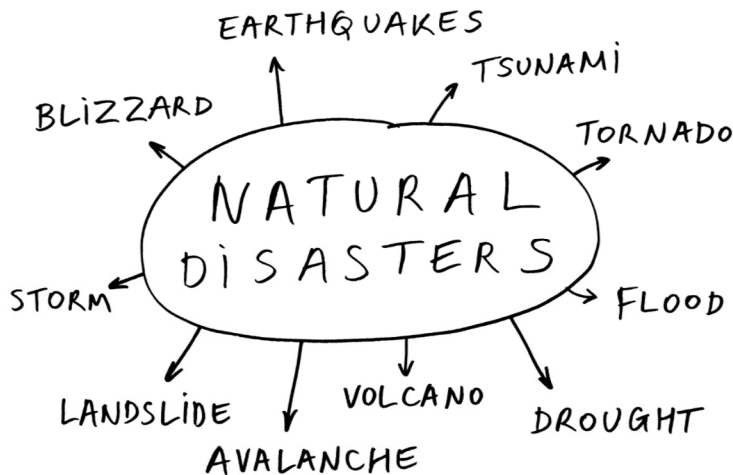




Are Natural Disasters Sending Us a Message?

Jeremiah 23:19: (NASB) Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest; it will swirl down on the head of the wicked.



As time goes on, many of us will look back at 2017 and remember it as a year of storms. We have had storms of political division and unrest, storms of tragic events ranging from terrorism to the senseless taking of innocent lives, and we have had literal storms, specifically three major hurricanes that came back-to-back-to-back and left a wake of devastation, homelessness, loss and death. We will focus on hurricanes and other natural disasters. Are these events a coded message from God? Is God punishing us for our blatant sin, or is He telling us to mend our foolish ways? Now, if you do not believe in God, could these

natural disasters be a coded message from "Mother Earth" letting us know that we have messed with her precious and vital ecosystem for too long? Are there lessons here for us to learn?

 **Hurricane Harvey not by accident, *Right Wing Watch News*, Rick Joyner, Jim Bakker and God's Judgment**

- (Rick Joyner) But, the real issue with the weather and everything else on the earth has to do with sin and wickedness, or righteousness. The whole earth will cry out because of the shedding of innocent blood - the earth cries out. That's what throws nature off more than dumping CO₂ into the air.
- (Jim Bakker) I have felt - and I was afraid to share with anybody - that this flood is from God. It's a judgment on America somehow. Am I off, or do you feel like it could be?
- (Rick Joyner) Yeah, I think anything like this is not by accident. These kinds of things don't happen by accident.

Was that particular hurricane from God? For us to determine accurate, *biblically-based* answers, we will need to establish the patterns that God used in Scripture when He employed natural events. So, here are the key questions:

1. WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?
2. WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?
3. WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?



First let's touch on the fact that God has set up the brilliance of nature:

Job 36:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶*Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; the number of His years is unsearchable. ²⁷For He draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist, ²⁸which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly. ²⁹Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thundering of His pavilion?*

The book of Job gave a straightforward description of how rain happens, long before weather cycles were known. A hurricane uses incredible amounts of warm ocean water to give it power and intensity.

God has put the balance of nature in place to give all an opportunity to live:

Matthew 5:43-45: (NASB) ⁴³*You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy - The Scriptures did not actually say to hate your enemy; this was added by the traditions of the Pharisees.

Jesus took it one step further and instructed them to *love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*. He said this is what God wants you to do because He provides rain on both the righteous and unrighteous. There is an incredible lack of judgment in nature according to the words of Jesus. We cannot base our entire opinion on this subject on this one verse, but it gives us an important place to start. God spreads the abundance of nature to everyone, even though the earth is imperfect and there are floods, droughts, etc. Nature feeds the planet without regard to the sinfulness of the inhabitants.

God also used the occurrence of rain as a way to bless specific people:

Deuteronomy 11:10-14: (NASB) ¹⁰*For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, ¹²a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.*

This Promised Land was obviously the place God wanted His people to be able to freely worship Him. It was described as being well-watered, implying there were other areas of imbalance.

¹³*It shall come about, if you listen obediently to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, ¹⁴that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.*

God brought them out of slavery and talked to them through Moses. *If you listen obediently to My commandments* - The conditions of being God's chosen in His chosen land were simple: "This is what I have planned for you, but you (His chosen people, Israel) have to be obedient. Fidelity to My ways will bring you a rich earthly harvest." The consequences of straying from Him are implied to be a *withholding* of such abundance.



