

Whatever happened to evil?

- I. Witchcraft, witch doctors, warding off evil spirits. (Give examples of witchcraft in primitive and/or modern societies.)
- II. Whatever happened to evil? Recently in Vienna an allegedly “primitive” twenty-year-old Muslim terrorist with a seventh century mindset easily deceived his highly educated prison psychologists, police, and other experts, convincing them that he had been deradicalized. They released him, and he soon slaughtered four people and wounded 23 more. Evil easily exploits a sentimental worldview.
- III. Sin, death, and the devil are closely connected: Rom 6:23: “The wages of sin is death.” I Cor 15:56: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” Heb 2:14: “that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil...”
 1. Whatever happened to sin? See the 1973 book by the famed psychiatrist Karl Menninger who noted the disappearance of the word “sin” in social conversation. The United States was founded in part because of people wanting freedom to worship. For nearly two hundred years mainstream Christians taught that we are sinners who need to repent. But then in the 1950’s Norman Vincent Peale, followed by Robert Schuller, and Joel Osteen and the power of positive thinking has taken over much of American Christendom. What is lost is awareness of divine judgment and sin.
 2. Whatever happened to death?
 - a. Gone is “he died.” Now we say “he passed.”
 - b. Gone are funerals. Now we have “celebrations of life,” dominated by eulogies.
 - c. Secular grief counselors proliferate the public square in times of tragedy.
 - d. Every generation disappears in the sands of time. Who knows much about their great, great grandparents? They are gone from memory, and we will be, too.
 3. Whatever happened to the devil?
 - a. The devil has become a cartoon figure with a long tail and horns. Or for a female devil like Cruella de Vil from *A Hundred and One Dalmatians*.
 - b. The devil is a comic excuse for bad behavior, as in “The devil made me do it.” Flip Wilson.
 - c. *The Devil’s Share*, by Denis de Rougemont. The devil’s tricks: 1) to convince us that he doesn’t exist (the modern mentality), 2) that he is Adolph Hitler, or out there, over there, and not here. Where is the devil really? In the seat you are sitting on.
 - d. 2 Cor 11:14-15: “For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange that **his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.**”
 4. “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing, they become capable of believing in anything.” G.K. Chesterton
 - a. Today religions and spiritualities proliferate: Astrology, new age religion, druid worship, Satanic worship, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, everything under the sun.
 5. Whatever happened to evil? For the Christian, evil is real and important.
 - a. Because of the cross, sin, death, and the devil are defeated. John 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.”
 1. Sin: Rom 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. Death: John 11:25-26: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.'"
3. Devil: Hebrew 2:14: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death **he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil**, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage."
John 12:31: "**Now is the judgment of this world**, now shall the ruler of the world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."
Luke 10:18: "And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'"
4. An eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor 4:17: "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for **an eternal weight of glory**, beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." The Hebrew word for "glory" is weight. We usually think of glory as a kind of gossamer splendor. This text anticipates the world to come as one with more substance and more life, real life, than in this world.
John 19:30: "It is finished." He alone brings in his kingdom of glory. He does it by himself, without our help, and it is finished.
5. Rejoice in his victory! Rejoice in his kingdom to come. Rev 21:2-5: "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and **God 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. And he who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, **I make all things new.**' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are **trustworthy and true.**'"