

Accepting Adversity and Tragedy

Lesson 4 Large Scale Tragedies Basic Considerations

Introduction

Having laid a foundation in the previous lessons, it is time to begin an examination of some of the hard questions of life noted in lesson 1. What are we to think when a natural disaster occurs halfway around the world: an earthquake in Iran that kills tens of thousands or a typhoon in Southeast Asia that kills hundreds? Does it make a different impact on us when the tragedy strikes closer to home, say a hurricane on the Florida coast? What if the tragedy is man-made, whether an accident (a nightclub fire sparked by fireworks) or intentional (World Trade Center collapses)?

Whether the tragedy is described as a natural or man-made disaster; questions still arise about the role of God. Could He have prevented the tragedy, and if so, why did He not? The inclination of so many is to blame God. How does a Christian respond to the questions that arise in his or her heart, and how does he or she provide answers to unbelievers who doubt the goodness of God? We will examine these questions and others over the next three lessons.

A Biblical Topic?

Before we get too deep in a consideration of this topic, we need to be sure that it is one addressed in the scriptures. Remember the need to depend upon a revelation from God to provide answers to questions of this nature rather than our own emotions. And indeed, this subject is addressed.

1. Read Luke 13:1-5. What two tragedies are mentioned by Jesus?
2. Were these tragedies man-made or did they occur naturally? If man-made, were they intentional or accidental?
3. We will study the specific lesson that Jesus teaches from these tragedies later, but for now consider this question: was an opinion already held about the tragedies? Did Jesus agree or disagree with the opinion?

Facts of a Fallen World

Much of the misunderstanding about large-scale tragedies and God's role derives from a failure to understand some of the basic facts regarding the nature of the world we live in. We live in a fallen world, one that is flawed and not as God designed it to be originally. By a fallen world we mean one in which man has fallen from the position of a relationship with God untainted by sin. The story of man's fall is found in Genesis 3.

1. Read Genesis 3:1-24.
2. Consider carefully the actions of Eve, Adam and the serpent (Satan).

There are a number of important facts in this account that will matter throughout our entire study:

- A. A being exists (Satan) who is endeavoring by every means possible to seek the harm of mankind:
 1. He lied to Eve about the intentions and goodness of God
 2. Read I Peter 5:8 and John 8:44. What is said of Satan?
- B. God desires the loyal service of men and women, but He will not force them to obey. He allows us the free will choice of obedience or rebellion
 1. We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)
 2. Before the fall, God gave Adam and Eve the ability to decide whether to obey or not (Genesis 2:16-17).
 3. After the fall, they knew the difference between good and evil and had the ability to make choices (Genesis 3:22).
- C. The consequences of sin are dire.
 1. An ideal world was changed into one of thorns and thistles and man was condemned to a life of hardship (Genesis 3:17-19a)
 2. Woman was given sorrow and pain (Genesis 3:16)
 3. Death was introduced and along with it undoubtedly the various means of death: disease, accidents, and natural disasters (Genesis 3:3, 19b)
- D. The world is no longer as God designed it to be, but He has a plan in Christ
 1. The first prophecy of Christ is found here (Genesis 3:15)