



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?



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: 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: *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: 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. 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? 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?

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? Their withholding of rain was exactly what God has forewarned would happen if His people turned away from Him. James 5:17,18

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.

What natural event is God using? God used rain and water; on 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.

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.

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.

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 has 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



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.

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.



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. 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 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 rain and water; 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 shaking Jonah back to the reality of his life and his allegiance. Jonah 4:8

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: 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. 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.

But is the earth going to be burned up? 2 Peter 3:10: 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.

What natural event is God using? God used fire from heaven.

Who is being affected by the event? The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

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: 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.

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 19:24-25: *Out of heaven* - brimstone and tar pits were everywhere and could have literally rained down ashes from the sky. Whatever it was, it created utter destruction. 2 Peter 2:6-7: 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: 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...!*