

# **What Does the Bible Teach About “Acts of God”?**

**(Keeping the faith in the midst  
of a natural disaster)**

**December 15, 2022 Thursday  
Indepth Bible Class of the  
Trilacoochee church of Christ**



# “It Was an ‘Act of God!’”

- In recent years, natural disasters have occurred all over the world
  - Tsunami in Asia (2004)
  - Hurricane Katrina (2005)
  - Cyclone in Myanmar (2008)
  - Earthquake in Haiti (2010)
  - Hurricane Ian in Florida (2022)
- When disasters strike, people often ask:
  - Why did it happen?
  - Did God cause it?
  - If not, why did He allow it?

# “It Was an ‘Act of God!’”

- Insurance definition of “An Act of God”:  
“An event which is caused solely by the effect of nature or natural causes and without any interference by humans whatsoever. An Act of God refers to an accident or other natural event caused without human intervention that could not have been prevented by reasonable foresight or care.” (*Wiktionary*)

# “It Was an ‘Act of God!’”

- Theologians differ on their interpretations of it.
  - “God causes disasters” R. C. Sproul on Divine Providence: “In a universe governed by God, there are no chance events.”
  - Self-serving, ignorant televanglists go on the air to claim God’s judgment against the victims.
  - “God allows tragedies to occur” (Deism). God started this world in the beginning, and now just sits back uninvolved allowing it to run as it will.
  - “Just accept unfortunate events as part of life”
    - Matt. 5:45 - “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

# Did God Cause It?

- It is common to call natural disasters “acts of God,” because God used natural disasters in the past.
  - Gen. 6:6-7, 11-13, 17 - “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them...’ 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth...’ 17 ‘And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.’”

# Did God Cause It?

- Gen. 18:20 - “And the LORD said, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave...”
- Gen. 19:24-25 - “Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.”

# Did God Cause It?

- Amos 4:6-12 - “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; Yet you have not returned to Me, Says the LORD. 7 I also withheld rain from you, When there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, And where it did not rain the part withered. 8 So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, But they were not satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me, Says the LORD. 9 I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees, The locust devoured them; Yet you have not returned to Me, Says the LORD. 10 I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; Your young men I killed with a sword, Along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me, Says the LORD. 11 I overthrew some of you, As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me, Says the LORD. 12 Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”

# Did God Cause It?

- It is a mistake to attribute all disasters to the direct purpose of the hand of God.
  - Disasters are part of natural processes of this planet's design and function.
  - Hurricanes are part of the seasonal circulation of the ocean water that maintains a temperate climate.
  - Volcanoes are part of plate tectonics resulting from the stable spin and tilt of the planet.



# Did God Cause It?

- Sometimes God simply allows such events to run their course according to “time and chance,” and therefore many experience tragedies through no sin of their own.
  - Ecc. 9:11-12 - “I returned and saw under the sun that- The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.”

# Did God Cause It?

- Some disasters are man-made.
  - Chernobyl nuclear disaster,
  - December 15, 1967 Silver Bridge collapse in Point Pleasant WV,
  - Most contemporary forest fires,
  - September 11, 2001 collapse of the Twin Towers in New York.

# Did God Cause It?

- Suffering often comes upon the innocent and righteous; it is not limited to sinners.
  - Job 1:8-22 - Job was tested because he was righteous, not because of sin.
  - 2Cor. 11:23-28 - Paul's suffering resulted from his faithful service as an apostle, not because of any sin he may have committed.

# Did God Cause It?

- We should never make the mistake of Job's friends, assuming the guilt of those who suffer tragedy.
  - Job 42:7 - "And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

# Did God Cause It?

- Jesus implied that sin had nothing to do with Pilate's slaughter of the Galileans or the disastrous collapse of the tower of Siloam.
  - Luke 13:1-5 - "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.'"
- In the absence of direct Divine revelation, there is no way we can know if "God caused it."

# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- It keeps this world from becoming too attractive, encouraging us to look for something better.
  - Matt. 6:19-21 - “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
  - Phil. 3:20 - “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - Heb. 13:14 - “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”

# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- It can bring out the best in people: patience, generosity, a sense of community.
  - Rom. 5:3-4 - “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”
  - James 1:2-4 - “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- It encourages people to draw near to God in repentance.
  - 2Cor. 7:10 - “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”



# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- Whenever the innocent and righteous die, we should bear in mind:
  - The death of the righteous is precious to God.
  - Psalm 116:15 - “Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints.”

# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- The death of the righteous removes them from suffering and evil.
  - Isa. 57:1-2 - “The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. 2 He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.”

# Then Why Did God Allow It?

- The death of the righteous is a blessing.
  - Rev. 14:13 - “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”
- Even the innocent young are delivered from heartache and sorrow.
- Caused by God or not, disasters can result in some good.

# What Can I Do About It?

- Disasters supply us with opportunities to do good to others.
  - Gal. 6:10 - “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

# What Can I Do About It?

- Do good to ALL men.
  - Luke 10:30-37 - “Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ 37 And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

# What Can I Do About It?

- Especially the household of faith.
  - Rom. 15:25-26 - “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”

# What Can I Do About It?

- 2Cor. 8:1-4 - “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”

# What Can I Do About It?

- 1Cor. 16:1-3 - “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.”



# What Can I Do About It?

- Pray
  - 1Tim. 2:1-2 - “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”
  - We should pray for those directly afflicted, and their loved ones.
  - We should pray for those providing relief.
  - We should pray that people would be safe from future occurrences.

# What Can I Do About It?

- Then, we must have the faith and wisdom to know that such things will happen in a fallen world, but they will never take place in heaven.