

Christ and Disasters

Luke 13:1-5; Romans 8:18-23

The philosophical question 'can God be good and all powerful if he doesn't stop these earthquakes' has been around for many years. How do we answer that?

God is on the throne: Atheism would have you believe that you are at the mercy of random events. The Bible has much better news for you. God not only created the universe, He upholds it and is intimately involved with it: raising up and bringing down nations and governments. (Heb 1:3; Isaiah 40:15, 22-25).

But does that mean He is in control of natural disasters? The Bible says 'yes': everything is in His control. Job's friend, Elihu, says that God is behind the forces of nature and uses them for His purposes: Job 37:9-13. When God appears to Job, He overwhelms Job with His majesty: He is the Creator. Job is not (Job 38:2-7).

One of the church's greatest problems is that we have lost sight of the sheer grandeur and power and authority of God, we have "declawed the Lion of Judah". To understand disasters biblically, we have to understand that God is in total control.

The state of Creation: When you look at these events you intuitively know that something is wrong with the world. You're right. Paul spells out the problem in Romans 8:20 'For the creation was subjected to futility'. As a result Paul says in v21 that creation is in bondage to decay, and in v22 that it is groaning together in the pains of childbirth.

God subjected the world to futility in response to mankind's sin and rebellion against Him: 'Cursed is the ground because of you.' (Gen 3:17). Natural disasters aren't the result of one nation's sin, it is the cumulative sin – from our first father – until now, and creation groans under the weight of that sin. Natural disasters speak powerfully to us of a world in rebellion to God.

God's megaphone: CS Lewis said 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.' Jesus' response to a building collapse was to remind people of their frailty and call them to repentance.

In other words, Christ's message to you and to me through the megaphone of these disasters is 'this could have been you, so repent and turn to God while you can' and accept His free gift of life while you have life.

Secondly, disasters should prompt us to pray and to give and some of us will go.

Not the last word: The gospel is not pessimistic. The gospel has as its end, not disaster, but glorious future. These disasters are birth pangs, not death pangs. Very painful, real pain. But with hope at their end.

So can we say that God is both all-powerful and all-good? Yes, He is all powerful. And yes He is good. He is more good than you and I can know. We think of good as 'happy life in this life'. God has something far more glorious in mind.