

## GOD AND NATURAL DISASTERS

When I googled "god" and "tsunami" I expected to find some asinine interpretations and I wasn't disappointed.

From Pat Robertson's CBN.com website, there was the claim that "[God's tsunami](#) had to do with "Israel and End-time Prophecy." Reminiscent of Orwell's famous dictum "WAR IS PEACE," the writer has the audacity to assert that this was a step towards bringing lasting peace to the Middle East.

We have learned that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the only Ruler who can bring lasting peace to the Middle East. Jesus said that His kingdom is "not of this world," but this kingdom has the power to change lives. In our journey, we have discovered a spiritual home in the culture of God's kingdom. This home is a "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."  
(Hebrews 11:10)

On another CBN.com page, the same writer, Peter Tsukahira, invoked [The Principle of Prophetic Alignment](#). He argues "Jesus taught and demonstrated that His life and ministry were completely in agreement with the prophecies given to Israel by the biblical prophets." Then he cites some passages from Ezekiel to demonstrate that "According to Ezekiel, Israel is again God's instrument, His means to show His glory and His character to the entire world." In short, all this conflict and human suffering in the Middle East stems from God's plan to restore the nation of Israel by savaging its enemies.

The [Washington Times](#) reports that some Muslim clerics see the death of tens of thousands of Muslims as designed to punish Christians - supposedly because the tsunami hit on December 26, the day after Christmas, the worst time for defying Allah. The Washington Time's polar opposite, [Al Jazeera](#), reports that "right-wing rabbis" claim that God "was angry with the nations that did not help Israel."

I don't want to imply that this blame-game is representative of the whole religious community. Some have a hard time reconciling this disaster with God's goodness while others divorce God from what they see as a natural disaster. Wedded to his belief in an omnipotent and omni-benevolent God, the [Sainted Augustine](#) straddled the middle by arguing that what we see as evil is intended to make for a greater good. This rationale reminds me of Lenin's dictum: "One cannot make scrambled eggs without first breaking the eggs." It has been 2,000 years since the time of Jesus and yet no omelet appears on the horizon. Clearly, this problem of omnipotence and evil cannot be reconciled.

Let's use the [Asian Tsunami of 2004](#) as a case example.

### GOD: KILLER, BUMBLER OR FAKE?

There are only three main ways to reconcile traditional concepts of God with the horrific carnage of the Asian mega-tsunami. Each way is a hypothesis that depends on whether God cause the tsunami. And each leaves God with a lot to answer for.

- Suppose that God caused the tsunami. Then the first hypothesis is that God is a murderous fiend.

This murderer hypothesis follows if God not only caused the tsunami but intended to cause it. Causality is easy to show for an omnipotent or all-powerful being. Such a God can cause any event by simply willing it and then His will be done. Indeed tsunamis are just the kind of *force majeure* that we call an Act of God.

The sharper question is whether God intended to cause the tsunami and its disastrous aftermath and thus whether He deliberately killed over 150,000 innocent children and adults. The law defines intent as either desiring an outcome or being substantially certain

that the outcome will occur. Assume that God did not desire to cause such death and destruction. That still won't get Him off the hook.

The clincher here is God's alleged omniscience or complete knowledge. Set aside the argument from philosophers that omniscience is logically impossible because it requires knowing all truths and because there is no set of all mathematical truths (a consequence of Cantor's Theorem: a set always has less size or "cardinality" than the set of all its subsets). So go ahead and grant that God has omniscience and perfect foresight. Then God does not play dice because for Him there is no probability or uncertainty. God knows with certainty the causal consequences of everyone's actions and of His own actions.

- So God intends His actions - and so God is a mass murderer.

The verdict is worse than this because God shows no remorse and because He deliberately continues to compound the problem. It does not matter that He may be all-loving. God's alleged omnipotence lets Him resurrect the dead tsunami victims and fix the other damage that He has caused. But He refused to do so. Instead God lets the victims' relatives grieve and lets disease spread and lets children suffer abuse.

- The second hypothesis is that God caused the tsunami but He did not intend to.

It just sort of happened after He unleashed the Big Bang 15 billion years ago and imposed the laws of physics on all matter and energy. The Universe Maker is still responsible for His dangerous product.

This careless or negligent God does not really count as God because he lacks omniscience - since omniscience implies intent and thus no intent means no omniscience. Yet this might be the God that many inadvertently pray to. It is pointless to pray to an omniscient God because he already knows the content of the prayer. Prayer itself is nothing more than asking for a divine handout and thus borders on blasphemy. The request is not a waste of time and effort for all concerned only if it tells God something that He did not already did not know. But then He lacks omniscience and that in turn suggests that He is not all powerful or omnipotent. How can you have total power over everything for all eternity and yet not know everything?

Such lack of knowledge would itself be a lack of power and hence there could be no omnipotence either. So this creature would not be God - but He would still be liable for multiple counts of wrongful death if not criminal negligence.

- This leaves the third category where God did not cause the tsunami.

Here there are many variations on the simplest hypothesis of all: There is no God. So God did not cause the tsunami or anything else.

The no-God hypothesis is what statisticians call the null hypothesis. It is the default hypothesis that we try to reject or refute with evidence to the contrary as when physicians test to see if a new drug has a predicted effect. Failure to reject the no-God hypothesis does not mean that we accept it as true although it does point in that direction. It technically means that so far the evidence has not knocked down the claim.

- So it goes with God.

Science has not found a single footprint or miracle that would refute the null hypothesis that there is no God and thus support the claim that there is a God. The microscopes and telescopes have found no trace of Him whatsoever. This negative evidence is strong but not completely conclusive because the universe is a big place and a God signal may still turn up.

Until then what science can explain with God it can explain without God. The tsunami arose from natural causes - and did everything and everyone else in the universe.

### **Final thought**

If we stick to the God hypothesis, we might ponder, if God thinks so much of Israel, why He went to extremes to empower Hitler to kill six million Jews. Before the advent of agricultural science, man was beset with great famines. Before the advent of medical science man was beset with pestilence. In the fourteenth century, one third of Europe's population was killed by the Bubonic plague at a time when Christian sentiments were at their strongest. The plague was blamed on Jews and set off a wave of Jewish persecution. It would appear to me that man derives his salvation from God through science. This would argue against a supernatural God and for a natural God. Mother Nature perhaps?