

Does God Still Bring Natural Disasters to Judge Humanity?

There has been a tendency in the body of Christ for the past several decades to simplify our understanding of the nature of God and the Bible to comport with our rational understanding of good, evil and justice. Consequently, this quest to simplify everything has resulted in a definition of God's goodness that focuses on His love and ignores His justice and sovereignty.

What people fail to realize is that, God is always good—even if we do not agree with or understand His ways, actions or judgment. He is always good even when there are Scriptures that seem to assign to Him acts of cruelty and violence as an expression of His just wrath.

In light of this, I have been shocked by the biblical ignorance of many preachers as well as some of the posts on social media related to how people narrowly define the goodness and nature of God.

Unfortunately, the popular thing many preachers have done the past few decades is to confine our understanding of God to a narrow view of the four gospels to the exclusion a contextual reading of both the gospels and the Old Testament as well as the rest of the New Testament.

This simplification of the nature of God and His actions has resulted in a semi Gnostic dualism, in which we define everything we perceive as good as from God and everything bad as from the devil.

In order to do this, we have to jettison the 39 books of the first testament.

Case in point: There are many preachers who say that all

natural disasters are of the devil, and that God no longer judges the people in the world. If this is true, then the devil must be more powerful than God or that the world is not really under His sovereign control and is running amuck.

Their theological framework to justify this superficial view of judgment is the fact that, since Jesus rebuked a storm when He was in a boat, all storms must emanate from the evil one (See Mark 4).

Of course, the devil can instigate a storm, as was the case when He attempted to stop Jesus and the apostles from getting to the other side of the lake in this particular story. (No one is denying the fact that the devil can and does cause many natural disasters as well as other expressions of evil such as fear, sickness, disease and premature deaths, as we see clearly in the Gospel accounts and beyond.)

However, to limit our view of the nature of God and the devil to a few stories and a simplistic view of the Gospels ignores the fact that Jesus warned people that His Father is going to bring judgment similar to that which took place in the days of Noah. (The flood of Noah was a God-induced judgment; see Gen. 6-9, Matt. 24:37-39.) Even the apostle Peter connected the Noahic Flood to the New Testament dispensation (see 2 Pet. 3:3-7).

Not only that, but many preachers teach that the book of Job is no longer relevant post-resurrection since Jesus released the captives. However, the apostle James brought the book of Job into the New Testament as an example of the patience of Job and the merciful outcome of the Lord; hence, connecting the present nature and operation of God to that which He exhibited towards Job (see James 5:10,11).

Someone might say that a reading of the book of Job shows that the devil was behind all the attacks of Job. That is true, but even a cursory reading of Chapters 1 and 2 of Job shows that

God had to first remove His hedge of protection and grant Satan permission before he attacked Job.

Furthermore, the prophet Amos gives a litany of natural disasters that God brings upon a nation for disobedience to Him: a lack of food, a drought, harsh weather, a plague and overthrowing cities as He did Sodom and Gomorrah (see Amos 4:6-11).

The prophet Isaiah also makes it clear that God created both light and darkness, makes peace as well as brings adversity to nations (see Isa. 45:7).

To say that these verses are no longer in effect because everything changed post-ascension of Jesus is to not understand biblical interpretation.

The Bible says that God changes not (Mal. 3:6) and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). These passages have to do with the nature and ways of God.

What has changed post-ascension of Christ is the method in which God deals with the human race regarding His salvific methods of securing our redemption. For example, in the Old Testament, an animal sacrifice was necessary for God to overlook human sin (see Heb. 9:22 and the whole book of Leviticus), and a male believer had to receive the rite of circumcision in order to partake of the covenant of grace. But in the New Testament, the ceremonial law has been done away with which means we can bypass the Levitical system by faith in Jesus for salvation (see the books of Galatians and Hebrews).

However, this does not bypass the nature and ways of God as demonstrated in the Old Testament, but rather further affirms it, because the blood of Jesus was shed to satisfy His unchanging righteousness (see Rom. 3:21-28).

You see, the nature of God is based primarily on righteousness

and Justice which are the foundation of His throne (see Ps. 89:14, 97:2).

Even God's love alone—as great as it is—was in and of itself not enough to save believers. Jesus had to die first to satisfy God's righteousness, so He can reconcile us to Himself, without compromising His holiness.

What I am concerned about the most is the tendency to jettison biblical expressions of God's ways and nature as shown in the Old Testament, which in effect practically cuts off most of the Bible and leads to a dualism that arises out of the old heresy called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism probably originated by Simon Magus who tried to infiltrate the church as seen in Acts 8 and was made into a full-blown heretical expression of Christianity by Marcion of Sinope at Rome around A.D. 144.

Marcionism was a dualistic system that rejected the Hebrew Bible, because Marcion taught that the Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament. The ancient church father Tertullian refuted Gnosticism and Marcionism in a five-book treatise called *Adversus Marcionism* around A.D. 208.

This Gnostic view is eerily similar to some of the dualistic teachings that have been popularized recently, which rob the church of a robust understanding of the nature and (mysterious) sovereignty of Almighty God.

Of course, I believe that the gospel narrative of Jesus Christ was the fullest expression of God the Father (in John 14:9, He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father"), but Jesus never abrogated the writings of the Old Testament. Instead, He affirmed them when He told His followers the Law, the prophets and the Psalms all pointed to Him—thus teaching that those Scriptures corresponded to His nature and ways (see Luke 24:44).

Also, I'm not sure what all these dualistic preachers do with other portions of the New Testament, in which Jesus says He will make war against some in the church and put some people on a bed of sickness and kill others with pestilence (see Rev. 2:16, 22,23).

Paul echoed the same when, in writing to the Corinthian church, said that some of them were sick, weak and died as a result of the loving judgment of the Lord for their lack of unity so they would not end up being condemned with the world (see 1 Cor. 11:30-32).

We can also take note of how Paul warned believers in the churches of Ephesus and Thessalonians of the wrath of God for those who practiced sexual immorality (see Eph. 5:5-7; 1 Thess. 4:3-6).

I'm concerned that this extreme dualism and humanistic understanding of the goodness of God will eventually do away with the biblical belief in a literal hell, eternal judgement and the need for eternal salvation through Christ alone. (After all, they will say, a good God cannot possibly put an unbeliever in an eternal hell, can He?)

Even now, many popular preachers are flirting with a new view of the old heresy of universalism (the erroneous belief that all humanity—including unbelievers—have automatically been saved through the sacrifice of Christ) called "ultimate reconciliation," which teaches that all people will eventually be saved—even the devil and his angels.

Any overemphasis on one truth leads to an imbalance, which ultimately leads to non-biblical, heretical views.

May the Lord keep us focused on the full counsel of God and not a redacted humanistic view of the Holy Scriptures. {eoa}

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