

Wave of Destruction

Tsunami: 26 December at 07:58:49 (Local Time)

On the surface, this was going to be an ordinary Christmas morning in Banda Aceh on the northern tip of Sumatra. The children were licking ice creams. Others, watched by happy parents, played on the edge of the waves — daring them to catch them. Older folk strolled along, commenting on how nice it was to have a bit of winter sun. The sea was blue and calm — and the tide turned...then the tsunami hit!

At Phuket, a popular Thailand resort a short distance to the north of Banda Aceh, the beach was packed with people from Europe, North America and Australia, lying on beach loungers under striped umbrellas, playing with their children or frolicking in the water. Its high season and holiday tourists come from all over the world to enjoy some fun in the sun. At Phuket the weather is almost always perfect, the water is deliciously warm and the sea is still and translucent. On this day with the area saturated with around 400,000 tourists, paradise was ripped asunder, washed away by a series of freak waves that left the island dealing with its biggest disaster in modern times.

Entire Sri Lankan towns were washed away with the waves, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and 31,000+ dead. In addition, sanitation and clean water shortages along the coast threaten disease outbreak, and the fishing industry has been demolished.

The most powerful earthquake in 40 years, 9.0 on the Richter scale, erupted under the Indian Ocean near Sumatra on Dec. 26, 2004. It caused giant, deadly waves to crash ashore in nearly a dozen countries, killing around 250,000 people.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "I have been in war and I have been through a number of hurricanes, tornados and other relief operations, but I have never seen anything like this.

The Richter scale goes from 1 to 10. Each step indicates an earthquake approximately 60 times more powerful than the last number. So when you read about a 7.0 quake that causes immense destruction in California, think of this: Seismologically speaking, the one in Indonesia was about 3,600 times more powerful than those shakers that casually wreck freeways and buildings in Los Angeles and Oakland. The energy unleashed by the Sumatra quake was roughly equivalent to an explosion of 32 billion tons of TNT.

There are hundreds of earthquakes of varying dimensions on the planet each day. Geographers estimate a 9.0 comes along maybe three times a century. This one was perfectly situated for causing death and destruction with some 250,000 people dead and vast stretches of Asia ripped apart, a lot of people are asking, how can a merciful God allow such disaster and suffering? And should we interpret this as a sign from above?

Theodicy: the theological discipline that seeks to explain how the existence of evil in the world can be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God.

The comments of one person were: "What is interesting about this is that this tsunami did not increase death. All of those people who died were going to die anyway. And I don't mean to be cold. We desperately don't desire to see people suffer in such a horrific way. But, at the same time, every single one of us is going to die. And the critical thing is to determine what is going to happen to us the moment after we die. Where are we going to spend eternity?"

“And that's why God, who does love you, and he sent his own son to die on the cross, that, when I place my faith in him, I can be forgiven of my sin and I can know for sure that, when something happens to me— and I can die on the highway. I can die as a result of a disease. It doesn't have to be a tsunami. But one day, I'm going to die. And I know when I do; I am going to be ushered into my father's home into heaven because I have placed my faith in Jesus.”

“So, this is a tragedy and it's a disaster, but it's not a reflection on the fact that God doesn't love us, because God loves us and the proof of that is the cross.”

One man wrote, “Can God be good?” Another wrote, “Why does God allow disasters?” “Why does God allow suffering,” others have asked. Some even claim that God is evil because of tragedies.

It can be asked, “How many tsunamis' have occurred along the coastlines? Has man learned to protect themselves? Money-driven investors have been a driving force in making decisions to build hotels in flood areas, high rises in earthquake prone areas, housing tracts in volcano's shadows and mudslide prone hillsides. It is a tendency for people to blame God for tragedies and not take responsibility for foolish actions. Let's face it: Earthquakes are part of life just like road accidents are part of life. We know where the fault lines are and many people foolishly choose to build on them. Is God to be blamed for our foolishness to live in risky and dangerous places?

There have been earthquakes since the earth started to form and there will be earthquakes until the earth disappears.

