

“Why Does God Allow Natural Evils Such as Tsunamis, Hurricanes and Earthquakes?”

My question is about natural evils such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes etc. I feel like the problem of moral evil such as murder and stealing is solved by the free will defense but I haven't heard a good refutation of why God allows tsunamis and other natural events to take out huge villages and kill children.

The so called “natural evils” such as natural disasters are only evil from a human perspective. Tsunamis and earthquakes are normal and necessary occurrences in nature. We could not live on planet earth without them. They shape the environment and contribute to an inhabitable planet. They are part of a normal cycle of nature, along with every other occurrence in nature such as volcanoes, floods and even disease and plague, which is God's way of maintaining balance in the ecology, necessary for human survival. These natural occurrences only become evil when humanity gets in their way. This sometimes has to do with human choices and “moral evil.” For example building huge population centers on known fault lines and danger zones and not taking proper precautions in construction or having an efficient evacuation plan and warning system in place. Humanity cannot do away with the normal cycles of nature because we need a healthy natural environment to live. But we can adjust ourselves to nature in order to mitigate some of its more deadly effects on civilization. New Orleans is the perfect example of human arrogance, neglect and apathy in the face of known dangers from hurricanes. This city did not take the proper precautions in building a technological defense against hurricanes when it was known for decades that it was in danger of a disaster. The Netherlands is an example of a country that did take the proper precautions in

protecting itself from flooding and goes on to survive without incident. So should we blame God for the apathy of New Orleans? This means there is not a strict separation between natural and moral evil and that they are more interwoven than we realize or care to admit.

Now, many times natural disasters are not the result of human choices. We have two options. First, it is a judgment of God. Second, we don't know why, other than saying God has a purpose in this disaster that we don't understand, which is certainly an acceptable choice; that is how the problem of evil is explained in the book of Job. I am not averse to saying natural disasters are a judgment from God. The Bible has no problem calling natural disasters judgments—floods and earthquakes are perfect examples. This does not mean that every natural disaster is a judgment. I am only saying judgment is a possibility.

So there are three possible answers to your question. Natural disasters happen as a result of human choices. They are a judgment of God or they happen for a reason we do not understand.

Feel free to follow up on any of these issues with me if you like.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

Posted Feb. 26, 2013

© 2013 Probe Ministries