

GOD'S VOICE IN NATURE

Dear Reader,

Though awed by the power of storms such as the 2004 Indonesian tsunami and the recent cyclone in Myanmar, we quickly forget about them. After all, they happened far away.

We hear of earthquakes, but seldom feel them. Yet on April 18, one which was centered in southern Illinois could be felt even here.

Still closer to home, we know of the damage and destruction of tornados. Already this spring some have done damage near us.

Tsunamis, earthquakes, and tornados are all events in nature. Scientifically speaking, they are caused by geological phenomena (fault lines) or atmospheric phenomena (jet streams, low pressure systems).

So it is too easy to forget that God sends them to teach us spiritual lessons.

Our insurance companies still refer to such as "acts of God." Ought not we?

And if so, what is God saying in them?

God controls all things.

First, He reminds us that He controls all things. Through geologic and atmospheric phenomena, God does what He pleases.

God Himself tells us this in the Bible. Read Psalm 104 or 147. Or this: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: . . . The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. . . . The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness . . ." (Psalm 29, KJV).

That man can neither control, send, nor stop these events, God reminded Job (Job 38).

Acknowledge that God sends them! They are indeed "acts of God"!

And then remember: if God controls all things, He controls you and me also. Do you submit to His way for you?

God is powerful.

Second, these teach us God's power.

Buildings, structures, and cities which took men years, even decades, to build, God destroys by such storms within minutes, even seconds. This power of God is awesome!

But it makes us think: if God has such power over nature, does He not have power over us? Indeed!

His power over us includes His power to save mankind from sin. Man cannot save himself from sin. God can. He showed this power by sending Jesus Christ into the world to save us from sin, by raising Him from the dead the third day, and by causing Him to live in the hearts of God's people.

Do you confess that power of God? Do you look to Him as the only One who can provide you with salvation?

God is just.

Often the question is asked, why would a good God do such things?

One part of the answer is that He is just.

All these events remind us that man's disobedience to God has brought man, and all

creation, under God's curse, so that Paul writes of all creation groaning in pain (Romans 8:22).

By the death and destruction which such storms leave behind, God is reminding man of man's sin, and of God's hatred of sin. Do you hear that word? If we do, and if we take it to heart, we will repent of our sins, and seek God's grace to obey.

God is merciful.

Yet a fourth thing these teach, and a second answer to the question why God would send them, has to do with God's mercy.

God's mercy is shown in them, first, by using them as a means to take some of His people to Him in death. We do not like death; often we fear death. But death is God's means to make those for whom Jesus died sinless.

Second, God's mercy is shown by His using these to make us look for Jesus' return to renew all creation and to make a creation in which such storms will have no place, because God's curse on creation will be lifted.

Christ is coming.

The good news which these acts of God teach us, finally, is that Jesus Christ is coming again. Not only *will* He come; but He is already now in the process of returning to earth to make all things new.

When His disciples asked Him for the signs of His return, He pointed them to signs in nature, among other things; and specifically He mentioned "earthquakes" (Matthew 24:7).

When you stand outside on a summer afternoon, and feel the wind speed and direction change, see the clouds darken, and see lightning near the horizon, you say, "A storm is in the process of coming."

So Jesus gives us signs of His coming - signs that tell us how near He is.

How near is He? When is He actually going to arrive? We don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us.

But storms in nature remind us: He is coming!

Pastor Douglas Kuiper

But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Psalm 115:3

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thin is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. AMEN.

Matthew 6:9-13