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# Who'll Stop the Rain?

*Large-scale disasters highlight man's inability to control the environment or to prevent catastrophes that can bring suffering to thousands. The question "Where is God when people suffer?" needs a satisfying answer. Could the answer be found in a source many want to deny?*

by Darris McNeely

I am a child of the '60s. I grew up listening to all the music of the period. One of my favorite groups was Creedence Clearwater Revival. One of their best songs, "Who'll Stop the Rain," carries a plaintive question of the ages. Here is the first stanza:

*Long as I remember  
The rain been comin' down.  
Clouds of myst'ry pourin'  
Confusion on the ground.  
Good men through the ages  
Tryin' to find the sun;  
And I wonder, still I wonder  
Who'll stop the rain?*

In this song "rain" is a metaphor for the problems and suffering of humanity through the ages. A mournful voice asks, "Who will end the problems we see around us on this planet?"

It's a good question, one that deserves an answer.

I remember reading an article after the 9/11 terrorist attack. It had rained in New York a few days afterwards, bringing gloom and adding to the labor of those attempting to rescue any survivors from the rubble of the World Trade Center.

The writer, like everyone, was grappling with the reality of the attack and was saying to God, "If you could not have stopped the terrorists, why can't you at least stop the rain?" He looked to the



Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell stands near photos of missing people at a tsunami relief center in Thailand Jan. 4 (Reuters/Adrees Latif)

skies and wondered why the rain had to add to the difficulty of the suffering.

### "Nature's awful lottery"

We have in the South Asian tsunami disaster a foretaste of greater disasters prophesied in your Bible to come on this world. The number of dead—over 260,000 by the latest count—is horrible, beyond our ability to comprehend.

We naturally ask the questions: "Why? What does it mean? Why does God allow such suffering?" In reality, this is a great anguished cry of, "God,

(See "RAIN," page 3)



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The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide United Church of God members and other interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## A Small Link of Hope

**T**o which organization should I donate? How do I know my money will get to people who really need it and won't be eaten up with bureaucratic expense? Will my donation really make a difference?

Like many of you, I have asked these questions over recent weeks as I looked at pictures of the devastation from the tsunami in South Asia. It will take years for the affected countries to recover. Many people's lives will never fully recover. Yet something has to be done to help people get back on their feet and move on.

A few days ago a solicitation came from a humanitarian agency run by one of my fellow ministers in the United Church of God. He is raising funds to help buy and refurbish fishing boats for Sri Lankan villages along the Indian Ocean. These people lost their means of supporting themselves when the tsunami destroyed their boats. The agency, LifeNets, is partnering with other larger agencies to raise funds to help people help themselves out of the tragic circumstance (see [www.lifennets.org](http://www.lifennets.org)). Here, by comparison, is a small effort to help and to make a difference.

So I wrote out my check to this agency and sent it. In my mind, I imagine that it will help buy some nets, machinery or a rudder on one boat and thereby let a family earn a living and feed themselves and others. I look at it as one small link on a large chain of hope reaching out as a lifeline to people half a world away from my comfortable neighborhood.

There is a lot of bad news in our world. Bible prophecy contains some pretty grim pictures as well. Put them together and the subjects we write about are sobering, realistic and downright frightening at times. Yet at the core of Bible prophecy is the truth that Jesus Christ cares about the world He created. He did not wind up the world at the beginning and walk away to leave people to their own devices.

While on this earth, Christ demonstrated great compassion and attention to the daily needs of the people who came to Him. He healed them, fed them and taught them of the Kingdom to come. He left an example for His followers to do what they can to help people help themselves.

God cares. So must we who do His work. In this month's issue we try, through several articles, to give a dimension to the South Asian tragedy that you won't get through other traditional sources. You can tell this story has deeply affected all of us. Our writers are trying to give understanding to the incomprehensible. We believe the key is found in the Bible.

Christ did not walk away, nor should we. Like Him, we come with a message of the Kingdom of God. We know we will not bring that Kingdom by our own efforts. Only when God intervenes in this world will all the suffering come to a close. But we must do all we can to live by the principles and laws of that coming kingdom in our lives today. And when we have an opportunity to help people restore their lives, we do so in the spirit of the One who will restore all things in the world to come.

*In this month's issue we try, through several articles, to give a dimension to the South Asian tragedy that you won't get through other traditional sources.*

—Darris McNeely

**“RAIN,”** (Continued from page 1)  
*if you exist, why don't You do something?”*

We are not in control of our environment. We find ourselves at the whim of such catastrophes. Other, man-made disasters—such as terrorist attacks, war and sometimes famine and disease—come because man has freedom of choice, and with that come the consequences of wrong decisions made at every level of mankind.

*New York Times* columnist David Brooks gave voice to the many who try to make sense of large disasters. In a Jan. 1 piece he wrote of the Asian tsunami (and, really, other large natural disasters) as a “great abyss” into which we peer uneasily without understanding. “Nature’s awful lottery” is the term he used to explain the time and chance dimension of life. For many who grapple with the idea of God, this is another way to try to make sense of and explain the unexplainable.

A major lesson from the tsunami disaster is that we are not really the masters of our world.

Because the earth is a continuously changing and developing body, the earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes and tornadoes that occur are more the natural order of the environment. It could be said that the “calm” periods between the occurrences of such natural phenomena are abnormal. Man learns to adapt and survive the natural disasters.

We live in a world with free will and choice. Man chose to live under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and as a result, we live in a world of good and evil. Man has been trying to figure this out ever since.

Where is God in disasters? This disaster dominated the attention of the world for the first few weeks of the year. Sadly, it is not the only region of suffering people.

Africa, a whole continent, is in unending need from one end to the other. By some estimates 10,000 people die each month there from disease, starvation and war.

Nothing human beings could have done would have prevented the tsunami (though we’re learning that things could have been done in advance to reduce the loss of life). The cause of the many *preventable* disasters in Africa, however, has to be laid at the feet of leaders and failed

institutions that cannot put together a visionary and just plan for governing the diverse peoples of this vast and beautiful land.

Like the comment cited earlier by the man who looked heavenward and asked God why He didn’t do something to stop the rain falling on rescue efforts in New York City, many see these things and ask, “Where is God?”

### What did Jesus Christ do?

Let me try to answer that question by taking the oft-repeated question, “What would Jesus do?” Let’s take the phrase off the bracelets and look into Scripture for an answer.



*Christ wept over Jerusalem and the coming tragedy that would befall the city.*

We can easily sum up Jesus’ approach to the needs of the people in His time by looking at one example in the Gospels:

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Matthew 9:35-38).

When Christ walked the earth, He did three things to provide relief for the people’s physical problems. He taught them, healed them and fed them. He preached

the message of the coming Kingdom of God, but He did not ignore their immediate need. He acted where He was and did what He could to alleviate suffering. He did what He could when He encountered human need.

But this passage indicates He saw that the basic cause of their suffering was *wrong education*. They did not have *the right teachers teaching them necessary knowledge and understanding*.

He worked from the understanding that He had a duty to help and serve, but that He could not change the course of the world as it was. He knew that life on this planet has to run its course “until the times of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21).

This fact is evident from what Jesus said as He crested the Mount of Olives on His final trip to Jerusalem and saw the city spread out before Him in its splendor.

“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation’” (Luke 19:41-44).

Christ wept over Jerusalem and the coming tragedy that would befall the city several decades later at the hand of the vengeful Romans. