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## Is the Japan Earthquake Part of God's Plan?

**Matthew 24:7:** (NASB) *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.*



This was a tragedy. The recent earthquake, just off the coast of northern Japan, was the fifth largest ever recorded in human history. While the quake itself was not terribly damaging, the tsunamis it spawned were another story. From a personal standpoint, I have NEVER seen anything so destructive and powerful as those waves which literally engulfed everything in their path. So, what does all of this mean from a Christian standpoint? Did God make the earth quake - did God send the waves? Could God have stopped this? Stay with us as we consider these difficult and piercing questions.

### What Happened?

#### Devastating Japan Earthquake, NBC Today Show March 11, 2011

- *Tsunami swept some sixty miles inland. It started with an 8.9 quake.*

(Source: LiveScience, Stephanie Pappas, Remy Melina and Natalie Wolchover contributed to this article.) *What's the Science Behind Japan's Quake and Tsunami?* On Friday afternoon in Japan, disaster struck as a massive 8.9 magnitude earthquake generated a wall of water that surged over the east coast of the island nation, sweeping many to their deaths.

Here's what you need to know about the quake and its aftermath: Where did the earthquake come from? Japan is situated along the world's most active earthquake belt, the Pacific Ring of Fire, where rigid plates in the Earth's crust collide along the rim of the Pacific Ocean. This earthquake originated 231 miles (373 kilometers) northeast of Tokyo and 80 miles (130 km) east of Sendai, Honshu, in the Pacific Ocean. The earthquake occurred at a depth of about 15.2 miles (24.4 kilometers).

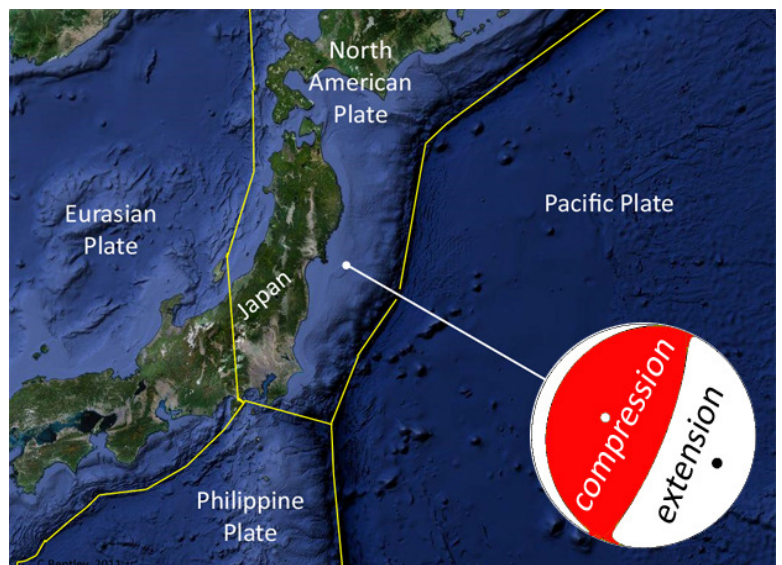
In this area, the Pacific Plate, the plate beneath the Pacific Ocean, is moving almost due west and being pushed down into the Earth's interior along a trench off Japan's east coast. On average, the Pacific Plate is moving at 3.5 inches (8.9 centimeters) per year, but this process is not continuous, according to Keith Sverdrup, a professor of geophysics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Movement may stop as the plates stick together for a period and energy will build up, so when the movement does finally occur, it is much more dramatic, Sverdrup said.

The process of one plate being pushed beneath another is called subduction, and it occurs all along the Ring of Fire, producing other earthquakes, including the 7.7 magnitude quake that struck off the coast of Indonesia in October.