The brilliance of nature is in place, but sometimes nature in an imperfect world gets out of hand. Is God behind this?

**God DOES use nature as a tool to impart His will.
How did He use rain to make His point?**

As we go down this road of God using, altering or timing natural events, it is important to establish right from the start that God was never arbitrary with His use of nature. As we shall see, He always used it for a specific purpose, at a specific time and in a specific way. God knows what He is doing!

 **Is America listening, Pastor Kevin Swanson on God's Vengeance Through Hurricanes, Right Wing Watch**

- Hurricane Katrina contributing \$110 billion of damage - now hurricane Harvey has come and hit Houston and now back to New Orleans, and it looks like this hurricane has done something like \$50-60 billion of damage, being probably the third most devastating hurricane to hit America. Now, of course in the perspective of everybody out there that takes more of a secular world view, God has nothing to do with these hurricanes. God doesn't want Houston to repent. God doesn't want New Orleans to repent. God doesn't want the nation to repent. I mean, what in the world do they have to repent of?
- Do you want the top ten or just alphabetical? There's tons of things!
- Well, there's lot of things to repent of. See again, Jesus sends the message home - unless they repent, unless Americans repent, unless Houston repents, unless New Orleans repents, they will all likewise perish. That's the message that the Lord Jesus Christ is sending home right now to America. Is America listening?

The *whole world* is full of sin - not just in Houston and New Orleans - it is everywhere! Are these natural disasters sent by God to shake us out of our lethargy to change our ways?

The infographic is divided into three horizontal sections by dotted lines. The top section has a light blue background and features a large blue water droplet icon. The middle section has a dark blue background and features an icon of five stylized human figures in different colors. The bottom section has a light blue background and features a magnifying glass icon.

WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?
God used rain and water;
sometimes He withheld these.

WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?
God's own rebellious people. 1 Kings 17:1

WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
The withholding of rain was exactly what God had forewarned would happen if His people turned away from Him. James 5:17,18



1 Kings 17:1: (NASB) *Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.*

James 5:17-18: (NASB) *¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*

Is God responsible for these things? God sent Adam and Eve out into the unfinished earth. The reason we have natural disasters is because of the unfinished earth. Is God trying to get our attention in that He left us to ourselves and this is what happens?

We will answer this shortly.

 **Part 1, Nature is Speaking, Julia Roberts (narrator), Conservation International**

- *Some call me Nature. Others call me Mother Nature. I've been here for over four and a half billion years - 22,500 times longer than you. I don't really need people, but people need me. Yes, your future depends on me. When I thrive, you thrive. When I falter, you falter...or worse.*

After reviewing God's patterns in the Bible, we do not believe God (or the pagan Mother Nature!) is sending us specific messages.

Genesis 6:5-8: (NASB) *⁵Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷The LORD said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them. ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*

Genesis 6:14: (NASB) *Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.*

This was a vessel of deliverance for the human race.

Genesis 7:17-18: (NASB) *¹⁷Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. ¹⁸The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.*



2 Peter 2:4-5: (Leeser) *⁴For if, God, spared not, messengers, when they sinned, but, to pits of gloom, consigning them, in the lowest hades, delivered them up to be kept, unto judgment, ⁵and, an ancient world, spared not, but, with seven others, preserved, Noah, a proclaimer, of righteousness, a flood, upon a world of ungodly persons, letting loose...*



What can we learn from God's use of rain and water, be it too little or too much?



WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?

God used rain and water;
one time He deluged the earth.



WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?

All of mankind had fallen into a deep and powerful evil, led and corrupted by fallen angels. Genesis 6:5-8



WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

God planned for the preservation of His creation through Noah. Genesis 6:14, 7:17-18
The necessity of destruction came as a result of the level of evil practiced by spiritual beings as they violated God's rules of creation and sought to create a hybrid race. 2 Peter 2:4-5

- Disobedience by those who absolutely knew better was met with consequences.
- God provided sufficient notice of what would happen. Everyone was in a state of accountability.
- God's earthly demonstrations of sovereignty were dynamic and directed to His earthly people.

The first element was water.

Does God use earth-related events to further prove His sovereignty?

When we think about earth and natural disasters, we think about earthquakes. A month ago Mexico experienced its strongest earthquake in a century, which just piles more natural disaster tragedy upon the recent hurricanes. Does God use earthquakes to "get people's attention"?



