Disasters* *(A memorial to Jack D. Warford)*

Genesis 1:29-31 (29) And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
(30) And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.
(31) And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
*At the end of His six day creation, God surveyed all that He had made, and proclaimed it "**very good**", the Hebrew terminology meaning is: that which was both complete and perfect. Pestilence, disease, and human death were unknown. Man existed in a paradise of happiness and beauty where he shared an intimate and blissful covenant relationship with his Maker.* And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden (Gen 3:8). *Man had continual access to the **tree of life** that stood in the garden, the fruit would allow him to live forever. Unfortunately man chose the forbidden tree. As a result, access to the tree of life was cut off, and the Earth became plagued with disasters. How can these tragedies be reconciled with a supposedly good, benevolent God?*
September 21, 1989—Hurricane Hugo strikes the southeastern coast of the United States. Over 25 people are killed, and over $10 billion worth of damage results.
One month later—October 17, 1989—an earthquake registering 7.1 on the Richter scale strikes the San Francisco Bay area in California. At least 62 people are killed, and damage estimates

are placed at well over $1 billion.
August 24, 1992—Hurricane Andrew hits three counties in southern Florida. More than a dozen people lose their lives, and damage estimates are set at over $20 billion.
September 11, 1992, Hurricane Iniki devastates the Hawaiian islands. At least four people die, and damage is set at over $1 billion.
In June 1993, huge portions of numerous states along the Mississippi River and its tributaries experienced the worst flooding in their history. Entire cities were devastated with water measured not in inches, but in feet. At least 47 people died, and more than 25,000 were evacuated from their homes.
In 1889, the famous "Johnstown Flood" occurred in Pennsylvania. The dam of the South Fork Reservoir, twelve miles east of the city, burst during heavy rains. Over 2,000 people were killed, and property damage was estimated to be over $10 million.
In 1969, Hurricane Camille killed more than 250 people in seven states from Louisiana to Virginia, leaving behind over $1.5 billion in damage.
September 9, 2010, my beloved grandson was killed in a flash flood caused by torrential rainfall from remnants of tropical storm Hermine. Sadly he was falsely accused of trying to cross a swollen creek by an officer that did not take time to investigate the facts. His investigation into Jack's death took 6 minutes, 5 minutes devoted to paperwork. The investigating officer said the creek was swollen a little and went down quickly. In fact; the flash flood was so violent it carved out a gigantic hole in the road just east of the low water bridge making it impossible for a vehicle to cross. Natural law suggest Jack had traveled beyond that point just moments before the flash flood arrived carrying him away and carving out that hole. There was debris in the limbs of trees along the creek and the torrent carried away a tractor some 100+ yards suggesting a flash flood of magnitude, not swollen a little.

Two people from the area who witnessed this flood, each revealed personally it was the most violent they had ever seen at Britches creek and one said the worst in fifty years. It was described as a wall of water that came bursting down stream without warning, overrunning its banks. There was nowhere for Jack to run, that's the nature of a flash flood. The wall of water had to have been 15 to 20 feet high to have left debris in the tree limbs along the creek. This storm killed 92 people. No one is immune to these events. It is rare indeed, it seems, for a single generation in a given location to be spared at least some kind of natural disaster. Without warning, tornadoes sweep down from the afternoon sky and destroy in a moment's fury what took decades or centuries to build. Floods cover "old home places," and remove forever any vestige of what were once storehouses of hallowed memories. In a matter of seconds, earthquakes irreparably alter once-familiar landscapes. Hurricanes come from the sea, demolish practically everything in their paths, and then dissipate as if they never had existed. Each time humanity suffers. And each time there are those who ask;

THE "WHY?" QUESTION

In the face of disasters such as those described above, there is hardly any question likely to be asked more routinely than "why?" But the question is not always asked in the same way, or with the same intent. Some stand on the charred remains of what was once their home and ask, "why me?"—and mean exactly that. Why them and why now? All they want is to understand the physical events that have changed their lives, and to learn what they can do to correct the situation and avoid a repeat. They are not looking to assign blame; they merely want an explanation of the prevailing circumstances. Others view the destruction around them and ask "why?," but their inquiry is brief and their response immediate. They correctly view the Earth as a once-perfect-but-now-flawed home for mankind. Rather than their faith in God being

diminished by the ravages of ongoing natural phenomena, it is strengthened because: ***(first)*** *they know there are rational Biblical and scientific explanations for such events, and they know Jesus has given them the right to ask 'why?' Listen to this;* And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, la-ma sa-bach-tha-ni? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matt 27:46).

(second) *they understand that after all is said and done, "the Judge of all the Earth will do that which is right";*

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: (1Pet 1:17).

