

## Who Is To Blame?

In the past month the southern United States has suffered two direct hits from hurricanes as well as wildfires and extremely hot temperatures on the West coast. All of these are natural disasters, so is God to blame? Some moralists want to think that God is punishing people because of decisions, lifestyles or the decay of traditional values. They cite Old Testament



descriptions of Satan's unrelenting testing of Job or the flood during the time of Noah. The Bible tells us when sin entered the world, all nature was cursed. Since God created the whole universe and the laws of nature should we conclude that He stirred up our recent natural disasters to punish mankind?

I have a different perspective. Jesus Christ came into this world to atone for our sins. He shared God's love with everyone He met. He taught us that God is merciful and a God of comfort. *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God (2 Corinthians 1:2-5).* God is the giver of life. He is love. But, God doesn't interfere with man's opportunity for free choice in decision making. It is our choice, individually, whether or not we follow Him. He certainly doesn't punish the innocent for the sins of others.

People who judge the character of others by saying that calamities are God's punishment are seeking a divine role that only God possesses. They are trying to reduce God's punishment to moralistic, human terms. Humans often try to make themselves look better by talking badly about others. The end judgement occurs at a one-on-one time with God. Salvation is an individual choice. Jesus Christ seeks to be your personal Savior.

The question is *not* who is to blame when bad things happen. The question is: do we put our hope and trust in a loving God? God is there to help us pick up the pieces after disaster strikes. Psalm 46 speaks about God providing comfort, strength and hope when people face any calamity. *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea (Psalm 46:1-2).* Instead of placing blame, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

But, you say, what about Noah? Will God do this again to punish us or make us start over? Listen to this as part of the biblical account of Noah: *Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; (Genesis 9:8-12).* So, the massive flooding in Texas and Florida are not God's punishment.



Listen to the science of hurricanes. Most hurricanes originate in West Africa, where the hot, dry air of the desert clashes with cool, moist air. As the winds cross the Atlantic they interact with the warm equatorial water, triggering rising columns of rotating warm, moist air, sometimes reaching hurricane strength. The predictable, seasonal presence of hurricanes is nature taking its course. God isn't up there targeting groups of people because of their sins. Nor should we.

When people suffer calamities through no fault of their own, instead of trying to place blame, feel compassion for them. Put your own energies into helping them in love. That is the role God wants you to do.

**Question:** When bad things happen what can you do to help?

**Prayer:** Most gracious Heavenly Father. There are many hurting people as a result of natural disasters. Help them to overcome their difficult situations and to come to praise You for your love during this difficult time. Let us seek ways we can help. Amen.