Was the tsunami the hand of God? “For many of those trying to come to terms with the sheer scale of devastation wrought by the Asian tsunami has found their faith tested in recent days. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, has admitted his own doubts. Where was God when a tsunami swept away around 250,000 people living on the edges of the Indian Ocean? Did God cause the tragedy to happen? Even allow it to happen? Or was God not a factor at all? The tsunami killed Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, people of almost every faith. (**Belfast Telegraph**)

Was the tsunami a punishment of God?

“I think that the whole idea that God is using this to punish people is appalling because there are thousands of earthquakes every year that are monitored and recorded by seismologists and the whole idea that somehow these earthquakes are God punishing people just does not make sense.

The fact that this does happen shows that we live in a very fragile world, a very fragile earth.” (**The Rev Dr. Ken Newell Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Ireland**)

Someone commented: “Every Christian must be stunned by the happenings of the past week. Death, the mightiest of all reapers, has cut down a terrible harvest, and sobering must be the wails which compose the harvest hymn of death. Such things have happened in every age of our world. This is no new thing. Christ, in the gospel of Luke, refers His hearers to the calamities of which they had recently heard, and perhaps had even witnessed. One was the slaughter of Galileans by the soldiers of the Roman governor, Pilate, and the other the sudden death of 18 people on whom a tower had fallen

see (Luke 13:1-5). Christ asked the pertinent question: ‘Were these Galileans sinners above all the Galileans?’ He answered with an emphatic: ‘No.’ Then He said: ‘Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Christ again asked the pertinent question: ‘Were those upon whom the tower fell sinners above all men?’”

“Again His answer was an emphatic: ‘No’ and added: ‘I tell you, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.’”

“We should remember that accidents are not punishments for sins. Punishment for sins belongs not to this world but the world to come.”

“The path of righteousness often leads a man to the most hideous death in this world, while the path of the ungodly can lead to advancement, riches and high esteem.”

“Let us remember that disasters are not punishments, and both the good and the bad suffer together. The Bible says: "After death the judgment" - not before.”

Why didn't God interfere?

“When things are going fine people don't want God to interfere, but when something like this happens they ask how God can allow it.”

“I have no answers to this, but in Romans, Chapter 8, Paul says that the whole of creation suffers because of sin. However, the whole world will be completely redeemed one day, because Jesus died on the cross for us.”

“Accidents do happen, terrible things do happen. But I still come back and say that God gave us a wonderful life and tremendous blessing which people enjoy.”

“Job asked questions but still trusted God and Jesus asked on the cross: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ But He still trusted Him.” (**The Rev Dr. Brian Fletcher, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland**).

A Hindu point of view

“It's very hard to watch suffering on such a scale. Most of us Hindus believe that this was not a natural disaster - it was divine work. When there is too much evil and bad things happening on this planet, our religion says that the god of nature creates something like this. It's all karma. Everyone has to pay for karma and what they did in the past. In our religion we are currently going through the Kali Yuga or the Black Age and our religious books say that these things will come during this time because people do not understand the virtue of life. (**Tilak Raj Puri Chairman of the Indian Community in Northern Ireland**)

What God can and cannot allow!

“Tragedy, devastation, horror, suffering, death, desolation at Christmas time. Nature did not choose its victims. It killed the young and the old, the rich and the poor. It respected no colors or moral qualities. Surely not all those who perished were sinners, and not all were saints either. Nature struck in- discriminately, with stunning cruelty that changed holidays into days of mourning.”

“Not too long ago, I gave a series of retreats to several groups. When talking to them about the paschal mystery of Christ, the mystery of His passion, death and resurrection, I made it a point to emphasize that the death of Christ was the worst evil in history, because it was the murder of the God-man. It was the Son of God, one of the Trinity, who was killed on the cross by persons who mercifully did know the full evil of their crime.

And I said repeatedly, that if God could allow the killing of His own Son, then He could allow anything. He could allow the Holocaust, Nagasaki, Hiroshima and the two world wars. He could allow the killing of millions under Stalin and Mao, and the recent genocide of about 800,000 in Rwanda. He could allow the silent annual holocaust of 50 million innocent little humans aborted in the wombs of their own mothers. And, yes, today, I must add that God could allow the totally unexpected death of 250,000 innocent humans through the processes of nature. Yes, God is love, but He can allow the worst against those whom He loves. What God, however, cannot allow, is for suffering, death and evil to have the last word. He can allow the worst that man and nature can do, provided that the last word would be His, and this word will be a word of love and life.”

