

Why Did God Let the Las Vegas Shooting Happen?

With the recent natural disasters and horrific mass shooting in Las Vegas, many people have been asking why such horrible tragedies take place. Because of this, many have relegated simplistic answers to the trash heap. Some Christians may even question their faith. The following is an attempt to give a biblical explanation that equips us with a broader scope for explaining why such events happen to those in our spheres of influence.

The Fall of Adam and Eve

The first and foundational reason for pain, suffering and tragedy is the fall of Adam and Eve as taught in Genesis 3. We read that the sin committed by our first parents affected them as individuals and also the earth, since part of the consequences for their sin was that the ground would yield thorns and thistles, not just fruit. This implies the earth's atmosphere and the whole created order were negatively affected by their sin. This paved the way for life-altering cataclysmic events like earthquakes, storms and natural disasters.

This also explains why part of the liberty brought by the saturation of the gospel will come to the physical earth, which is presently groaning as it awaits the full manifestation of the sons of God to release it from the bondage of sin (Rom. 8:18-22). This is also why Jesus' death reconciled all things back to the Father—things that include the material world of the created order (read Col. 1:20).

God's Sovereignty Allows Evil to Take Place on the Earth

The book of Job is an incredible philosophical treatise relating how God sometimes allows Satan to afflict even

righteous people. At the end of the book God rebukes Job's friends for blaming his numerous tragedies on personal sin. In Job 38-42 God even rebukes Job for questioning His wisdom for allowing tragedy to enter into his life.

It is interesting that God never gave Job a specific reason for allowing his suffering. He basically told Job that His vast wisdom, demonstrated through creation, is enough for Job to continue to trust Him, and He left it at that.

I guess some things are too deep for human beings to wrap their brains around until we reach the other side of heaven when all truth will eventually be revealed to us (Deut. 29:29). Even philosophers have said that atheists do not have a case against the existence of God when tragedy strikes indiscriminately, since a concept of God can include Him allowing evil to take place for morally just reasons that we humans cannot yet fathom (see Isa. 55:8-9).

Finally, even Jesus said God sends rain on both the just and the unjust. He also warns believers to protect themselves from the coming storms of life by basing their lives on obedience to His Word (Matt. 5:45, 7:24-27).

Watching, Prayer and the Prophetic Can Warn Believers of Evil

Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God would deliver them from evil (Matt. 6:13). Joseph was given prophetic insight to store up food in Egypt to protect against widespread hunger; this saved the lives of his family when the seven-year famine came (Gen. 41). God told Abraham His plan to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah before it occurred, thus giving Abraham a chance to stop the destruction via intercession (e.g. if there were at least 10 righteous left in the city; see Gen. 18). The prophet Agabus warned Paul of pending danger awaiting him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11-12). Revelation 2 and 3 include prescriptive warnings to seven churches for them to avoid being wiped out of existence.

Along these lines, I was recently preaching in a church and heard an amazing testimony of a Haitian lady in New Jersey who had a dream that her mother was going to die. She stayed up all night praying until she sensed a breakthrough. This occurred only two days before an earthquake struck Haiti several years ago! As a result of this intercession, the three houses of her mother and two sisters were totally untouched. Their lives were spared on a block where every other house was destroyed! There is something to be said about not just being a Christian but being a spiritual Christian who continually watches and prays to stop evil from affecting our lives.

Many years ago, I remember, while interceding, the Lord gave me a vision of my 5-year-old son, Jason, getting lost in a water park while he was with my wife. The Lord showed me that if I prayed, he would be found in only 10 minutes, and that if I didn't pray, he would be found, but much later on and that it would cause us a lot of grief. Consequently, I prayed and rebuked the evil one from my son. Later on, when my wife called me and told me our son was lost but that he was miraculously found within 10 minutes, I told her I already knew about it in prayer.

A few years ago, when a Tornado struck my area in Brooklyn, New York, I woke up about thirty minutes before it struck (about 5:30 a.m.) and had a spirit of prayer on me, and as I was travailing in the spirit (for what I knew not at the time) the tornado hit our area (it sounded like a freight train coming!) and our block was the only one not affected (the tornado hit the blocks surrounding us – tearing off roofs and ripping out trees, but our block was untouched!).

In general, Jesus said He wants to bring good things to His children (Luke 11:13) and He wants us to experience an abundant life. But Proverbs 8:34-36 teaches that He specifically blesses the people who continually wait before Him at His gates. There is a lot more I can say on this topic.