Now to answer the previous question...

It is true God allowed man to experience sin, and its consequence is an imbalance in nature. However, God is not "aiming" a storm at this one and that one for any arbitrary reason as in, "Houston needs to repent, so let's send them a major hurricane and flood."

Could Satan be controlling these elements as part of the permission of evil? Possibly. While we do not have a lot of scriptural evidence of his controlling nature here and now, we do know he is described as the *prince of the power of the air*. (Ephesians 2:2)

It is likely that Satan was behind the storm on the Sea of Galilee trying to derail the ministry of Jesus. (Matthew 8:23-27) Jesus said, *peace, be still* (Mark 4:39) and it was over. Clearly, Jesus had power over such things.

The word *rebuke* in Matthew 8:26 when Jesus rebuked the wind is the same word when he rebuked the demon that possessed the child in Matthew 17:18.

So, do natural disasters come from God because He put us in an unfinished world? No, the experience of sin is a gift from God, because it is a terminal experience with a beginning, middle and end. Eternity follows where sin is removed. God gives us that experience and all that comes with it so we can see what we are missing by being without Him. Does He "aim" tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes? *Not at this time*. Has He ever done this? Yes, so what is the difference? More soon.



Calls world to judgment, Pastor Kevin Swanson on God's Vengeance Through Hurricanes, Right Wing Watch

- *Stuff to repent of - now we're not saying that it's a one for one. We're not saying that God sent the hurricane just because of "this." But we are looking for stuff to repent of for the state of Texas and for the city of Houston. We're hoping that they're paying attention. We're hoping that they believe there is a sovereign God who holds the entire universe in His hands, and fires up the stars that can burn for billions and billions of years with billions and billions and billions of kilowatts of fusion power. That this God who is all powerful and has brought judgment upon the entire globe through a worldwide flood some 4,000 years ago, and threatens to bring a judgment upon the entire world where He'll burn the world with fire and also provides for a hell for those who refuse to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

This sounds like Dark Ages theology based on fear. In our Information Age, we know better. We can look up Scripture verses and check the translations. We now have the ability to research the Hebrew and Greek words and to study topically. **Christian Questions has done many podcasts analyzing the topic of hellfire. Please search "hell" on our website to continue your study.**





WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?

God used the shifting of the physical earth.



WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?

Korah and his kin were Levites. As such, they were held in high esteem and honored within the nation as those who assisted in their worship of God. Numbers 16:1-5



WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Their accusations against Moses were ridiculous. Remember, Moses did not *want* to lead. They sought unmerited power. Proverbs 16:18, Numbers 16:12-14 Each of these men revealed their true allegiance, and it was not to God nor the man God had chosen. Moses proclaimed what would happen before it actually happened - these men were warned! Remember, they had been delivered from slavery through many miracles. Numbers 16:23-26, 31-32

Numbers 16:1-5: (NASB) ¹Now Korah...with Dathan and Abiram,...and On...took action, ²and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. ³They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD? ⁴When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; ⁵and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself.

Proverbs 16:18: (NASB) *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.*

Numbers 16:12-14: (NASB) ¹²Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram...but they said, We will not come up. ¹³Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us? ¹⁴Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!

Numbers 16:23-26: (NASB) ²³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴Speak to the congregation, saying, Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. ²⁵Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, ²⁶and he



spoke to the congregation, saying, Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.

Numbers 16:31-32: (NASB) ³¹As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; ³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions.

What can we learn from God's use of the earth and its ability to shift?

- Disobedience by those who absolutely knew better was met with consequences.
- God provided sufficient notice of what would happen.
- God's earthly demonstrations of sovereignty were dynamic and directed to His earthly people.

God's use of water and earth are clear, focused and NOT arbitrary!
What about His use of the wind?

As we see a pattern begin to develop with God using the elements of the physical world, we can draw a confident breath in the way He has displayed His sovereignty, and through these things shows us a God who is wise, thoughtful and NOT a God who is angry and impetuous. As we now look at His use of wind, we should expect the same.

God did use these elements in the Bible in specific circumstances. But nothing was arbitrary about how He used them. To say God aimed this or that disaster at a particular city is arbitrary as they are not His people of the Old Testament. These disasters are just part of the natural world. We do an incredible disservice to God by attributing these events to Him.



WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?

God used wind.
Sometimes He withheld it or released it.



WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?

Both God's chosen as beneficiaries and
the enemies of God's chosen as casualties.
Exodus 14:21-22



WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The wind gave God's chosen dry land
as it gave their enemies a path to destruction.



Exodus 14:21-22: (NASB) ²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. ²²The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.



God and former mayor, Right Wing Watch News, Rick Joyner, Jim Bakker and God's Judgment

- (Rick Joyner) *If we don't get these clear messages they are going to get more and more severe. The Lord doesn't like to do things; He'd prefer mercy over judgment, but His judgments are mercy if we're not listening. If we're not listening, we're not hearing and responding. We have to stand up against the perversion of our times and call it what it is.*
- (Jim Bakker) *Do you remember what the former mayor of Houston did? She ordered all the preachers to turn in their sermons before they preached them. Just remember, God gets the last word! God gets the last word. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

True - God is not mocked. But they took this Houston hurricane from 2017 and attached it to an act in 2014 of the former Mayor of Houston.

Multiple sources include:

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/15/houston-pastor-sermon_n_5992044.html

The Washington Post, "Houston Subpoenas Pastors' Sermons in Gay Rights Ordinance Case," October 15, 2014

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/houston.asp>

If God in fact was trying to send Houston a message, He was several years late. This seems like just a convenient excuse to show people the wrath of God. The theology of the Dark Ages was one of fear. If the church could make the people afraid, you could control the population and make money.

That is not the way God uses wind. There was always a specific purpose and it always involved Israel. Notice there are no examples of God using weather for or against people in the New Testament.

In fact, the suggestion of such a thing resulted in a strong rebuke from Jesus:

Luke 9:52-56: (NASB) ⁵²and he sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. ⁵³But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.



God *did* use natural events to affect his natural people in the natural world. But when it comes to Christianity, there is not one example of a natural disaster used to further God's plan. Why? Because now it is about the spiritual people through Christ. It is no longer about the physical chosen land, it is about spirituality. This is by design.



WHAT NATURAL EVENT IS GOD USING?

God used wind.

Sometimes He withheld it or released it.



WHO IS BEING AFFECTED BY THE EVENT?

The wind got Jonah's attention because it put others' lives in jeopardy. Jonah 1:1-4



WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

This wind was God's shaking Jonah back to the reality of his life and his allegiance. Jonah 4:8

Jonah 1:1-4: (NASB) ¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ²Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me. ³But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. ⁴The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

Jonah 4:8: (NASB) When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, Death is better to me than life.

What can we learn from God's use of the earth and its ability to shift?

- Disobedience by those who absolutely knew better was met with consequences.
- God provided sufficient notice of what would happen.
- God's earthly demonstrations of sovereignty were dynamic and directed to his earthly people.



Taken in context, our theme text below shows us another important point regarding God's word and the natural elements: much of what is written is highly symbolic.

This text is spoken to Israel's false prophets at the time of their 70-year desolation:

Jeremiah 23:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹*Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest; it will swirl down on the head of the wicked. (Specifically said to those false prophets - not the "average" wicked person.)* ²⁰*The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; in the last days you will clearly understand it.* ²¹*I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.*

The prophets were opposed to God but purported to represent Him. The anger of God was towards those who should know better. The use of wind is very specific in these verses. It gives us the sense that God's reason for using it had to do with His physical, earthly people.

Literal or symbolic, the message is the same: God has ultimate control.

**We have water, earth and wind and God remains reasonable.
What about His use of fire from heaven?**

What about fire? What about lightning, or the horrible event of a volcanic eruption? As we will see, God does use things of this nature, but not at the expense of His already-established integrity of action.

As of the date of this podcast, wildfires are burning out of control in northern California. Does this mean God is trying to get the attention of California? No.



Part 2, *Nature is Speaking*, Julia Roberts (narrator), Conservation International

- But I've been here for eons. I have fed species greater than you, and I have starved species greater than you. My oceans, my soil, my flowing streams, my forests - they all can take you or leave you. How you chose to live each day whether you regard or disregard me doesn't really matter to me. One way or the other your actions will determine your fate not mine. I am Nature. I will go on. I am prepared to evolve. Are you?*



The oceans, soil, flowing streams and forests all belong to God. Nature is the created. By the Creator's grace, He is sovereign, powerful, wise and merciful. He is not sending storms at these targets to get peoples' attention. The Bible does not give us precedent to say otherwise.

