

ROBERT'S REFLECTIONS ROBERT'S REFLECTIONS

Do Natural Disasters Prove There is No God? (Part 3 of 3)

In the previous parts of this article, we have considered moral evil (a choice to do wrong) and natural evil (harm or tragedy that comes through no direct action of man). But what, if any, is God's role in all this? As humans we have a very limited and narrow view of the great truths of life. God always sees the big picture, and always has, as His goal, the accomplishment of a greater good.

Following a catastrophe, what typically happens to church attendance? It invariably goes up...at least for a little while. Whether or not God caused the storm or merely allowed it to happen, it is often the case that people will seek to begin a relationship with God. Someone might ask why God would use natural evil to do this. Couldn't God just appear to mankind, proving His existence without using pain and suffering to open man's heart? Not if God is going to honor man's free will to choose. While some would angrily deny any God who could or would allow these things to happen, many others have come to love and trust God through these times. The bottom line is that God permits some natural evil because it draws people to God, often for the first time.

Another effect resulting from the existence of natural evil is the opportunity to develop a God-like character. When humans see others suffering because of a natural disaster or some epidemic disease, it provides an opportunity to show love and compassion. And when we display these to our fellow man, we are displaying the character of God. It is in the context of disaster that moral character has the opportunity to develop and grow. And this world naturally provides man with many opportunities to display good moral character. God has created the natural world the way it is to accomplish His good will.

The Scriptures confirm these conclusions. **Psalms 119:71**—"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Natural evil is sometimes the only way to get man's attention to make him stop and consider the possibility of God. **Job 1:12**—"And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." This statement was made regarding Satan's temptation of Job. It was Satan that sent the wind (likely a tornado) which killed Job's adult children. God permitted it, but did not cause it.

Ours is a world where natural evil exists, but that does not disprove the existence of God. To the contrary, God uses the opportunities that natural disasters bring to lead people to: 1) begin a relationship with Him, & 2) to help believers develop more of a God-like character of compassion for those who are suffering because of a disaster. God is always in charge, and He is always seeking man's good, even through the occurrence of natural disasters.

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