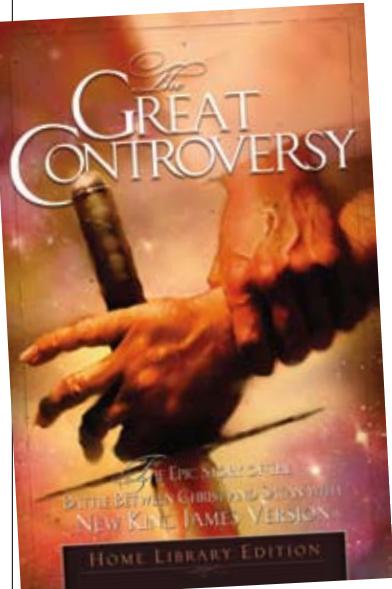


this world is filled with thieves and robbers and will soon be cleansed by the righteous judgment of a loving Father.

No, Christ did not spend time arguing about who was to blame for natural tragedies. In the science of the Bible it's obvious. The book of Job exposes the devil by hiding the Father. The life of Christ exposes the devil by revealing the Father. In the end, there is one clear and simple statement that sums up the whole business:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, NASB). Amen.

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by Ellen White

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3ABN Today LIVE—*Let It Rain!*
James Rafferty and Ty Gibson • (618)627-4651
- **March 8-11**
Evangelistic Week of Prayer
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
James Rafferty • buwa@vwsa.co.za
- **March 9**
Bible Study, Light Bearers Ministry
Ty Gibson • (541)988-3333
- **March 12-14**
North District Camp Meeting,
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
James Rafferty buwa@vwsa.co.za
- **March 13**
Pleasant Hill SDA Church, OR
Ty Gibson • (541)746-1750
- **March 26-27**
Owensboro SDA Church, KY
James Rafferty • (270)685-4747
- **March 26-28**
Lay Bible Workers, Prayer Warriors Conference
Auburn, WA
Ty Gibson • (303)733-3771
- **March 28**
Harts On Fire Ignite Women's Retreat, Lebanon, OR
Rise Rafferty • (541)367-4485
- **March 31**
7 Trumpets Study—Fall Creek SDA Church, OR
James Rafferty • (541)937-3526
- **April 2-3**
Pasco Riverview SDA Church, WA
Ty Gibson • (509)547-4998

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Our purpose is to help proclaim the gospel
of our Lord Jesus Christ through the spoken and published word.

MISSION UPDATE

The Newsletter of Light Bearers Ministry

NATURAL DISASTERS —AN ACT OF GOD?



By
James Rafferty

s God behind *all* natural disasters? No believer can deny God's judgments without tossing the Bible. But do *all* natural disasters lead to God, like "all roads lead to Rome"? Insurance companies seem to think so—based on their famous (or infamous) insurance clause, "act of God." And what kind of message would a *loving* God want us to get from natural disasters anyway?

One answer for these questions is found in Christ's words to believers in the face of a tragedy that killed 18 persons:

"Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them,

do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5, NKJV, italics added).

Christ did not spend time arguing about who was to be blamed for the tragedy. Instead, He reminded His listeners that tragedies are a wake up call. So should we assume that God sends natural disasters to make us repent of our sin? If that's the case, we could conclude that everything on planet earth would be just fine without God and His continual efforts to force us to repent. Not only is this anti-biblical (the goodness of God leads us to repent, see Romans 2:4), the reality is that this idea was disproved years ago by scientific experiment.

That experiment is recorded in the book of Job. It involved a good man—this way it could not be said that God was punishing him for some sin—having God removed from his life.

continued on next page . . .

God is constantly at work for the good of His creatures. Satan is also constantly at work, but for evil. The prince of the power of the air is the agent of destruction, the one who causes suffering and misery. Times without number God has interposed to avert death, to keep men, women, and children in safety when Satan purposed a result wholly disastrous.

God keeps a reckoning with the nations. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Those who work evil toward their fellow men, saying, How doth God know? will one day be called upon to meet long-deferred vengeance. In this age a more than common contempt is shown to God. Men have reached a point in insolence and disobedience which shows that their cup of iniquity is almost full. Many have well-nigh passed the boundary of mercy. Soon God will show that He is indeed the living God. He will say to the angels, 'No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy. Let him work out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full. They have advanced from one degree of wickedness to another, adding daily to their lawlessness. I will no longer interfere to prevent the destroyer from doing his work.'

