

Are These Hurricanes God's Judgment on America?

Hurricane Irma barreled through the Florida Keys and hit the city of Tampa. Just a few weeks prior, Hurricane Harvey devastated the city of Houston, Texas—then called perhaps the greatest natural disaster in our nation's history—with billions of dollars in damage and hundreds of thousands of destroyed homes and displaced people.

Some are even calling Irma a much bigger storm than Harvey, and over 6 million people have been evacuated from Florida and Georgia (a scale comparative in size to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt several thousand years ago!). Consequently, many people are wondering about what the Word of God says in correlation to these storms and natural disasters. The Bible does indeed say much about how nature reveals various aspects and expressions of God towards our world.

The heavens declare the glory of God.

Psalm 19 is one of the most powerful portions of Scripture related to how God uses nature to reveal His glory. In this psalm, nature is depicted as speaking and even preaching to human beings and all creation. With words like “the skies proclaim the work of his hands” and “day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they reveal knowledge” and “their voice goes out into all the earth; their words to the ends of the world...” the psalmist essentially is saying that every day God uses nature and natural phenomena to proclaim His existence which should then lead men to His law (19:7 and on).

The creation of the world reveals His divine attributes

The apostle Paul gets even more specific in his letter to the Roman church, (Rom. 1:19-23), in which he states that because

of nature, men are without excuse on the Day of Judgment since the creation of the universe reveals God's divine attributes and invisible qualities—hence, the natural world is an expression of His invisible essence and power. Consequently, we can extrapolate and make a case that God allows natural phenomena to also contravene in the affairs of men as a wake-up call that—in spite of all our technological advances—humankind is no match for the power and glory of God. (The events of the past few weeks should be a cause to humble all of us and show us how utter dependent upon the Creator we all truly are for life and sustenance.)

Perhaps the most glorious passage in the whole Bible in regards to God's use of nature to depict His glory is found in the book of the prophet Isaiah (40:12-31) where in the Scriptures it says things like "who has measured the waters in the palm of His hand, or with the breadth of His hand marked off the heavens, who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance." All this was said to show the stark contrast between God's power and the nations of the earth when Isaiah continues later on in this passage and says, "Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket" and "before Him all the nations are as nothing. ... He spreads the heavens out like a canopy ... and brings princes or rulers to nothing." "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: who created all these." This section of Isaiah then ends with an admonition regarding humankind's dependence upon God—who never grows tired or weary (40:28-31).

Sometimes God sends natural disasters as judgment on a nation.

Even though this is not politically correct in this morally relativistic world—the Scripture also makes it clear that God at times uses storms and natural disasters to get the attention of men and cause them to repent. The prophet Amos speaks of this when he says that sometimes, in response to human sin, God withholds rain, destroyed crops with locusts,

blight and mildew, sent plagues and even initiated wars as judgment—He uses all these disasters as a way to reveal His thoughts to mankind (Amos 4:7-13).

At times He shakes the earth (an earthquake?) so that men will turn away from their idols and fear the Lord (Is. 2:19, 20). God also released a huge storm in the sea to cause the prophet Jonah to turn back to his assignment (Jonah 1: 4). In Jeremiah 23:19 it says the “storm of the Lord will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked.” Although this was revealed by the prophetic word of the Lord in Scripture—it is difficult for us to judge why storms break out and wreak destruction—it is our duty to pray and help our neighbors who fall victim to these calamities, and not quickly attribute all natural disasters to God’s judgment as we will see with the next point.

Sometimes natural disasters and storms are demonic in nature.

We read in the account of the suffering of Job that God allowed Satan to induce natural disasters such as a storm to bring destruction on human life (Job 1:18, 19). We also see how the Lord Jesus rebuked a storm at the sea, showing that the storm was not from God and was a likely a demonic attempt to stop Jesus from going to the other side of the lake (read Mark 4:35-41).

There is always a morally good reason God allows storms and other phenomena.

As bad as storms and hurricanes are, there may be a morally just reason why God allows them to take place—for reasons that have nothing to do with Judgment. For example, when I was in China more than a decade ago, a Chinese expert in Christian missions told us that the huge tsunami that hit the tip of Indonesia actually contravened a huge terrorist’s movement as it struck its radical base and epicenter. Also, my friend in Australia recently told me that when a Category 5 storm hit

his nation more than a decade ago, it was an answer to prayer because it replenished the nation's water supply that was experiencing a drought for more than ten years! Only God knows what these storms may have prevented in regards to demonic or human plans that would have done even more harm than the storm?

Nature has been altered because of the fall and creation awaits full redemption.

Finally, the apostle Paul tells us in Romans (8:19-23) that all creation is groaning and awaiting for the fullness of the manifestation of the sons of God. This implies that when Adam fell into sin, all of creation suffered since he was called to be the vice regent under God to rule the created order; Jesus as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15: 45) came not only to redeem humanity but restore the created order (Col. 1: 20) back to its original design. However, He awaits the church to walk in its fullness for this to take place as the Body of Christ, we are called to function as the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World. As we have seen after Storm Sandy hit the New York Region in 2012—the church were the first responders (before FEMA) and served the communities at their time of greatest need. (The body of Christ has also responded in a great way recently in Houston.) I expect the body of Christ to respond the same way in Florida, not only in prayer but also in leading the way in compassionate outreach to the thousands in need.