

WISDOM IN THE WASTELAND

8.5.18 • CRAIG REES • WAITING WISELY WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your major takeaway from the message this morning?
2. In response to natural disasters, six ideas have typically dominated the horizon:

AUGUSTINIAN Related to human freedom given by God. It results from human activity and reflects human sinfulness. It does not reflect God's action and is contrary to God's will.

IRENAEAN The universe is controlled by the laws of physics. Despite the suffering, this world is the best possible world that could be created. Suffering occurs to achieve a greater good.

EXISTENTIAL Similar to Irenaean. Good may come out of it and a decision has to be made to find meaning in tragedy.

CHAOTIC The natural world is chaotic. We just need to live with it.

DUALIST Good and evil are opposites in conflict and people must decide. Good comes only from God and evil and suffering from the devil.

RETRIBUTIVE Disasters represent punishment of human sinfulness by an often wrathful God.

Looking at these theories, consider the following questions:

1. Which of these have little credibility in your eyes?
 2. What strengths and weaknesses do you see in the remaining theories?
 3. Since no cut and dried theory exists, how should we best respond?
3. Pastor Craig shared the research of Chester who shows that from 1900-2008, the classic Christian response to disaster has been to tie it to **divine retribution and/or the end of the world**. When is such a response unhelpful to the mission of God in the world? When could it be necessary? How do we know the difference?
 4. Looking at Romans 8:20-21 and Isaiah 24:5-6 within the light of Revelation 21:1's teaching of a new earth, discuss the idea of a **creation groaning for redemption**. What is our Christian responsibility when creation groans? Should it differ to how we respond when the created groan?
 5. Moral evil and natural disasters connect. Noting that the many casualties of natural disasters come to under resourced parts of the world, how should this influence our response to disaster and our mission in the world? To what degree is safeguarding the created (people) from the creation a vital part of Christian mission?
 6. How does your practice of prayer reveal your belief about responsive prayer? Do you pray in ways that expect God to both answer and respond, or does one approach dominate? In what ways does your prayer life reveal you to consider the future 'too settled' when it comes to nature and the nations?
 7. When it comes to communal judgement a whole host of Scriptures reveal people asking God to give them more time. Beginning with Abraham and Sodom, moving through Joel, and finding living expression in Jesus, people plead with God to **not** call "time". How could this idea be more fully represented in our own lives? 1 Corinthians 5:5 shows that there is a time to hand a person over to God's judgement. Noting the goal of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:5, how do we know when to ask God to call "time" or to give us more time?

BOTTOM LINE

What we say
and how we
pray matters

KEY VERSES

Joel 1-2:13-14

Isaiah 24:5-6

Luke 13:1-9

Romans 8:20-21