

From a Biblical Perspective, What Should Christians Make of These Natural Disasters?

We've all witnessed in horror the drone footage of the recent tornadoes in Kentucky and five other states. At least 74 are confirmed dead and over 100 missing. It was Kentucky's deadliest tornado since 1890 and possibly ever.

So what do we make of these natural disasters from a biblical perspective? Are they from the devil, or, are the insurance companies correct in calling them "acts of God" in their contracts? We can go so far down that path with known truths from God's Word, but we will eventually run smack-dab into 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NLT): "Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely."

What we do know for certain is that God originally created the Garden of Eden perfect. I can guarantee you there were no tornadoes. There weren't even any thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18), and they didn't have to sweat to enjoy the food (v. 19). Even Satan was originally created as a perfect being (Ezek. 28:14-15). And remember, Jesus taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10b, MEV). Does anyone who is reading this think there are tornadoes in heaven?

So, as we try to sort through this perplexing subject, we must keep everything on the bedrock of the fact that God is good. Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), and He didn't *start* the storm; He *calmed* the storm (Matt. 8:26).

The Great Scramble

In football, sometimes there's "a broken play." That's when somebody doesn't do what they were supposed to do, and the quarterback scrambles; the original play is out the window. He's just trying to keep from getting sacked and get the ball down field as best as he can with a make-shift play. Well, after the fall in the Garden of Eden, guess what? We're all scrambling. It's a broken play now, thanks to Adam and Eve. Yes, Jesus came to gain back that which was lost in the fall (Luke 19:10) and is even referred to as the second (or last) Adam (1 Cor. 15:47). But He's got a broken play and imperfect players to work with now. Some players happen to be in a better position to score than others.

In like manner, it does seem like some folks' prayers "break through" and receive miraculous answers more so than the prayers of others. Jesus said, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah ... yet to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath ... to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. But none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:25-27). Why is that?

In some cases, it's pretty simple. We're all given "the measure" of faith, but some put their measure to better use than others. If we were all given the same gym equipment, some would gain more strength and endurance than others. However, the disparity in other situations—like natural disasters—can get complicated and can even go back to previous generations. But since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), there must be other factors at play.

Hurricane Katrina

After Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, causing 1,800 fatalities and \$125 billion in damage, many preachers came out of the woodwork saying that it was God's judgement on New

Orleans for all the sin. I like what one person said (I would give credit if I could remember who): "If that was God's judgment on New Orleans for her sin, He missed! The French Quarter, where most of the sin takes place, was mostly unscathed."

There are two schools of thought on "the thief" in John 10:10. Some say it's the devil, and others insist it's false teachers. I have my own opinion, but it really doesn't matter for our discussion. Jesus made it clear that the thief came to "steal, kill and destroy," and that He came to do the exact opposite: "To give life and give it more abundantly." Look at the "before" and "after" images of downtown Mayfield and ask yourself which one more resembles abundant life, and which one looks like killing, stealing, and destroying took place?

And by the way, if your son or daughter lived there, would you destroy their home like that? Of course not. Well, Jesus said, "If you then, evil (sinful by nature) as you are, know how to give good and advantageous gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven [perfect as He is] give what is good and advantageous to those who keep on asking Him" (Matthew 7:11).

And God's not in cahoots with the devil to do His dirty work with a wink and a nod. Second Corinthians 6:14-15 (NLT) asks these three questions: "How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil?"

You can read through the Old Testament—particularly in the King James—and find things like, "God *smote them*." It may sound contradictory, but those "nuances" can normally be reconciled with context, Hebrew word meanings and/or congruency with other Scripture (because Jesus said, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35b).

The Blame Game

When I was in elementary school, the girl who sat in the desk in front of me sometimes wore her hair in pigtails. The guy who sat across the aisle would reach over and yank on one of her pigtails and quickly jump back and act like he was working on his assignment. The girl would always blame me and turn around to give me that angry look. None of us has all the answers regarding natural disasters, but I think God gets blamed for a lot that He had nothing to do with. He gave the earth to mankind (Ps. 115:16), and mankind squandered it over to the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4a). If I give a homeless person a \$20 bill, and he buys drugs with it, there’s nothing I can do about it if I genuinely gave it to him with no strings attached.

Some talk about the good things that come from a disaster, so therefore, God must have sent it. It’s true that as Joseph told his brothers, “You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good” (Gen. 50:20b, NKJV). But James 1:13b (CEV) tells us, “God cannot be tempted by evil, and he doesn’t use evil to tempt others.” It appears that the Greek word for “tempted” goes beyond just being tempted to sin, but even if we leave it at that, wouldn’t there be all kinds of temptations to sin if your house got leveled?

So, how do we know when something comes from God? Well, a good place to start is James 1:17a (NLT): “Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father.”
{eoa}

Nolan Lewallen, *a retired pilot of a major airline, lives near Stephenville, Texas. Nolan’s two greatest passions are the Bible and politics. His new book, The Integration of Church & State: How We Transform “In God We Trust” From Motto to Reality, brings the two together.*

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.