

**THE SOWER
ARTHUR CHURCH OF CHRIST
415 W. 4TH STREET
ARTHUR, IL 61951
Ron Bartnen, Evangelist**

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WHO'S TO BLAME?

Whether it is a tsunami, earthquake, tornado, or pandemic, people invariably ask the question, "Who's to blame for all this destruction and loss of life?"

Generally, the answers fall into two extremes:

1. There are those who confidently affirm that God would never be responsible for such events. After all, God is a God of love (1 John 4:8).
2. There are those who confidently affirm that God is responsible for such events, and uses them as "wake-up calls" to discipline people for their sins.

I am convinced that Scripture teaches that both positions are incorrect, and here's why.

Position #1 – God would never be responsible for catastrophic events for God is a God of love.

Reply – A superficial survey of the biblical narrative debunks this theory. The Bible is replete with plagues, illnesses, and natural disasters which were instigated by God. Remember the ten plagues God brought upon the Egyptians (Exodus 7-11)? Or how about a natural disaster that claimed the entire population of the earth, saving eight people Z(Genesis 6-7)? No, the fact that God is love does not prevent Him from using catastrophes to fulfill His purposes.

Position #2 – God is behind all these catastrophic events as a means of disciplining sinners.

Reply – The problem with this position is that it affirms what one cannot know. While it is true that God can use calamities to fulfill His purpose, there is no way to know that present-day calamities are His handiwork. I know that God brought the plagues on Egypt, and brought a flood on the entire world because the Bible tells me so. But where there is no revelation, I am unable to discern between a random act of nature and a divinely appointed use of nature. Because of our inability to know for certain, we must be very careful not to attribute to God what He may not have done and inaccurately represent Him (Job 42:7).

According to the Bible, God has employed catastrophes to fulfill His purposes, but the only way we know that is true is that He has revealed it to us in the Bible. Since we have no revelation about modern-day catastrophes, we must learn to refrain from affirming what we do not know.

Whether a calamity is the result of nature or a purposeful act of God, let us allow such disasters to remind us of the brevity of life and our purpose while we are here. –Steve Higginbotham, MercEmail

PSALM 91:1-7

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day:

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness:

Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee.

SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Few words are of more significance than those spoken in the face of death. Many words of loved ones will be forgotten, but rarely forgotten are those final words spoken to us from a loved one's dying-bed. Certainly the words spoken by Jesus upon the cross are words of tremendous meaning. As recorded by the Gospel writers, they are seven in number:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). What better view into the heart of Jesus could there be than this? This is what the cross of Christ is all about.

“Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:43) was spoken to a dying thief. These words emphasize that the cross is not just about saving those with exemplary lives. Jesus died for all.

“Woman, behold thy son,” spoken to His mother, Mary,, referring to the disciple John; and then to John, referring to Mary, **“behold thy mother”** (John 18L25-27). Jesus recognized a responsibility for the care of His mother, placing her in the hands of a loving disciple. (Continue next column)

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), a cry prophetically uttered by David in Psalm 22:1. It is the cry of the lost, forsaken by God because of man's guilt. However, it was not for any guilt of His own, of which He had none, but for our guilt. He died as our sin-bearer. It is as Paul declared, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“I thirst” (John 19:238). This was His only reference to a physical need while on the cross.

“It is finished” (John 19:30). The divine work of man's redemption had been accomplished.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). His was a voluntary surrender of His life to God. He had told the disciples, “I lay down my life for the sheep.... No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:15b, 18a).

These words spoken by our dying Savior are truly a window into His heart. —
Ron

“THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND” was spoken by Paul, bound in prison for his declaration of the gospel (2 Timothy 2:9). Being in prison and bound in chains opened new doors for the “furtherance of the gospel...so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places” (Philippians 1:12-

13). Being unable to be at public worship and somewhat “bound” in our homes does not bind the gospel. It is accessible on the Internet. One source I know of in our area is the Lakeland church in Mattoon(<https://www.facebook.com/lakelandchurchofchrist/>). You may tune in on Sundays (10:30 a.m.) and be nourished in the word of God. The one the Highway church in Mattoon is promoting is from the Crieve Hall church in Tennessee, (www.crievehall.org) with a full service, including communion. Let families and friends know of these opportunities as well. Satan assuredly desires this virus for, among other reasons, the binding of the word of God. Foil his plan: use this time in family worship and the reading and study of God’s word. Let God’s word be loosed in your life.