How does this earthquake rank in global records? While the magnitude estimate of this latest earthquake may later be revised, 8.9 is the largest Japanese quake on record and the fifth-largest quake worldwide since 1900, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

#### Death toll 40 and rising, NBC Today Show March 11, 2011

- *An event geologists call historic.*





(Source: LiveScience, Stephanie Pappas, Remy Melina and Natalie Wolchover contributed to this article, continued...) How did the earthquake generate a tsunami? The earthquake caused the seafloor at the fault to suddenly shift vertically and this motion, in turn, shifted the water column above it. This motion then spawned a series of massive waves known as a tsunami. "It is not unlike dropping a pebble into a pond and seeing the ripple move," Sverdrup told LiveScience.com. The waves simultaneously spread toward the east coast of Japan and toward the west, on a much longer path to the west coast of North America. "Last night, Japan's tsunami was at a location at which we have had giant tsunamis in the past," said Harry Yeh, a professor at Oregon State University who was born in Japan. In 1896 and 1933, tsunamis hit in the same area...

### What makes a tsunami?

#### Tsunami size speed - Quake moved Japan, *NBC News*

- *Water upward of 30 feet high;*
- *The largest island of Japan was jolted 8 feet further to the east!*

(Source: LiveScience, Stephanie Pappas, Remy Melina and Natalie Wolchover contributed to this article, continued...) Yeh is an expert on ocean and coastal wave dynamics, including tsunamis. "A tsunami is really an intriguing phenomenon because it rarely happens," he said. The wave itself is unique, resembling neither a storm wave nor a long, tidal wave, and it alters both the ecology and the terrain of the land it touches. Watching the footage on TV, he said he was struck by how the speed of the water surging over fields and homes resembled that of a flooded river. The highest of the waves are believed to have reached 30 feet (9.1 meters).

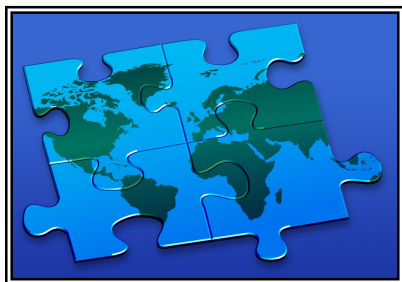
#### Deaths at 2800 and now nuke problems, *CBSNewsOnline*

- *Death tolls begin to skyrocket;*
- *Nuclear plants lose their cooling systems;*
- *Meltdown danger is now added as a third threat to the quake and the tsunami.*

Comparing this to the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, that one was 7.0 and that area is not as accustomed to big quakes. There was little or no preparedness on their part and estimates of the death toll there are around 100,000 - 200,000. Japan, on the other hand, was very prepared for major catastrophe, and yet they have the nuclear problem on top of the others.

### So, does God play a role in these things?

The 4 potential views of God related to our world:



1. God is not able to stop disaster and doesn't care to.
2. God is not able to stop disaster though He would like to.
3. God is able to stop disaster and just doesn't want to.
4. God is able to stop disaster and will absolutely stop it.

What do WE believe??? We believe that God is able and will!

**Let's look at the big picture from God's perspective:** Isaiah 55:7-13: (NRSV) <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. **This shows us God's love!** <sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. <sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. **This shows us God's wisdom!** <sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, **This shows us God's justice!** <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. **This shows us**



God's power! <sup>12</sup>*For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*  
<sup>13</sup>*Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. This shows us God's Plan!*

Okay - nice scripture, nice promise and a nice thought, but how does this address the question:

### Why doesn't God use His power to stop tragedy?

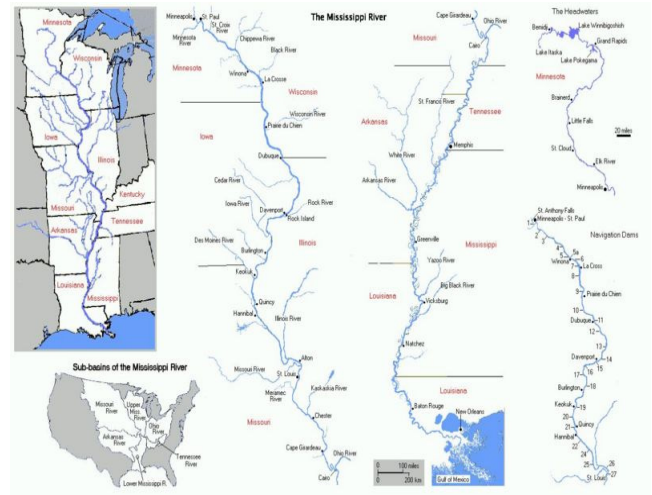
Let's use the Mississippi River as an example of God's plan:

What direction does it flow? South, according to the BIG PICTURE. In reality, it flows in different directions and appears off course.