How true the words of God spoken by St. Paul: “We know that God makes everything work for good for those who love God” (Romans 8: 28)!

An Atheist writes: Disasters help us to learn more about ourselves, and our responses

Dr. Paul Valent is a psychiatrist who founded and is past president of the Australasian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

“Where was God during the tsunami? Where is God in Darfur? Where was God in Rwanda? Cambodia? The Holocaust? My own religious phase ended when my father, the only one of nine siblings who survived the Holocaust, died 12 years later of prolonged, painful cancer. I then joined the majority of Holocaust survivors who abandoned belief in God. No believer has been able to convince me since then of the existence of a just, benevolent God.” (Paul Valent)

First of all, an atheist is forced to take the position that man is unable to control his own actions and natural catastrophes. Obviously, he does not have the ability to establish peace in the world, control the environment, disease, killing and war. He must except the fact he is helpless in face of natural catastrophes and must take the blame for all the problems of society.

Atheists believe there is no higher intelligence than them; therefore he becomes a god over all lower forms of life. Remember, the bible rightly says, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God” (Ps 14:1). He belittles the idea that a supreme intelligence exists in the universe, and points at tragedies that happen to re-enforce his position of weakness. He does not have any comforting answers, but “what will be will be.” This path leads to hopelessness and despair. He majors in blaming something he believes that is non-existent, thinking he has enlightened others to having a better life. He must accept the blame for catastrophe, tragedy, disease and war because of his inability to control them.

Who is to blame for the 3.1 million have died from AIDs in 2004? 60% have died because of a homosexual lifestyle. 25 % died from using dirty needles from illegal drug use. 15% died from heterosexual promiscuity. Should God be blamed for this unthinkable tragedy? This was a result of unwise choices. God chose not to interfere with their choices. Does this make God evil because He does not force people to live righteously?

In General, God does not intervene in the natural catastrophes of a self-destructing universe, however on special occasions He used natural phenomena to punish and orchestrate His eternal plan.

The Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptian army of Pharaoh.

The fire of God burned up many people. Num. 11

Miriam was struck with leprosy. Num. 12

The plague that killed the 10 spies. Num. 14.

The earth opened up and swallowed up the 250 rebellious leaders. Num. 16

The plague of Num. 16.
The serpents that bite the Israelites. Num. 21
The Jordan River crossing.
The Fall of Jericho.
The day the sun stood still.
The Thunder of 1 Sam. 7.
The earthquake of 1 Sam. 14.

The consequence of the sin of Adam: “You will surely die...and the sting of death is sin” (Gen. 2:17; 1 Cor. 15:56). Sin became a poison in the blood stream of man, slowly taking away his life. In the process of dying, pain, disease and suffering became a constant companion. Also, the entire universe was plunged into corruption and someday will be renewed for the habitation of redeemed mankind.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:18-23).

Into this world God sent his only Son, who came not to abolish or explain suffering but to fill it with his saving presence

What kind of God would allow a deadly tsunami?

The atheists contend that the origin of this world was a result of a cataclysmic event beyond human understanding or explanation. It is commonly called the “Big Bang” theory.

Can God be blamed by the atheist for this type of universe convulsion, when he does not recognize such a God? Is God to blame for the evolution of the earth as it cooled down from a fiery ball of molten mass into a crusty exterior floating on this molten sea?

The atheist belief system proposes that the present day status of the earth was a result of one catastrophe after another, from one convulsion and upheaval after another, shaping the exterior surface in mountains and valleys, gigantic volcanic eruptions that caused intermittent ice ages, meteors striking the earth and driving the waters of oceans inland for hundreds of miles, earthquakes beyond number, shaking and destroying and killing indiscriminately life in all of its forms, such is the general belief system of this godless society. May I ask the question, Why blame God now? The fact is that you do not believe in God and you have little power to control natural catastrophes. Then who should be pointing the fingers of blame?

Geologists, for example, and all the other “ologists” that work with them are increasingly convinced that many of the bizarre life-forms whose fossil remains are found in the lower groups of rock strata of the Paleozoic (Ancient life) and Mesozoic (Middle life) eras were wiped out in a series of mysterious, mass extinctions—numbering at least fifteen, according to the research of Raup and Sepkoski.

