

Read Luke 6:37, James 1:27, and Psalm 82:4.

First of all, we should not stand in judgment over them, declaring that God has sent this disaster to punish them for their sins. It is true that there are things in Haiti that God hates. But that is true everywhere in the world. Our own country would fall under the same condemnation if God were meting out His wrath right now. Second, we should help the Haitians if and inasmuch as we are able to do so. This might mean traveling to Haiti or supporting those who will do so to assist in relief efforts or donating food and clothing, or giving money to relief efforts. Third we are also to pray for the Haitians and for all people, that God will send His Word and continue to work repentance and faith among them. In short, a tragedy such as this one teaches us to glorify God by turning in repentance and faith to Christ, and loving and serving our neighbor by helping them in every physical need. (5th Commandment).

What is God doing in Haiti?

With more than 150,000 people confirmed dead following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti earlier this month, many wonder what God's role has been in this disaster. Televangelist Pat Robertson has declared that the Lord sent this disaster to punish the Haitian people for a supposed "pact with the devil". Others have speculated that the Lord sent this earthquake because, although Haiti is purportedly 95% Christian, about half of the population still practices the idolatrous and syncretistic religion of voodoo. Haiti is also the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, leading some to speculate that God has been especially cruel to the Haitians, kicking a horse when it's already down, so to speak. So just what is God doing in Haiti? Did He have a hand in this earthquake? And if so, to what end or purpose?

1. Many people speak of God "allowing" tragedy to happen. How does this square with the Scripture's depiction of God's authority and activity? Read Job 1:6-12. Does God just allow the devil to torment Job, or is God more active in Job's situation? Read also Deuteronomy 32:39. Does it appear that God is passive in matters of life and death?

According to the Scriptures, God is not passive. He is always at work behind the scenes performing His will. God does not perform evil, but good through His work even in tragedies. It is true that other entities are at work as well, like devil or demons or sinful human beings, who work with an evil intent; but this does not negate God's good actions through the same event. We must be careful not to emasculate God in our thinking by trying to excuse His actions saying

that He simply “allows bad things to happen”. In the case of Job, it is God who brings Job to the devil’s attention so that Job may be tested. The devil has an ill intent, but God’s intent is good. According to Deuteronomy 32, God has authority over life and death and enacts both.

2. Did God send this earthquake because of a particular sin of the Haitian people? Read Luke 13:1-5. What does Jesus teach concerning such deadly events and the people who suffer from them?

Apart from a clear word of Scripture indicating the Lord’s intent in a specific situation, we cannot say for certain why God sends tragedy to a particular nation, people, or individual. According to Jesus, we must not stand in judgment over those who suffer a particular tragedy as if we knew the mind of God. The victims of a tragedy are usually not to blame for the tragedy’s occurrence.

3. Is God being cruel to the Haitians in particular for some reason? Read John 3:16-17 and I John 4:8 to see how God’s character guides His actions toward all people.

God is never cruel. God is love and loves everyone in this way, that He sacrificed His Son to them. We cannot say for certain why a particular people or a particular individual seems to suffer more than others in this life. But we do know that Christ has taken all of our suffering into His own on Calvary.

4. From Luke 13:1-5 again, what does Jesus teach that the purpose of such events is for all of us?

The message of any tragic event is that we all need to repent of our sins so that we may not perish eternally. Tragedy can befall anyone at any time and we all need to be prepared against the day of death.

5. What is another message the Lord is sending when natural disasters strike? Read Mark 13:3-13.

According to Jesus, natural disasters are signs that the end of the world is coming. We are to heed these signs in penitence and faith, looking forward to the day of Christ’s return.

6. What is another reason for natural disasters. Read Romans 8:18-25.

Not only is the world passing away, but it will be recreated in the Day of the Lord. Paul indicates that natural disasters are the groanings and birth-pangs of the new creation.

7. Will God use the tragedy in Haiti for the good of the Haitian people? Read Romans 8:28.

God always wills good things. He does this not just in a general way, but specifically for each Christian. No matter what a Christian suffers, we know and can trust that God is working that thing for his or her good.

8. What is one good effect that we know God will perform for the faithful in Haiti? Read Romans 5:3-5 and Psalm 119:65-72.

Suffering has a good effect in the life of a Christian. It causes one to return again and again to Christ for grace and for strength. Hence King David speaks of his having been afflicted as a good thing because it caused him to study, learn and pray the Scriptures. Paul says that suffering leads to greater faith; for suffering forces us toward Christ who also suffered for us.

9. What should our reaction be toward the Haitian people?