



Are Natural Disasters “Acts of God”???

Matthew 24:7 NRSV: For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places:

Late last year, on a sunny Sunday morning death came calling in many nations surrounding the Indian Ocean. There was an earthquake, thousands of feet under the sea – a quake that no one felt, but a quake whose results would be felt, whose results would shake the entire world of mankind. This unfelt earthquake caused waves – big waves, whose fury and power knew no bounds and whose ferocity destroyed all in their path, even if that path met land 4000 miles away. We know the death toll to be somewhere over 150,000. We know the damage to be incomprehensible and we know that life in the wake of these tsunamis, hangs by a thread. Where was God in all of this? Was this his wrath? Was he even paying attention? Could he have stopped the death and destruction?

Is God able to stop evil and tragedy?

There are many scriptures that show how God’s power and ability to do the seemingly impossible. In Matthew 19:26, Jesus tells us that “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”. We have numerous examples in the Old Testament to God’s unfathomable power, from causing a flood on the earth in Noah’s day, to parting the Red Sea during the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, to destroying the city of Jericho with shouts and horns. Other scriptures include:

Luke 3:8 KJV: Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Romans 11:23 KJV: And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

So if God has all power, why did he allow such a tragedy to happen? If He didn’t cause the tragedy, why didn’t He stop it?

Why didn’t God intervene?

In the scriptures, it is shown repeatedly where God gives man free moral agency to be obedient or not. In Genesis 3:1-7 we see where God did not intervene in the entrance of sin, although in Genesis 3:22-24 God did not allow the sinners to remain in the garden. God also did not intervene when the sons of God (angels) saw the daughters of men, took them for wives, and created a race of “warriors of renown” which was not a race that He sanctioned. (Gen 6:1-5) God also did not permit this race to procreate and destroyed them as part of the flood. (Gen 6:7-8) God did not intervene when the nation of Israel wanted a king. (1Sam 8:4-10) He gave them kings, guiding and supporting those who were obedient to His will. God also did not intervene in the death of His dear son Jesus. (John 19:28-30). Jesus’ death was the key part of God’s plan to redeem the fallen human race. God did intervene in the timing of Jesus’ death and protected Jesus until the appointed time. (Luke 4:27-30).

But we do see examples of God intervening on behalf of the nation of Israel. In the case of Gideon, God chose a small band of men to defeat the Midianites.

Judges 7:7 KJV And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

Other examples include intervening with the nation of Israel to bring up Moses to deliver them, and intervening with Elijah when he built an altar along with the prophets of Baal, and fire came down on God's altar to prove Baal was a false god. (1Kings 18:22-40). The examples seem to conclude that God does intervene if it is according to His plans and purposes, such that His great plan for the world of mankind is executed.

Matthew 5:18 KJV For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

How does this disaster further God's plan?

The purpose of the permission of evil, is to give humankind an unforgettable firsthand experience with sin and death. It is for the purpose of teaching humankind the disastrous results of life lived without God as its center and for teaching the consequences of disobedience to God's direction. It is for the purpose of showing humankind the sinfulness of sin so that we may never ever wish to go back to such a way of life.

We know Jesus died a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:6) and that in Abraham and his seed shall all of the families of the earth be blessed (Gen 12:3). But before these blessings can occur, the human race must endure difficult experiences in order to fully appreciate the blessings. In the future, all mankind will have a legitimate opportunity to know God (Isa 35:5-10) and they will obediently follow after God (Zech 8:20-23).

Jeremiah 31:34 KJV: And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Zephaniah 3:9 KJV: For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

Ultimately, death and sorrow will be destroyed. The world will live in peace.

Isaiah 11:9 KJV: They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

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