The most recent and most keenly debated of those events is the K-T (Cretaceous-Tertiary) extinction, which apparently wiped out the Dinosaurs a mere 65 million years ago, thereby ending the terrifying Age of Reptiles.

Meteorite Bombardment? The favored extinction mechanism for American scientists, at least at the

moment of writing, is massive meteorite impact, possibly involving one gigantic specimen some six to ten miles in diameter that may have struck and buried itself in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula—resulting in destructive tidal waves on the one hand, and volcanic eruptions and fire-balls on the other that burned up whole continents, suffocating all animal life, and blackening the atmosphere with sufficient ash, dust and smoke to totally exclude all sunlight and so destroy all vegetation.

The Demise of the Dinosaurs?

An article in the Times of London described how Indian scientists, who have also been investigating the demise of the dinosaurs, have discovered thousands of perfectly preserved, mostly spherical eggs in some 50 hatcheries scattered over an area of 4,000 square miles. Apparently many villagers pray to these fossil eggs which they venerate as being the testicles of the Hindu god Shiva, the deity of destruction, and put them in wayside shrines along with flowers. The mass destruction of these dinosaurs and the abandonment of the eggs, is attributed by the Indian scientists to a meteorite some 25 miles wide which apparently created a vast, but now covered, crater stretching from Bombay to the Seychelles.

They estimate that the impact released far more energy than the world's entire stock of nuclear weapons—thereby melting rock with intense heat, spewing out multiple millions of tons of debris, burning up the oxygen of the atmosphere, and creating an incredibly powerful shock wave.

Again, the envisioned outcome was a black dust cloud that encircled the whole earth and obliterated the sun for six months, thereby also wiping out all plant and animal life on land and in the sea. Could the asteroid belt be the outcome of a tenth planet explosion? And how could the earth escape without some physical scars.

The atheist has championed these findings of scientific researchers, revering their conclusions of the violent evolution of the universe. Obviously, this type of evolution is still going on, destroying cities and killing people, but why should they be pointing fingers at a person who believes in a supreme God, questioning God's power, integrity, and goodness, even suggesting that He is evil.

To the atheist I ask, "If you do not believe in God, and these things continue to happen, who is to be blamed, but man himself who has demonstrated he is unable to control his behavior and powerless to control natural calamity? The ultimate accomplishment of intelligent human beings is to have developed weapons of mass destruction and use them to kill their own kind.

The truth of the matter is as follows:

Evil, violence, murder, disease, destruction and death entered through Adam, who was the first man created by God. He disobeyed His creator, God. It was the mercy of God that saved the world from the righteous immediate judgment of God. God had every right to start over again, create another planet to enact His plan to have a family made after His image and likeness. However, He loved man and instead of destroying him, He executed a redemption plan to save him in spite of the circumstances created by his sin. Satan, who was at war with God, walked through the door opened by the sin of man, and sought ways and means to destroy God's creation. Satan, evil to the core, established dominion over soul of man, his emotions, mind and will.

God created! Adam sinned! Satan entered into the world!

God did not reject Adam. Adam rejected God! Adam, by His sin, relinquished his dominion over the earth.

God chose not to force mankind to conform to His will, but has chosen to allow man to have his own

free will to choose right or wrong.

The penalty of sin is death, not only to man but to the universe as well.

It is God's mercy to delay the sentence of destruction in order for His grace to save dying man from his sentence of death.

Sometimes, according to biblical records, God uses people and natural disasters to punish His people and bring them to repentance.

The great flood during Noah's day.

It was because of the wickedness of the people.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

It was because of the wickedness of the people.

The 10 plagues of Egypt

Pharaoh refused to allow the people of Israel to go free.

Israel in the wilderness after their escape from Egypt

Plagues, earthquakes, fire, snakes—because of their sin and rebellion.

The defeat of the 10 tribes by the Assyrians.

Idolatrous behavior of the people.

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians

It was because of the people sins against God.

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

The rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah.

Jesus was born in a manger and the angels sang of the future hope of a dying world, and then because of His birth, hundreds of babies died from the cruel swords of Herod's men. God sent His Son to save the world. Satan moved on the heart of King Herod to destroy God's Son. The blame game continues....Why did God send His Son? Why did God not stop the slaughter? God has chosen to work out His salvation plan in a dying and corrupting world without interfering in the corrupting process.

