

God and the Tsunami

“Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up (Psalm 28:5).

We have all been moved by the death toll as a result of the earthquake and tsunami in South East Asia. And indeed we ought to be moved by the death of so many thousands and the grief and affliction of multitudes that remain. But how are we to understand what has happened? What is the meaning of it? What is the cause of it?

God's Doing

It is the doing of the Lord's hand. Christians must never back away from this truth. We must never speak or even think as if God is not in control of all that comes to pass. He *"worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"* (Ephesians 1:11). If God were not in control when this earthquake took place, then he wouldn't be God at all.

Liberal churchmen would rather believe in a powerless God, than believe in a God who is holy and who brings great judgements on men. They would rather believe in a useless God than acknowledge God as he really is in his awesome power, majesty, holiness and judgement. This is why atheists have been using this solemn event to strengthen their denial of God's existence. They say, "How can a God of love do this?" And the liberal churchmen, who have long been telling people that God is a God of love and nothing else, have no answer. Their imaginary god, of course, does not exist. But Christians will hold to the Biblical view of God, come what may. And this God says, *"my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"* (Isaiah 46:10).

We must never take the side of the wicked who rail against God and who either say that God does not do these things or that if he does, he should not do them. If we are Christians, we must always maintain that God is in control and we must always maintain that what God does is right. Christians must never, in expressing sympathy for the afflicted, apologise for the works of God.

God's Rights

God has the right to bring the lives of men to an end. He can say to anyone in this world, *"This night thy soul shall be required of thee"* (Luke 12:20). He does this daily, bringing multitudes of lives to an end individually, most often by ordinary sickness. Sometimes he does it by the hand of man. And sometimes he brings many lives to an end at once by a great catastrophe, as in this case.

Not The End

It can be said that this earthquake is not a sign of Christ's imminent return. There are straightforward reasons for saying this. First of all, there have always been earthquakes. In Amos 1:1 the prophet refers to an earthquake that had taken place in his day. And there have, in history, been earthquakes as great as this one. But they were not a forerunner of the end of the world. The Lord Jesus said, *"And ye shall*

hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places.” (Matthew 24:6). The Lord Jesus is here giving an indication of many upheavals that are **not** a sign of the end. He says, “*the end is not yet*”. These things are normal. For centuries there have been wars, rumours of wars, pestilences, earthquakes, famines. He goes on to describe the destruction of Jerusalem which was to take place in AD70. And whilst there were to be warning indications when that would take place, when it did, it still was not a sign of the end. By contrast, he says in verse 14 of the chapter, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*” This has not taken place yet. So these things are not a sign of the end. In fact, the end is unpredictable, so verse 27, “*For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*”

A Judgment

Such catastrophes are a judgment from God. Care is needed, however, to avoid misunderstanding on this point. First of all, we must say that they are an expression of God’s displeasure against sin. This is true of death itself, by whatever means it comes. “*Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” (Romans 5:12). And so vast a multitude being swept away all at once from this world must obviously be an expression of God’s displeasure against the sins of men. If God is in control - and he is - then God caused thousands to be swept away to another world in such a short time. It is self-evident that God has a controversy with men and that God does, in this world, judge nations. He formed the nations and he judges nations that rebel against him. In the next world, there are no nations, and then he will judge every man and woman to the full, individually.

We must also say, that the nations that have been most afflicted are not necessarily the most wicked of nations. This is true, in this world, of individual suffering. Christ said, “*Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:4). Those who suffer most or those whose lives are cut off soonest, are not necessarily sinners above other sinners. And that is true of nations. No-one suffers in this world more than his personal sin and guilt before God deserve. Indeed, we all deserve to be condemned to hell forever immediately. Anything better is due to the kindness and longsuffering of God. God is sovereign and free in the extent to which he shows his wrath against sin in this world.

We ought, therefore, to reflect in the following manner: If God can justly bring such a judgement on nations, some of which have had comparatively little gospel light, what might he do to a nation like ours that has had so much gospel truth preached in it over many generations and which now despises it all and so wickedly casts off the knowledge of God? If there is not an outpouring of his Spirit to bring our nation to repentance and turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, then can we not expect the judgement of God to be displayed against our nation? And would not God be holy and righteous, if were he to bring a judgement yet greater than that which has taken place in South

East Asia? We must not assume that God could not ruin our nation. It is entirely compatible with his sovereignty, his power, his holiness and his justice that he should do so.

Lessons

Such an awesome event cries loudly to the nations to prepare to meet God in judgement. The verse in Psalm 28:5 with which we began speaks of those who would not understand the doings of the Lord. The earthquake in South East Asia is a warning from God. Christians must pray for the afflicted and help practically to send relief. They must pray for the Christians witnessing in the midst of great distress. They must pray for our own sinful nation, for except the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of men, they will only grow more hardened against the gospel. But they must not be ashamed also to lovingly, graciously, but clearly bear testimony to the warning message: God did do it; he had every right to do so; repent and believe the gospel. This is the message.

If you are not a Christian, you must heed this warning. God has spared you, while multitudes have been taken away. How marvellous that God shows such longsuffering to so many millions of undeserving sinners, sparing them even to see length of days. And in the case of many, like you, he even causes them to hear the gospel of everlasting salvation. You may be rightly disillusioned at the lies you have been told about God by unbelieving clerics. You can see clearly now that the idea of God being only a God of love is nonsense. The way forward, however, is not to turn in bitterness to the follies of atheism, but to the living and true God who reigns in glory and majesty. This God is holy and punishes sin. That is why Christ died on the cross – because God is a God of justice and judgment as well as immense love and grace. Christ died as a substitute for sinners – *"by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities"* (Isaiah 53:11).

You must number your days and apply your heart to wisdom. The Lord, who can take thousands away in a short moment, can surely take any one of us at any time that he pleases. There are many aspects of the future we do not know. But of this we can be sure. *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement"* (Hebrews 9:27). Are you ready for this? Are your sins forgiven for Christ's sake? If not, then you must seek him. Death will come, by whatever means God has appointed for you. We shall all go to heaven or hell forever. Seek mercy. Seek it only through Jesus Christ. Ignore the deceits of "multi-faith". There is one way to God, and only one. *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).