(and third) *they put their faith into action as they work to help themselves, or those around them whose lives have been affected by a disaster. Still others view natural disasters and ask "why?," but what they really mean is: "If a benevolent God exists, why did He allow these things to happen?" The implication of their statement is clear. Since these things did happen, God must not exist.*

Our Once-Perfect-But-Now-Flawed Planet

The peacefulness and tranquility of the first days of humanity were not to prevail. In Genesis chapter 3—in fewer words than an average sportswriter would use to discuss a Friday night high school football game—Moses, through inspiration, discussed the breaking of the covenant relationship between man and God, the entrance of sin into the world, and the curse that resulted therefrom. When our original parents revolted against their Creator, evil entered into the world. Moses informs us that as a direct consequence of human sin, the Earth was "cursed." And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground** for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; (Gen 3:17). *Also;* For we know that **the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in**

pain together until now (Romans 8:22).
Paul declared that "vanity" and the "bondage of corruption" is a result of the sinful events that took place in Eden on that occasion and that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now. It has been ongoing and apparently deteriorated rapidly. Moses recorded that deterioration in;
Genesis 6:5-7 (5) And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
(6) And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.
(7) And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.
Genesis chapters 6 through 8 records the global destruction resulting from the Great Flood sent by God as His instrument of judgment. The text indicates that the Flood was derived from two sources: (1) "the fountains of the great deep", and (2) "the windows of heaven" (Genesis 7:11). Water fell for forty days and nights (Genesis 7:12,17), and eventually "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered" (Genesis 7:19). Local floods can cause tremendous damage in very brief periods. Imagine, then, the damage of water covering the highest point on earth; Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered (Genesis 7:20). *As one writer has suggested: The destructive power of flood-waters is evident from what flood waters in recent years have done. They have moved blocks of granite weighing 350 tons more than a hundred yards. Boulders weighing 75 to 210 tons have been moved by flood waters 15 to 20 feet deep, a probable depth that killed Jack. What vast devastation must have been created when all those forces of Noah's day worked together; rain gushing down from the canopy above the firmament, earthquakes shaking the*

earth, all the volcanoes erupting and exploding at one time, continents shifting, mountains lifting up, canyons forming, tornadoes, hurricanes and wild windstorms raging, gigantic tidal waves with crosscurrents and whirlpools raising havoc.... Truly, the Flood was the greatest and most violent catastrophe in the history of the world, with almost total destruction of life and the entire surface of the earth. What were conditions like on the Earth prior to the Great Flood? There is a clue in;

2Peter 3:5-6 (5) For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
(6) Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with waters perished:

Numerous biblical scholars have suggested that conditions were radically different than those we see today, and that the Earth was devoid of the many natural disasters that it presently experiences. The "breaking-up of the fountains of the great deep" in Genesis 7:11, implies catastrophic activity as one of the immediate causes of the Deluge; therefore it must have been restrained previously. Thus the Biblical record implies that the age between the fall of man and the resultant Deluge was one of comparative inactivity geologically. The waters both above and below the firmament were restrained, temperatures were equably warm, there were no heavy rains nor winds and probably no earthquakes nor volcanic emissions. It is not unreasonable to suggest, knowing the changes caused by local floods, that the global Flood of Genesis chapters 6 through 8 not only radically altered the face of the Earth, but simultaneously produced circumstances that are responsible for many natural disasters experienced since that time. New, higher mountains and lower valleys were produced by the Flood at the command of God, turn with me to;

Psalm 104:6-7 (6) Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a

garment: the waters stood above the mountains.
(7) At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.
Approximately 71.9% of the Earth's surface is covered with water. Temperature changes occur, producing seasonal variations unlike any before. The first mention of changing seasons was after the flood; While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (Gen 8:22). *What causes natural disasters on the Earth today? One cause is the vastly different geological and meteorological phenomena now present. Tall mountains and deep valleys may be conducive to localized extremes in weather. The drastically changed components of the Earth's crust (e.g., fault lines, etc.) give rise to earthquakes. Vast bodies of water, and large global climatic variations, spawn hurricanes and tropical storms. Taken at face value, then, the wickedness of mankind in Noah's day, which brought about the occurrence of the Flood, is responsible ultimately for the changes that now produce various natural disasters. While we may never know with precision what conditions prevailed between the Edenic period and the Flood, it seems that the weather systems with which we are familiar were largely absent at that time. This relative storm-free era most certainly would predate the Flood. Since that event, man has been imperiled by tornadoes, blizzards, monsoons, and hurricanes.... Upon whom should we heap blame for the suffering resultant from such weather? Is it fair to accuse God?, not at all!, when He created man's home free from such things;* And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Gen 1:31). *Sin robbed us of our original garden paradise, and sin was responsible for the world wide flood, a history of which is recorded in Genesis chapters 7 and 8. It is believed to have began in the year 2516 B.C., and continued twelve lunar months and ten days, or*