Analyzing disasters for the purpose of blame is not a good practice. Trying to understand why bad things happen is a dead-end road. In the midst of disasters, suffering, and calamities, it should be our endeavor to maintain faith in God, not to seek for explanations, but wisdom and guidance through the difficulties. The old hymn had it right, "I will understand it better by and by."

Sometimes God using the elements, natural phenomena, such as, hail, wind, earthquakes, plagues, etc. to defend and save his people from destruction. However His interceding is infrequent, and only when it enhances His specific purposes.

God is sovereign and is not bound by any philosophy, cosmic law, or human wisdom. He does not have to explain the why's, wherefores', or when's, but works all things according to His purposes. Please remember God's concept of death is not the end of a person. Death is a door that leads a person into the spirit world and into the righteous hand of God. The Christian hope is that when he is absent from the body, he is present with the Lord.

The atheist's concept of death is finality.

Religious and Secular Humanism is based on the atheist's concept of life on earth without the presence of a supreme being.

Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous infidel and atheist of the 19th Century wrote:

When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in the entire wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free—free to think, to express my thoughts—free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself . . . I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds.

The real bible of Ingersoll is as follows:

For thousands of years men have been writing the real Bible, and it is being written from day to day, and it will never be finished while man has life. All the facts that we know, all the truly recorded events, all the discoveries and inventions, all the wonderful machines whose wheels and levers seem to think, all the poems, crystals from the brain, flowers from the heart, all the songs of love and joy, of smiles and tears, the great dramas of Imagination's world, the wondrous paintings, miracles of form and color, of light and shade, the marvelous marbles that seem to live and breathe, the secrets told by rock and star, by dust and flower, by rain and snow, by frost and flame, by winding stream and desert sand, by mountain range and billowed sea.

All the wisdom that lengthens and ennobles life, all that avoids or cures disease, or conquers pain—all just and perfect laws and rules that guide and shape our lives, all thoughts that feed the flames of love, the music that transfigures, enraptures and enthralls the victories of heart and brain, the miracles that hands have wrought, the deft and cunning hands of those who worked for wife and child, the histories of noble deeds, of brave and useful men, of faithful loving wives, of quenchless mother-love, of conflicts for the right, of sufferings for the truth, of all the best that all the men and women of the world have said, and thought and done through all the years. These treasures of the heart and brain—**these are the Sacred Scriptures of the human race.**

Ingersoll fails to mention the treasures of the heart and brain has clearly come short of making this world a better place. Misery, pain, suffering, disease, murder, theft, swindle, deceit, war etc., are still out of control. According to Ingersoll there is no one to blame but the failure of human capability and beyond that capability there is no hope.

Religious and Secular Humanism place reason above faith, usually to the point of eschewing faith altogether. Religious Humanism is usually without a god, without a belief in the supernatural, without a belief in an afterlife, and without a belief in a "higher" source of moral values. Some adherents would even go so far as to suggest that it is a religion without "belief" of any kind—knowledge based on evidence being considered preferable.

The Humanist believes that full responsibility for the future of the world, its political systems, its ecology, etc. rests with humans. There is no God in heaven to intervene and save us from a disaster. In my opinion the Wave of Destruction that shortened the lives of approximately 250,000 people, was

a natural catastrophe and God chose not to physically remove the thousands that were living on the coast lands of eleven nations, nor did he stop the sudden shift of the continental plates that caused the tsunami, nor did he stop the kidnapping, stealing, prostitution or idolatry in those places. Also, He did not intervene in the floods of Europe, the floods of Southern California or the Mid-West. Rather, God has chosen to demonstrate His love through compassionate giving and service by His servants.

In spite of the wicked human heart, God has not withdrawn His love and saving Grace. He could have chosen to allow man to self-destruct in an aging and deteriorating universe, but instead He sent His only begotten Son as a death substitute for mankind that he might have eternal life. This is the Wave of Mercy and Grace.

The earth as we know it is doomed for destruction. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and {also} its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever" (1 Jon 2:16-17).

The last Wave of Destruction is described in the Bible, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:10-13).

Leon Willis