

Irma And Natural Disasters: God's Wake-Up Call?

America is reeling from ongoing disasters. Hurricane Harry was the most expensive storm thus far in American history. With the current estimate topping 190 billion, more than the cost of Hurricane Katrina and Sandy combined. The devastation is so large it is hard to grasp. By current estimates, 70% of home damage costs in the track of the storm will not be covered by insurance. This means the recovery from the devastation will be long-lasting.

Video of the sermon

And now Irma, a hurricane that already battered the Caribbean making it the costliest storm in the history of that region, has come ashore to Florida. As it heads inland, the damages will soar. And we should not forget the wildfires torching 100s of thousands of acres in the West, Northwest, and Midwest. It appears that 2017 will break all records for disasters in these united States. Consider the history of Hurricane costs in the U.S. In the 1960s, 1 billion; in the 70s, 7 billion; in the 80s, 25 billion; and in the 90s, 67 billion; but then in the 2000s, 444 billion before we add in Harvey, pushing it to over 600 billion, and who knows how much Irma will add to this total? Even adjusted for inflation the increase is sobering. What is going on here? There are only three options to consider, each based on a differing worldview. The first, "A Worldview of Disasters, The Sovereignty of Nature," view claims that pure chance is in control. This view is what we hear when people refer to mother nature. It appears she is arbitrary, so it is hard to do anything but prepare for the worst. "The Sovereignty of Man" view is a belief that man is ultimately in control of nature, his actions control and ultimately determine what happens here

on earth. Human beings in this view are ultimately in the drivers' seat. Thus, we have the claim of anthropogenic climate change. You have probably heard the leftist connecting these storms with man-made climate change. One of the more bizarre was in a promo for her latest propaganda piece actress Jennifer Lawrence:

"In an interview with Channel 4, a British public service television network, [she] blamed the recent hurricanes on Donald Trump's voters, because they don't believe in man-made climate change. During the lengthy interview on her new movie *Mother!*, the conversation turned political about halfway through... She then insinuated that the hurricanes were 'Mother Nature's rage and wrath' at America for Trump.

'You know you're watching these hurricanes now, and it's really hard especially while promoting this movie, not to feel mother nature's rage and wrath,' she stated." www.lifenews.com

So she has conflated the worldviews of Sovereignty of Nature with the Sovereignty of Man, displaying her irrational thinking. Which one is sovereign, man or nature? She cannot think logically about this as she vents her own rage and wrath against Trump and the American voters. But let's consider another worldview, the Biblical Worldview.

The Sovereignty of God means that God is ultimately in control. Joel 2:12-13, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." The NKJV translates, "And He relents from doing harm." If God is sovereign, wouldn't terrific storms also be under His sovereign control?

Rev. Richard Owen Roberts in his *Treatise on The Solemn Assembly* states:

“Consider the situation at the time of the Solemn Assembly called by the Prophet Joel. The people, as was common, were guilty of flagrant sin which had not been confessed and put away. God visited them with a remedial judgment – a plague of locusts of such proportion that nothing like it had happened before... a fierce drought had afflicted the land... The fields were ruined and the land itself mourned, the vinedressers wailed, and the beasts groaned while the herds of cattle wandered aimlessly because there was no pasture for them... The Prophet issued orders: ‘Gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament, O priests... Come, spend the night in sackcloth... Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the House of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord... Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble... Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments. Let the priests say, ‘Spare Thy people, O Lord, and do not make Thine inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations...’ Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and will have pity on His people.’

[In] response to the corporate repentance of the people through the use of the divinely ordained means of the Solemn Assembly, the land rejoiced and was made glad... So great was the blessing bestowed by the God who delights in a broken and contrite people that He made up to them the years that were lost to the mighty army of locusts. The people had plenty and were satisfied and praised the name of the Lord who had dealt wondrously with them. They knew that God was in their midst, that He only was God, and that there was none other! ...

Not only were Solemn Assemblies a very common aspect in the revivals of the Bible, but they were a very important part of the life of believers in America during all its early years [the historical record yields a vast number printed sermons from the colonial and founding eras.]

Our Fathers believed God was offended by sin. They themselves were deeply troubled both by the existence of personal sin in their own lives and by the presence of unconfessed corporate sins in the churches and in the nation. They regarded natural calamities as manifestations of the displeasure of God Almighty against sin and allowed such events as earthquakes, fires, volcanoes, epidemics, floods, and droughts to prompt them to special seeking of God's face in fasting, prayer, and corporate repentance. They also sought the Lord in Solemn Assemblies in connection with wars, murders, rapes, etc., believing such outbursts of wickedness to be directly related to the general decline of moral and spiritual life in the churches." (R.O. Roberts, The Solemn Assembly, 1989)

Are disasters judgments from God? Quite clearly throughout the Scriptures, disasters are often judgements of God for the sins of the people. Consider the greatest disaster ever to befall the earth, the Deluge of the whole earth. Genesis 6:11-13, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Genesis 7:19-23 records, "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

So clearly God does use disasters to punish evildoers for the sins they refuse to repent of.

Now we must note that not all suffering, not all disasters are directly due to the sins of those who may suffer the consequences of the disaster. For example, consider righteous saint Job. He suffered multiple calamitous disasters in his life, but none of them were due to his sins. He examined himself and could find no sin that was the cause of his suffering. So there is not always a direct line drawn. And there certainly is collateral damage from others' sins.

Imagine we are all standing in a pond up to our noses in water. If one person throws a stone – as in a sin – when that stone hits the surface of the water there, is a wave moving out from that impact. Everyone who didn't throw a stone is going to be suffering from the action of the one who did throw the stone. Those closest to the impact will take more water up the nose than those furthest from it. The sin of one affects us all even though it may be indirect.

So, when disasters strike at minimum we are receiving a wake-up call from the Lord: a call to examine ourselves, to examine the sins of the nation, and in humility repent of all sin. Could it be that God is using these disasters to wake up our nation? To lead us to repentance and revival, to return to Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength?

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E-Mail David Whitney: dwhitney@iotconline.com