



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: Where is God when earthquakes and tsunamis happen?

The tragic loss of life and suffering in the wake of natural disasters raise some very difficult questions. Is God turning a blind eye? Why does he allow earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis? It is one thing to explain human suffering caused by other humans: murder, rape, drunkenness and drug abuse; but it is another matter to try to explain tragedies of nature that are beyond human control. Although we may not be able to explain each disaster that occurs, two things can help us to hold to our trust in God.

First, the Bible teaches that natural disasters were not part of God's original plan for his creation. In the beginning, God said that the creation was "very good" (Genesis 1). But humanity's willful choice to sin in rejection of God's instructions tragically affected the entire earth. Women began bearing children through pain. In painful toil, mankind ate the fruit of the ground now cursed with thorns and thistles; and at the end of his life, he returns through death to the dust from which he came (Genesis 3:15-19). The New Testament explains that "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth." Having been "subjected to frustration," the created world longs to "be liberated from its bondage to decay" (Romans 8:20-22). Humanity's rejection of God's guidance is responsible for the conditions of this fallen world, not God.

However, the Bible also teaches that even before our human parents sinned, God had a plan to redeem us and return our created world to what he had intended in the beginning. That plan included the sending of God's Son, Jesus Christ, to join our suffering and thereby redeem us through his death in our behalf (Galatians 4:4-5). Three days after his death Jesus arose from the grave and opened the way for others to follow him (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). After healing a lame man in Jerusalem, the apostle Peter said of Christ: "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:21). The apostle Paul wrote: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Then he added that "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19). When all of this happens, God himself will live with his people; and "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the

old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). The next verse then says: “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” (Revelation 21:5).

Where is God when the earth shakes? He is still on his throne in heaven ruling over all of his creation. At the same time, he is very near to each one of us and is deeply involved in our lives. Although God’s original plan for his creation was spoiled by sin and evil, he has not abandoned us. He is busily at work in all that happens to bring his creation back to where he can say again, “It is very good.” “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:24-25).

[Send questions or comments or request for a copy to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071, phone 270-753-1881 or email richardy@murray-ky.net] 2011/03/18