Does it always flow at the same speed? No, its width and depth vary greatly.

Does it take the straightest path to its destination? No, though it takes the most sensible path.

Let's follow some of those twists and turns in God's plan and as we do, let's focus on when and how he intervenes and when and how he doesn't intervene:



## The Rules of the Plan

The **apparently** "off course directions" vs. The **actual** planned progress:

Allow for sin to enter...

*But not without consequence!*

Allow Satan's influence to rule...

*But not to the point of permanent damage!*

Allow man to make selfish choices...

*But not choices that destroy permanently!*

Allow degradation to dominate man...

*But not without prophecies of hope!*

Allow death and suffering to rule...

*But only for a time - then end it!*



**ALLOW FOR SIN TO ENTER...BUT NOT WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE!**

**God did not intervene in the entrance of sin:** Genesis 3:4-6 Genesis 3:23-24: Where was God? He was there - teaching the most valuable lessons of choice and consequences. There is a period of time where the plan of God appears to zigzag.

**ALLOW SATAN'S INFLUENCE TO RULE...BUT NOT TO THE POINT OF PERMANENT DAMAGE!**

**The ruler of this world:** John 12:31 Matthew 24:21-22: Where was God in all this? Watching - not only watching those who usurped authority, but watching the hearts of man as well and seeing who would be corrupted and why. The initial lesson of obedience had not lost its meaning; rather its importance would become clearer and clearer as the centuries would pass. God watched - and in His hand He held the clock - for this run of godlessness would only be allowed to last for a time.



**Reactor Failure Explained, Interview Katie Couric CBS**

- *Water must continue to flow around the rods to cool them down;*
- *Backup systems failed.*

**ALLOW MAN TO MAKE SELFISH CHOICES...BUT NOT CHOICES THAT DESTROY PERMANENTLY!**

**God allowed his chosen people to even reject Him!** 1 Samuel 8:4-10

**God allowed Israel their choice, though he did monitor and guide their kings:** 1 Samuel 15:19-23: Saul had the same greed and ego as Satan himself! God allows man to make selfish choices, but the choices are not allowed to be permanent against the record of eternity.

*With such depth of tragedy, where can we find TRUE hope?*

**ALLOW DEGRADATION TO DOMINATE MAN...BUT NOT WITHOUT PROPHECIES OF HOPE!**

There is always hope in the stories of rescue, but these are often clouded with sadness and despair.

Galatians 6:9-10: An interesting point is that most of the Japanese people are NOT Christian and most do not claim to be very religious.

**Degradation is allowed to dominate man:** Mark 15:9-15: Given the choice to free a righteous man, Jesus, or a criminal, Barabbas, they chose to free the criminal because he was drawing attention to God. That's what degradation does.

**Degradation is not allowed to exist in God's plan without hope:** Zephaniah 3:8-9: What a turnaround! Sometimes children need to see disappointment so they can understand and learn and be blessed later. What a great ending is described here.

**So, we should have GREAT HOPE for the future - through all of the pain, suffering and trouble!** Psalms 119:114-116: Our present reaction and our future planning show what we have learned from the experience.

*So, how big is this hope?*

**ALLOW DEATH AND SUFFERING TO RULE...BUT ONLY FOR A TIME - THEN END IT!**

Romans 6:23: (NASB) *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:20,21: Life under sin is futile because one can't overcome the reign of sin, but this is only for a certain period of time. Daniel 2:44-45: This message of hope describes an eternal kingdom on earth.

**From trouble comes prosperity:** Micah 4:1-5 **From trouble, comes perfection:** Revelation 21:4: There is something so much greater than the immediate tragedy. Focus on helping where we can and on the goodness and glory that God has planned through Jesus.

*So is the Japan earthquake part of God's plan?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*