A Person's Sinful and Foolish Behavior Brings Evil Upon Them

James 3:14-16 says that out of self-seeking, bitterness and envy emanates every kind of evil. That being said, all of us have the potential to commit any egregious sin under the sun according to the principle espoused by these verses.

The horrible massacre in Las Vegas on Oct. 2 was a surprise because the shooter (Stephen Paddock) lived a life without any evidence (at this point) of fanatical connections to extreme religious or political groups and also had no criminal record. (His father was on the FBI's most-wanted list at one time, which does illustrate the power of generational curses.)

However, based on what the book of James states—any one of us can “snap” because of life's experiences that cause us to react in bitterness and extreme self-focus—out of which arise every conceivable potential for evil; in the shooter's case he was an excessive gambler, which may indicate financial loss that may have precipitated his rampage (although there is never a rational explanation for murdering innocent human beings).

Regarding humanity in general, Isaiah 3:10-11 teaches that it will go well in life with the righteous but evil things will happen to the disobedient. Proverbs 19:3 teaches that a man's foolishness destroys his own life. Galatians 6:7-8 teaches that we will sow corruption in our lives if we live for fleshly desires. So there is something to be said about people releasing continual evil and unnecessary harm and pain in their lives and families when they disobey the Lord. We see it all the time when a person's adultery destroys their marriage and family; when a person's financial indiscretions cause them to lose one job after another; and when those who fall away from the Lord have miserable lives because of the chastening of the Lord meant to bring them back home to the Father. (Read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 and about the chastening of the Lord in Hebrews 12:5-11.)

Furthermore, the book of Deuteronomy illustrates the incredible corporate blessings that come upon a people and nation that obeys His commandments (Deut. 28:1-15) and the incredible curses, sickness, disease and famines that come upon a nation that willfully transgresses the laws of God (Deut. 28:16-68).

Jeremiah 29:7 alludes that believers are called to pray for the city and nation they reside in so that in its welfare they also will be blessed. This also implies that believers can suffer because of the sins and fate of the city they live in, which probably gives some explanation for why even Christians suffered and died in the Haiti earthquake. God said in Ezekiel 22:30 that He sought for a man who would stand in the gap and make up the hedge that He would not have to destroy a nation, and He found none. That resulted in Him pouring out His wrath and destroying that nation. Sometimes a national disaster can either be avoided or minimalized if the prophetic people and intercessors in a nation pay the price of persevering prayer so the city or nation they live in can be blessed. What we need in our nation is not just politically active Christians but prayerfully active saints who will stand at their wall until the purposes of God are fulfilled in their nation (read Isa. 62:6-7).

Satan Looks for Every Opportunity to Kill and Destroy

Last, but not least, this article would not be complete if I didn't bring up the role of Satan in regards to evil and tragedy. Scripture teaches that Satan goes about the earth seeking whom he may destroy and devour (Job 2:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). Jesus said that Satan only comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). Jesus called Satan a murderer and liar (John 8:43-45). Believers in Christ are called to submit to God and resist him so he will flee from them (James 4:7). Paul the apostle said in Ephesians 4:27 that we are not to give Satan a foothold or place in our lives. That is to say, sinful behavior or disobedience on our part enables the enemy of our

souls to have an opportunity to wreak havoc in our lives.

This is also why the Old Testament continually warns believers against the practices of witchcraft and the magic arts (Lev. 20:6) since they enable demonic entities to have control over our destiny. Galatians 5:20 also calls sorcery and witchcraft works of the flesh that bring destruction to us.

Instead of giving in to the flesh and cooperating with evil spirits, God has called us to desist and resist every scheme of Satan by being equipped with the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-19). Part of the armor we need for protection comes when other believers in our fellowship take turns persevering in prayer for all the saints so that prayer is taking place "at all times" (read Eph. 6:18).

In conclusion, we are called to resist the devil in our lives and in the life of our churches and cities by discerning his schemes and praying against them before they happen, and also by living a life of obedience that grants no opportunity for Satan to gain a foothold in our lives. If our lives or families have a history of witchcraft, addictive sinful behavior or false religion, we need to renounce these ties in prayer and break any and all curses that have come upon our family lines, claiming the blessing of Christ over our generations because of His redemption on the cross for all who believe (Gal. 3:13-14).