—Ellen White,
Review and Herald,
September 17, 1901

In the story of Job, the devil comes strolling into the assembly room of God claiming that this earth belongs to him (makes sense to me considering all the pain and suffering on the planet). So God allows the experiment for our benefit (certainly not Job's). In this "case study" we get to see what happens to an evil-hating/family-loving human being when God is taken out of the picture. Roll Job 1:12-19:

"So the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power... Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, (NKJV)," and the next thing you know:

Job's one thousand oxen, five hundred donkeys, and three hundred camels have been stolen, seven thousand sheep have been burned up by the "fire of God," all but three of his servants have been killed, and all ten of his children are crushed to death in a natural disaster (on the very day when Job is the most concerned about them).

Not a pretty picture is it? Did you notice that God was quickly blamed for the natural disaster part—i.e. "the fire of God" (there's our insurance clause mentality). Additionally, this "act of God" mentality led believers to blame the victim—enter Job's three friends. Roll Job 4 -25 (in a word picture):

Silence – Job? Friends? Sinner! Physicians? Windbag! Miserable Comforters! Hypocrite! Liars! Worm! Deceivers! – Silence

Job's friends believed God was punishing him. But they were wrong,

not only about Job, but about God (Job 42:7-8). Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led these men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence, in his great affliction, Job had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. The story of Job is a lesson designed to prevent this kind of thinking. The history of Job shows that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.

Okay, so Job's story shows us what happens when God is taken out of the picture. Now let's see what happens when the devil is taken out and God runs the world. Roll Revelation 21:1-4:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold,

the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

"Passed away"—that's a modern term for dead. A day is coming

when the devil and death will be dead. Praise God! Can you imagine a planet with no evil—not a single drop? God can. That's why He wrote it out for us in the Bible. This is the final destination of planet earth and God wants you to have a part of it, an eternal part. Presently the earth is breaking down under the curse of sin and Satan (Isaiah 51:6; Revelation 12:12). All our good intentions to save the planet are misdirected—if in the end our goal is to make planet earth our savior. There is already a supernatural plan in place to save the planet, the real need is to save the people on the planet.

This is why Jesus came to earth. To show us what God is really like so that we would know Him and eternal life (John 17:3). Jesus is the evidence, the balm, the healing, the antidote for evil. No theological answer can compare to the personal presence of "God with us" in all our suffering (Matthew 1:23).

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9).

All the pain, evil and terror on planet earth breaks the heart of God. Yet, there are times when God brings judgments to those who are brazen in wickedness. These divine judgments are consistently preempted by a warning message. For 120 years Noah warned of the coming flood, angels warned Lot

of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jonah warned Ninevah, prophets warned Jerusalem and, even now, God is warning the world of the seven last plagues.

Apart from these obvious preempted judgments, the "prince of this world," "the prince of the power of the air," is ravaging the earth, bringing calamity, destruction and death, as he did to Job (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2). The devil has one goal for us—extermination (I Peter 5:8).

In addition, sin has resulted in some major geographical alterations on planet earth—meaning that natural disasters are often just that, natural. For example, at the time of the flood immense forests were buried. These have since

been changed to coal, forming the extensive coal beds that now exist, and also yielding large quantities of oil. Coal and oil frequently ignite and burn beneath the surface of the earth. Thus rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues. As the fire and water come in contact with ledges of rock and ore, there are heavy explosions underground, which sound like muffled thunder. The air is hot and suffocating. Volcanic eruptions follow; and these, often failing to give sufficient vent to the heated elements, the earth itself is convulsed, the ground heaves and swells like the waves

of the sea, great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up. Christ warned that these powerful natural disasters would be more frequent and intense leading up to His second "coming" and the "end of the world" (Matthew 24:7, 8, 3).

And let's not forget the human element and our own tampering with "mother nature." In fact, most of the suffering on planet earth can be traced to our selfish ambitions, and not natural disasters. Wars are ignited for monetary gain, massive buildings are erected while millions starve, diseases flourish because cures are unprofitable and technology languishes unless it produces profits. The temple of

continued on p. 4 . . .

Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah; and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away," "the haughty people . . . do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" Isaiah 24:4, 5.

And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils.

—Ellen White,
The Great Controversy,
pp.589-590.