

GOD AND THE TSUNAMI 1/30/05 PM

God is sovereign

God is good

God has a purpose, though we may not understand at this time

God is working all things together for good.

If God is all-powerful and all loving, why didn't He stop the recent Tsunami that killed at least 200,000 people and has left at least that number still missing?

Many have tried to offer explanations.

One Muslim cleric stated that it happened the day after Christmas as a sign and punishment upon the wicked immorality of Christians.

The problem is that most who died were Muslims.

Another Muslim cleric believes that the tsunami was to punish the wicked immoral activity that takes place in the beach areas of that region.

But what of all the poor people who died who had no part in the sex trade?

Some Christian could postulate that the tsunami was directed against centers of radical Islam and Buddhism.

The hardest hit areas of Indonesia and Thailand were regions where radical revolutionary Islamic fundamentalists are trying to take over those countries.

On Sri Lanka radical Buddhists have recently destroyed 200 Christian churches.

But the majority who died in these countries were not members of the radical religious groups.

Besides, the tsunami also hit southern India, which is heavily Christian.

One Christian pastor suggested that the tsunami was the work of Satan and not God.

Yet we see in the book of Job that though Satan had a hand in Job's misery, it was God who ultimately gave Satan permission. (Job 1:21; 42:11)

Satan is real and does bring misery.

But Satan is on a leash. He goes no farther than God permits. (Job 1:12; 2:10)

No earthquakes in the Bible are attributed to Satan, but many are attributed to God.

Isaiah 31:2a Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster

Besides, God claims power over tsunamis.

Psalms 89:9 You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them.

cf **Luke 8:24**

2. **Atrocities and tragedies happen to all people, not just the worst sinners. Luke 13:1-5**

Jesus does not assume that those who suffered under Pilate, or those who were killed in the collapse of the tower did not deserve their fate.

What Jesus is saying is that tragedy and accidents happen to all people, not just the worst sinners.

Christians and non-Christian alike died in the Tsunami.

Young children as well as hardened Islamic terrorists

Poor shop keepers as well as prostitutes

What Jesus flatly denies in this passage is that bad things only happen to the worst of sinners.

Most who died in Galilee, Jerusalem, and Southeast Asia were run-of-the-mill sinners just like you and me.

3. **God uses calamities to do a number of different things in the lives of different people.**

Destructive calamities in this world mingle God's mercy and judgment.

God may be working hundreds of different purposes in the lives of different people as the result of one major calamity.

- b. **For some, God’s purpose is not to punish but to purify. Job, Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4**

Job was a godly man. His miseries were not punishment, as his friends seemed to think.

God was using the hardships to continue to sanctify and transform Him.

God uses suffering to do a number of things in our lives.

To develop character

To draw us nearer to God

To equip us to minister to others

- c. **For some, God’s purpose is punishment.**

Though we don’t know the spiritual condition of Job’s children, we know that he was concerned about them. (Job 1:5)

God may have taken their lives in judgment.

Sin unto death. cf Acts 5; 1 Corinthians 5, 11; 1 John 5

If this is true, then the same calamity that proved in the end to be God’s mercy and sanctification for Job was also God’s judgment upon his children.

God uses calamities and natural disasters to do a number of different things in the lives of different people.

They mingle judgment and mercy, both punishment and purification at the same time.

4. **Tragic disasters should lead us to repentance. Luke 13:3,5**

- a. **“Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.” vv. 3, 5**

Those who don’t know Christ should turn from their sin to the Savior.

The warning is that all people need to repent or we will suffer like fate.

We all need to turn from our sin to Christ as Savior.

Those things happened as a warning to all.

The implication is that only God's mercy has kept them alive- not their moral superiority.

We think we deserve the times of blessing and prosperity.

In times of war and disaster we tend to question God's goodness or His power.

Jesus doesn't see it that way.

Note that even deadly calamity is a merciful call from God for the living to repent.

The end-time earthquakes in the book of Revelation are meant to warn people and call them to repentance before the final judgment. cf Revelation 6:16

To call them to turn from our their rebellion against the living God.

Matthew 24:7-8 tells us that earthquakes are one of the warning signs of the last days. We need to be alert and prepared to meet Jesus Christ.

Jesus has given this world 2000 years to repent.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God's patience is great, but His judgment is sure

The day may come sooner than we think.

5. **We should respond in *compassion* for those who suffer, no matter what their faith. Romans 12:15; Luke 6:27-28**

Romans 12:15 Weep with those who weep . . .”

It does not add, “unless God cause the weeping.”

Pain is pain, no matter who causes it.

We are all sinners.

Empathy flows not from the causes of pain, but the company of pain.

We are all in it together.

Christ calls us to show mercy to those who suffer, even if they do not deserve our sympathy

Luke 6:27-28 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

6. **We should respond in *faith* though we do not understand. Habakkuk 3:17-19; Job 1:20-22; 42:1-6**

Habbakkuk

The child of God must trust the plan of God.

Job's response should be our example.

Job 1:20-22 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Job 42:1-6 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 2 "I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." 4 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes."

Next week we will look deeper at certain aspects of the problem of suffering.

- b. Is God really in control?
- c. If God is truly good, why do we live in a world full of evil?
- d. If God is so loving and powerful, why doesn't He wipe out all suffering and evil right now?
- e. If God is good, why didn't He make everyone perfect and unable to do evil and cause suffering?
- f. In a world of suffering and so-called natural disasters, what hope do we have?