

Question: "Why does God allow natural disasters, i.e. earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis?"

Answer: Why does God allow earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis, typhoons, cyclones, mudslides, and other natural disasters? Tragedies such as the 2004 tsunami in Asia, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 2008 cyclone in Myanmar, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti cause many people to question God's goodness. It is distressing that natural disasters are often termed "acts of God" while no "credit" is given to God for years, decades, or even centuries of peaceful weather. God created the whole universe and the laws of nature (Genesis 1:1). Most natural disasters are a result of these laws at work. Hurricanes, typhoons, and tornados are the results of divergent weather patterns colliding. Earthquakes are the result of the earth's plate structure shifting. A tsunami is caused by an underwater earthquake.

The Bible proclaims that Jesus Christ holds all of nature together (Colossians 1:16-17). Could God prevent natural disasters? Absolutely! Does God sometimes influence the weather? Yes, as we see in Deuteronomy 11:17 and James 5:17. Numbers 16:30-34 shows us that God sometimes causes natural disasters as a judgment against sin. The book of Revelation describes many events which could definitely be described as natural disasters (Revelation chapters 6, 8, and 16). Is every natural disaster a punishment from God? Absolutely not.

In much the same way that God allows evil people to commit evil acts, God allows the earth to reflect the consequences sin has had on creation. Romans 8:19-21 tells us, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." The fall of humanity into sin had effects on everything, including the world we inhabit. Everything in creation is subject to "frustration" and "decay." Sin is the ultimate cause of natural disasters just as it is the cause of death, disease, and suffering.

We can understand why natural disasters occur. What we do not understand is why God allows them to occur. Why did God allow the tsunami to kill over 225,000 people in Asia? Why did God allow Hurricane Katrina to destroy the homes of thousands of people? For one thing, such events shake our confidence in this life and force us to think about eternity. Churches are usually filled after disasters as people realize how tenuous their lives really are and how life can be taken away in an instant. What we do know is this: God is good! Many amazing miracles occurred during the course of natural disasters that prevented even greater loss of life. Natural disasters cause millions of people to reevaluate their priorities in life. Hundreds of millions of dollars in aid is sent to help the people who are suffering. Christian ministries have the opportunity to help, minister, counsel, pray, and lead people to saving faith in Christ! God can, and does, bring great good out of terrible tragedies (Romans 8:28).