrated that you can enforce "Sabbath-keeping" as an external observance, but it may not affect your relationship with God at all. Nehemiah locked the gates and threatened people and assured everybody that he would not tolerate the sins that had been so prevalent before the exile. (See Amos 8:4-6) His tactics worked to prevent open markets and business as usual in Jerusalem, but as we know from reading the New Testament, it just turned them into strict, legalistic enforcers of hundreds of "laws" regarding Sabbath observance.

18. **Ezra and Nehemiah are the last historical books in the Old Testament. Only the prophetic book of Malachi comes a short time later. What do you think God has accomplished through the first 3500 years of history? Why do you think He waited an additional 450 years before Christ came? We are told that He came at the "right time" (Galatians 4:4). What do you think God is waiting for now—two thousand years after Jesus came and died?**

Often churches seek to show their progress by counting the numbers of people that have joined their membership and the total amount of offerings collected. If that were God's goal we would probably have to say that the Old Testament period was a failure on God's part. But we must remember that God started history as we know it with a war up in heaven. He could have eliminated His opposition immediately at any moment, but He didn't. He could have enforced any kind of behavior that He wanted to. But that is not what God did. Freedom is more important to God than perhaps anything else. He refuses to act as a prison guard or policeman. He will only accept into his kingdom those who choose to agree with His way of running the universe and who do so voluntarily because they are convinced that His way is the only enduring way to run a universe.

On this earth, God could also have enforced behavior. But once again His goal is to convince at least a few of us to understand and agree with Him. In order to do that He must

also demonstrate that there are no other alternative ways to accomplish what He wants to do. He must demonstrate that none of the methods that Satan has suggested down through the years will work.

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