one solar year. The cause of this judgment was the corruption and violence that filled the earth in the ninth generation from Adam. God in righteous indignation determined to purge the earth of the ungodly race. Amid a world of crime and guilt there was one household that continued faithful and true to God, the household of Noah. In these latter days of crime and guilt there is one household that is faithful and true to God, the household of Jesus Christ. At the command of God, Noah built an ark. At the command of God, Jesus Christ purchased His Church, 'Acts 20:28.' Amid a world of peace and tranquility, sin entered in; So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen 3:24). *In Hebrews 4:12 it is the twoedged sword that keeps the way of life. The conclusion is: The cause of all that is wrong with the earth is not godliness but ungodliness.* And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15). *Mankind now reaps the consequences of the misuse of freedom of choice by previous generations. Future consequences may be our own misuse. Surely one of the lessons here is that it does not pay to disobey the Creator. In his second epistle, Peter made a clear reference to* 'the world that then was,' *and its destruction by the Flood. That world no longer exists. Today we inhabit a once-perfect-but-now-flawed-Earth. Man, not God, bears the responsibility because of his misuse of freedom of choice.*

Concerning Natural Disasters and a Benevolent God

First, God created a world ruled by natural laws established at the Creation. If a man steps off the roof of a five-story building, gravity will pull him to the pavement beneath. If a person steps in front of a moving freight train, two objects

cannot occupy the same space at the same time. The same laws that govern gravity, matter in motion, or similar phenomena also govern weather patterns, water movement, and other geological/meteorological conditions. All of nature is regulated by these laws, not just the parts that we find convenient. Second, some disasters may be the by-product of something that itself is good. In a physical world where there is water for boating and swimming, some will drown. If there are mountains to climb, there must also be valleys into which one may fall. It may be said that tornadoes, lightning, hurricanes, and other natural disasters are likewise by-products of a good physical world. For instance, the purpose of rain is not to flood or drown, but the result of rain may include these disasters. Likewise, hot and cold air are an essential and purposeful part of the physical world, but under certain conditions they may combine to form tornadoes. The natural laws that God created allow man to produce fire. But the same laws that enable him to cook his food also allow him to destroy entire forests. Laws that make it possible to have things constructive to human life also introduce the possibility that things destructive to human life may occur. How can it be otherwise? A car is matter in motion, and takes us where we wish to go. But if someone steps in front of that car, the same natural laws that operate to our benefit will operate in a similar fashion to our detriment. Third, natural laws are both inviolate and non-selective. Everyone must obey them or suffer the consequences. In Luke 13:2-5, Jesus told the story of eighteen men who perished when the tower of Siloam collapsed. Had these men perished because of their sin? No, they were no worse sinners than their peers. They died because a natural law was in force. Fortunately, natural laws work continually so that we can understand and benefit from them. We are not left to sort out some kind of haphazard system that works one day, but not the next. In a world which operates according to divine miraculous intervention, there

would be no necessary relation between phenomena, and in particular between cause and effect. There would be no regularity of consequence, no natural production of effects.... Hence, we could not know or even suppose what course of action to take to accomplish a certain rationally conceived goal. Thus, we could neither propose action nor act ourselves. If God suspended natural laws every time His creatures were in a dangerous situation, chaos would corrupt the cosmos, arguing more for a world of atheism than a world of theism! Everyday living depends on physical laws such as inertia or gravity. Regular interruption of these would make everyday life impossible and a person extremely edgy! How, then, exactly, would the unbeliever suggest that an understandable, dependable world be created, and operate, other than the way ours presently is? How could natural disasters be prevented, while maintaining natural laws and human freedom? Those who suggest that the existence of a benevolent God is impossible as a result of 'natural phenomena' often call for a better world than this one. But they cannot describe the details necessary for its creation and maintenance. Instead of blaming God when tragedies such as natural disasters occur, we need to turn to Him as did Job for strength, and let tragedies, of whatever nature, remind us that this world is not intended to be a final home. But at judgment, one's life after death need not be a disaster, Jesus said; He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. *Faith in Christ is the effect of belief, and submission to baptism is the effect of faith; only those who first believe the testimony of God, and by faith repent of their sins, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and are baptized for remission of sins, have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. This is the gospel teaching. Only you can accept or deny, the choice you make is your destiny. Need prayer for other reasons? Come, make your request known while we sing.*

I approve this message
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a minister for Christ
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