

Why the Suffering?

Answering the age-old question, Why does a loving God allow humans to suffer?

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"Why?" This is the age-old question uttered in anguish and tears after every natural disaster, war, and, as we have seen recently, act of terrorism. "Why?" "Why did it happen to me?" "Why did it happen to my family?" "Why did God let it happen?"

Certainly, these are legitimate questions. Often they are followed by a yearning to know who is responsible, who is to blame. Sometimes God is blamed. After all, shouldn't He make sure such things don't happen? Why does God allow such suffering?

The answer, in a word, is sin. By this, I don't mean specifically the sin of the people who suffered. Jesus made clear in Luke 13:1-5 that we are not to consider those who suffer as any worse sinners than anyone else, including ourselves. No, I mean the fact that we live in a world founded on sin.

The Bible tells us that God gave our first parents, Adam and Eve, a command (Genesis 2:15-17). They disobeyed it, and, thereby, sinned (Genesis 3:6). God had warned them that their disobedience would bring death (Genesis 2:17). Now it came, both spiritual death (separation from God because of sin, seen in principle in Isaiah 59:2) and physical death. Because of their sin, the Creation became corrupt (Romans 8:20-22). When sin entered the world, so did death: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Only about ten generations from Adam, sin had so corrupted man that the Bible makes the observation, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). The result? "Natural" disaster. God caused a flood that wiped out all humans but eight. Why? Sin.

Another few generations later, we see in Genesis 11:1-9 a united, but still sinful, humanity that God sees must be stopped in its progress. How does He do this? He brings disaster upon them by confounding

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their language so they can no longer understand each other.

Time and again, we see in the pages of Scripture events that from our human perspective we might see as natural or human-caused events: The plagues suffered by Egypt, the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness, the enemy raids upon the Israelites during the times of the judges, the famines during the times of the kings, and the eventual enemy invasion and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But the Bible reveals that God caused all of these events. Why? Sin.

What about today? Has God stopped causing "natural" disasters, wars, and other catastrophes? Is He now so weak that He must allow tragedies that He does not will? No. God does not change. He is the primary cause of our disasters, regardless of whether their secondary causes are "natural" or human. Why? The answer remains the same. Sin. Individually, as a nation, and as a civilization, we are sinful. The United States is not a great, Christian nation, whatever some people who would like to rewrite history would like us to believe. We are like any other nation, sinful. In fact, there never has been a nation that was not sinful.

It is time for us to go beyond asking why. It is time for each of us to examine ourselves, repent, and turn from our sinful ways and back to God. We cannot force others to repent of sin, but we can tell them the Gospel.