

## WHERE WAS GOD?

**TEXT:** Luke 13:1-5

**THESIS:** To attempt to answer biblically why God allows suffering.

**INTRO.:** A. The Sunday after 9/11 I preached a message with the title **"Where Was God on 9/11?"** In *this message* I want to establish some principles which will explain why God allows suffering, natural disasters, pain and trials – especially in the believer's life. We will never have all the answers because God's ways are higher than ours, but we will try to unlock some biblical solutions to the nagging question: **WHERE WAS GOD...?**

B. So, **where was God** during *superstorm Sandy* when so many lives were wrecked, people made homeless, many died, and some are still struggling with their loss? **Where was God** when *the Boston bombing* took place and so many lost limbs, loved ones, and had their lives changed forever? **Where was God** when *the tsunami took nearly 200,000(!) lives (including innocent children and babies) in 2004 in Indonesia?* **Where was God** when some 19,000 people died in *the Japan tsunami* in 2011, after a magnitude earthquake in the ocean registered 9.0. Japan is devastated and still has not recovered. Nuclear plants exposed thousands to high levels of radiation. Children were left without parents. Parents were left without children. **Where was God** in the

**recent tornados in Texas and Oklahoma** where lives were lost and homes and livelihoods disappeared in an instant? **WHERE WAS GOD?!**

**QUOTE:** *"If natural disasters do not serve God's good ends, then we are either confronted with a God Who is too weak to make evil serve a higher end, or too evil to do what is good and just."* - Lutzer

## **I. IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTERS?**

### A. Not Human-Created Disasters!

1. 9/11, the Boston bombings, wars, etc. are not **directly** traced to God
2. Many of these are simply the product of men's perverted, sinful natures

**ILLUS.:** Remember God's original plan for man was perfect. He created a perfect world and placed man in a perfect environment. He wanted man to live forever, but He did not create robots or automatons. He created man with a will – just as He created Lucifer (Satan) with a will.

3. But even human created disasters can indirectly be traced back to God! (I am not a Calvinist!)

**NOTE:** In our text men built a faulty building, but if God is omnipotent, couldn't he have prevented that building from falling or arranged that no-one was killed? In Phila. a similar thing took place just this week. **Where was God?**

Six thousand people die every hour on earth, many, if not most, of them in anguish.

**Where is God?**

## B. What About Natural Disasters?

1. Even saved people call them "***acts of God***"!
2. I have a message entitled "***Is It God Or Satan?***"
3. It is possible that it is both?!
  - a. Job is a classic example: God provoked Satan into attacking Job – "***Hast thou considered my servant Job?***"
  - b. God gave Satan the power to create *a tornado* to destroy the homes of Job's children, to inflict Job with *boils*, to use *lightning* to destroy his flocks, herds, servants and property...
  - c. So who was ultimately responsible? Martin Luther said: "Even the devil is God's devil."

**QUESTIONS:** Who sent the flood during the time of Noah? **Gen 6:17** *And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*

Who sent the plagues of Egypt? Who caused the sun to stand still for Joshua? Who sent the drought and famine when Elijah prayed? Who sent the earthquake to swallow the sons of Korah? Who caused the storm that sent Jonah overboard?

- d. We side with God when He punishes the wicked, or helps the saints (Paul & Silas and the prison earthquake), but want to blame God when the saints suffer along with the ungodly. We can't have it both ways.
- e. God says He sends the rain on the just and the unjust!

**NOTE:** The Bible clearly places God in charge of the wind, rain, earthquakes, tornadoes, et. al. The concept of responsibility usually connotes accountability, but with God He is not accountable to anyone! What we can say is that He is simply in charge of His creation, either directly or indirectly. Finite beings cannot judge an infinite God. The creature cannot say to the Creator ***"Why hast Thou made me thus?"***

## **II. IS THERE A PURPOSE IN DISASTERS?**

A. The Purpose May Be Judgment: Noah's flood, Israel's captivity, et. al.

1. Could it be that God is trying to get America's attention as He did Israel?
2. Could it be that we are beginning to see that He is in control of our future as a nation and that the Bible prophecies are true after all?
3. Are the "natural disasters" and man-concocted disasters warnings of an impending Tribulation?
4. Nature reflects God's gracious attributes (sunshine, flowers, et. al.) but also His attributes of anger and justice (tornadoes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, et.al.)

#### B. The Purpose May Be to Get Men's Attention:

1. After 9/11 the churches of America were filled and even the heathen politicians on Capital Hill in Washington gathered for prayer and acknowledged God.
2. Disasters help us see what is truly valuable & what is not; tragedy separates the trivial from the weighty, the temporal from the eternal.
3. At the moment of death, we are all reduced to the same helplessness!

#### C. The Purpose May Be to Change Our Perspective:

1. We may find out, even in materialistic America, that people matter and things don't!

2. When a loved one is dying or when we are dying we will not be focused on our possessions. *(I have never heard someone near death worrying about their new car, their lawn, their computer, or even Facebook!!)*

#### D. The Purpose May Be to Help Us Consider Our Mortality:

**QUOTE:** *"Tragedies rid us of the overconfidence we have that we are in control of our own destinies."* - Lutzer

1. Perhaps we may realize that our existence on earth was never intended to be permanent and that we need to focus on eternity.
2. Even when we are not personally affected by a calamity it is a reminder from God that we need to prepare to meet Him!

#### E. The Purpose May Be Inscrutable or Unexplainable:

1. What if God uses these things to prove our faith? *("Though He slay me...")*
2. What if calamities are a reminder of His goodness?
  - a. Every day we live with sunshine, food, health, etc. – gifts He doesn't have to give to us.

**Job 2:10b** *What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*

b. The fact that we are alive is a reminder of God's goodness

**NOTE:** We should never shorten life, nor help someone to die, and even do what we can to help them to live, but if we held God to that standard no one would ever die!!! And we would live forever in these sinful, deteriorating bodies.

**Lam 3:22-23** *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed , because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

**CONCL.:** Many are the ways of God which are inscrutable and unexplainable, but we have enough in God's revelation, the Bible, to help us with answers to the question **"WHERE WAS GOD?"** when calamities overtake us or overtake the world. The question is how will we respond?

We need to honor the sovereignty of God and allow Him to rule the universe and our lives as He sees best. By the way, do you even know Him as your Savior, let alone the Creator and Sovereign God of all things? If not, please receive Him NOW or you will one day stand before the Judgment **and find out where God was and is!**