But is the earth going to be burned up?

2 Peter 3:10: (NASB) ¹⁰*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.*

But then what happens? The people all come together and worship God; the physical earth is not literally burned up. The evil society, our present social order, is destroyed to make way for Christ's kingdom. Additional Scriptures (especially in Revelation) speak of earthquakes, which are the symbolic shaking



of civil and religious powers. God will purify what can be saved and destroy evil.



Their evil was exceedingly dark. About 15 years before their destruction those cities were shown God, His ways and His righteousness through the bravery of Abram and the blessing of Melchizedek:

Genesis 14:17-23: (NASB) ¹⁷Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him....¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹He blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. He gave him a tenth of all. ²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself. ²²Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours.

This is a shocking revelation that few talk about when discussing Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom was involved in a battle gone bad. Abram rescued his nephew, Lot, who had been taken captive along with many others. Abram was also able to recover all of Sodom's possessions. When Abram presented them to the king of Sodom, Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, appeared. And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand - the king was told God was responsible.

Take the goods for yourself - offered by the king, but Abram refused. The king owed his allegiance to Abram who saved his people and possessions. This city had accountability. They definitely knew about God and righteousness. They knew Abram and Lot worshipped God.

 **Repent or perish in hell, Pastor Kevin Swanson on God's Vengeance Through Hurricanes, Right Wing Watch**

- Now, I realize that the world mocks this kind of a message. These are the kinds of programs that get picked up on Right Wing Watch, and we are typically mocked for this kind of thing. You ask why we do these programs, because we want to be sure that everybody in reach of our voices gets the heads up: unless you repent you will likewise perish. And repairing your houses in Houston after a hurricane is useless if you're just going to go to hell. Repairing your houses after a hurricane only to go to hell afterwards is just not worth it. Hell is eternal destruction, and there is no repairing your houses or your lives in hell.



We are talking about destruction by fire and many who preach hellfire as eternal torment (with which we unequivocally disagree) talk about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - but they neglect to finish the story. More on this shortly.



WHY ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED AND HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

God "verifies" their sin. Genesis 18:20-21
Sodom proves their culpability to destruction.
Genesis 19:24-28
This utter destruction would be an historical reminder for ages to come of the degradation of sin. 2 Peter 2:6-7
But it would also be an opportunity for life because of Jesus.
Matthew 11:23-24

Genesis 18:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰And the LORD said, The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. ²¹I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.

Sodom proved their culpability to destruction. We can only speculate on what actually happened - it could have been lightning, a volcanic eruption or even in conjunction with the area's tar pits. (See Genesis 14:10) They lived in a strange physical environment in relation to their destruction.

Genesis 19:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, ²⁵and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

Out of heaven - brimstone and tarpits were everywhere and could have literally rained down ashes from the sky. Whatever it was, it created utter destruction.

2 Peter 2:6-7: (NASB) ⁶...and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; ⁷and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men...

This sounds harsh, but they were an incredibly dark and evil people. However, the story is not over. They were made an example that sin brings destruction - not eternal torment.

Matthew 11:23-24: (NASB) ²³And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.



They had the ability in their hearts to see goodness at that time but they did not. But their destruction is not permanent. They will have a better time in the Day of Judgment - they will be resurrected along with all of mankind.

What can we learn from God's use of power and fire as destructive forces?

- Disobedience by those who absolutely knew better was met with consequences.
- God provided sufficient notice of what would happen.
- God's earthly demonstrations of sovereignty were dynamic and directed to his earthly people.

Natural disasters are natural disasters, not acts of God. God is not arbitrarily throwing things at people to try to get them to repent because His plan is already in place for their repentance. He has already given Jesus. The price has already been paid. Sin just needs to be allowed to finish its destruction so righteousness can come into play for everyone - those in Sodom, Houston, New Orleans and every other place of disaster.

God does NOT provoke natural disasters.

*So, are natural disasters sending us a message?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



An interesting comparison from the Old to New Testaments regarding calling fire down from heaven.

Old Testament - Elijah calling fire down from heaven in response to Israel's idolatry:

2 Kings 1:1-16: (NASB) ¹Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. ²And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness.

Ahab's son, Ahaziah, obviously learned nothing from all that Elijah did to represent God.

