

Why does God allow it...?

Earthquakes, floods, devastating tsunamis, destructive tornados...

Day by day we are faced with reports of tragic events that bring about the death, injury and homelessness of many people. Catastrophes like these give rise to questions like: "Why did God allow such a terrible event?", "Why did He allow so many innocent people to die and so many others to suffer?"

In this short text we want to motivate people to think more deeply and to see events like these in a larger context. In our opinion the natural catastrophes are not a direct punishment of God.

God is completely good

We admit that it is a difficult question, especially for those who are under hard physical and mental suffering. Nevertheless we want to explain why we believe that events like these do not question God's infinite love and might. He does not want any evil but he wants the best for all men.

Man is responsible for the way he uses God's good creation

We think that often the reason for the tragic consequences of such natural disasters is the sin of negligence, egotism, greed and pride. Mankind is not ready to use its knowledge and abilities to invest energy and money for things which are sensible for all men and not only for some who want to satisfy their egotistic wishes.

Science could be developed much quicker in order to prevent many tragedies. The aim should be to solve the real problems of mankind and give all people the chance to pursue a safe life. It is a question of attitude. Man could have done already much more if he did not only look short-sightedly to his own advantage disregarding his responsibility for others.

In order to understand these tragedies in the right way we have to understand first God's nature and his relation to the material world. We believe that God is the creator of the world, he rules over it and sustains it. The existence of the wonderful universe with the earth as a dwelling place for mankind is a reflection of God's love and intelligence.

The natural laws are designed with exactness for preparing a place for us to live. Nevertheless there exist natural phenomena which can threaten man's life. They do not take place only on our planet but can be observed in the whole cosmos.

God did not create a world in which He has to interfere continuously with miracles to lead everything as He wants. God did not put man in a miraculous world where He has to protect him from every single disaster and supply him directly with everything he needs. He endowed man with intelligence so that man can use all resources in a reasonable way and live on this world in peace. Man is a creature with mind and spirit, he is responsible to use them in a proper way. God did not create people as puppets but gives them freedom to decide by themselves how they want to use their abilities.

Man can influence disasters

Unfortunately nowadays people settle in even very dangerous areas. They ignore the natural hazards only for some material advantages in regions like California, Florida and Japan.¹ A number of metropolises are built in the most dangerous earthquake zones.

Numerous lives could be saved if people consciously avoided areas of which it is known that they are regularly struck by tsunamis, floods, wind storms and the like. There are enough places on earth

which are quite safe.

Furthermore we do have technology which could help us to make it possible to live safely even in areas which are not completely untouched by natural disasters. Modern engineering science enables us to construct earthquake resistant buildings up to high magnitudes.

For approaching tidal waves warning systems could be installed so that people can flee to a more secure place in time. World wide news agency BBC writes that "In Japan, a network of fiber-optic sensors records any seismic activity and passes that information to a powerful computer at the Meteorological Agency, which estimates the height, speed, destination and arrival time of any tsunamis. Within two minutes of the quake, the agency can sound the alarm."²

Richer countries do have such systems and could support poorer regions like around the Indian ocean. On the other hand they could also use their resources in a better way. But it is typical of the irresponsibility of men that these things are always considered only after such disasters.

For example, in the case of the tsunami from December 2004, in Yala National Park in Sri Lanka a number of tourists and employees died from the Tsunami. Nevertheless Wildlife officials reported that there have been no recorded animal deaths.³ If animals are able to sense such dangers how much more is man capable of coping with such difficulties as he is endowed with mind and spirit.

Other disasters like abortion remain hidden

The tragic consequences of the great catastrophes should also make us think of other disasters like abortion which is a daily tragedy. On average, natural catastrophes occurring across the globe cause the death of around 100,000 people each year⁴. On the other hand, approximately 43,800,000 children have to die each year through abortions worldwide; that means 120,000 per day.⁵ That is an incredibly high number. Who spares a thought for them? They cannot protest; you can hardly find anything in the newspapers or television about their terrible death.

The solution is to turn to God and to behave in a responsible way

Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, windstorms, tsunamis show us our powerlessness. Man has to accept his limits. We cannot do anything we like but we have to respect God's creation as it is. Man should use his God-given abilities and resources in a responsible way to avoid any damage for mankind.

We should not feel secure just because we live in a safer place. The life of everyone can end suddenly for instance through a car accident or heart attack. The value of human life goes far beyond the value of material property attached to it. The pictures about devastated land and dead people shake man's security in earthly things and make us conscious that only eternal life with God can guarantee security. Our life is feeble, we cannot own it or rule over it. It is a present from the Source of life which is God. We should be thankful for every day we can live.

We do not regard natural catastrophes as a direct punishment from God for just those people who live in those specific places. The damage caused by such events could be prevented if man were ready to see his responsibility towards his neighbours and use his abilities to serve the others selflessly.

Jesus says:

Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:4-5, ESV)

Jesus did not consider these people more sinful but tells all men to turn to God!

Footnotes:

1. see [Global Seismic Hazard Map](http://www.seismo.ethz.ch/static/GSHAP/), <http://www.seismo.ethz.ch/static/GSHAP/>
2. see <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/12/27/asia.warning.ap/index.html>
3. see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4136485.stm
4. see http://www.unisdr.org/files/25831_20120318disaster20002011v2.pdf
5. see http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_IAW.html

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