³But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? ⁴Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die. Then Elijah departed. ⁵When the messengers returned to him he said to them, Why have you returned? ⁶They said to him, A man came up to meet us and said to us, Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die. ⁷He said to them, What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you? ⁸They answered him, He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite. ⁹Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of



the hill. And he said to him, O man of God, the king says, Come down. ¹⁰Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Some commentators say this was lightning - whatever the case, remember these were soldiers of Israel facing and defying a prophet of God.

¹¹So he again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he said to him, O man of God, thus says the king, Come down quickly. ¹²Elijah replied to them, If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty. Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

The lack of response to the death of the previous company of men indicates the depth of idolatrous pride that was rampant in God's own chosen people, Israel.

¹³So he again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. ¹⁴Behold fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight. ¹⁵The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, Go down with him; do not be afraid of him. So he arose and went down with him to the king.

There is mercy from God when those opposed to Him show humility.

¹⁶Then he said to him, Thus says the LORD, Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.

Elijah delivers God's message, and the king does die.

New Testament - Jesus' own followers wanting to imitate the judgment of God:

Luke 9:51-56: (NASB) ⁵¹When the days were approaching for his ascension, he was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵²and he sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. ⁵³But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.

Jesus is saying: such physical interventions in the lives of men are not for us here and now. This stage of God's plan is about the message of salvation and not the exacting of justice.

(Source: Biblical commentary from Jamieson-Fausset-Brown) *Then the Lord rained...brimstone and fire from...heaven* — God, in accomplishing His purposes, acts immediately or mediately through the agency of means; and there are strong grounds for believing that it was in the latter way He effected the overthrow of the cities of the plain — that it was, in fact, by a volcanic eruption. The raining down of fire and brimstone from heaven is perfectly accordant with this idea since those very substances, being raised into the air by the force of the volcano, would fall in a fiery shower on the surrounding region. This view seems countenanced by Job (Job 1:16 18:15).



An example of the use of natural events by the “prince of the power of the air:”

Mark 4:37-41: (NASB) ³⁷*And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.* ³⁸*Jesus himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?* ³⁹*And he got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Hush, be still. And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.* ⁴⁰*And he said to them, Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?* ⁴¹*They became very much afraid and said to one another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*

The larger context of the theme text; written when Israel was being desolated for 70 years:

Jeremiah 23:9-22: (NASB) ⁹*As for the prophets: My heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I have become like a drunken man, even like a man overcome with wine, because of the LORD and because of His holy words.* ¹⁰*For the land is full of adulterers; for the land mourns because of the curse. The pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course also is evil and their might is not right.* ¹¹*For both prophet and priest are polluted; even in My house I have found their wickedness, declares the LORD.* ¹²*Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them, they will be driven away into the gloom and fall down in it; for I will bring calamity upon them, the year of their punishment, declares the LORD.* ¹³*Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: they prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray.* ¹⁴*Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: the committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.* ¹⁵*Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood and make them drink poisonous water, for from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone forth into all the land.* ¹⁶*Thus says the LORD of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.* ¹⁷*They keep saying to those who despise Me, the LORD has said, You will have peace; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, Calamity will not come upon you.* ¹⁸*But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?* ¹⁹*Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest; it will swirl down on the head of the wicked.* ²⁰*The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; in the last days you will clearly understand it.* ²¹*I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.* ²²*But if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.*

A few “natural events” in the Old Testament that God used or that symbolized God’s actions. Context: The routing of an enemy who attacked an ally of Israel by God.

After a great confusion within the ranks of the enemy, there was a massive hail storm as they fled:

Joshua 10:11: (NASB) *As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.*

These enemies obviously knew Israel and the power of their God and stood against it.



An example of God's anger at Israel:

Isaiah 30:30: (NASB) *And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the flame of a consuming fire in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.*

Context: God's anger at Israel for forging an alliance with Egypt using very symbolic language:

Isaiah 30:27-33: (NASB) *²⁷Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation and His tongue is like a consuming fire; ²⁸His breath is like an overflowing torrent, which reaches to the neck, to shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, and to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin. ²⁹You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, and gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the flame of a consuming fire in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones. ³¹For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified, when He strikes with the rod. ³²And every blow of the rod of punishment, which the LORD will lay on him, will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; and in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them. ³³For Topheth has long been ready, indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, a pyre of fire with plenty of wood; the breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.*

The following is a future prophecy of God's earthly kingdom rule. The physical consequences are in play as all of the world will then be under the rule of God:

Zechariah 14:17-19: (NASB) *¹⁷And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. ¹⁸If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*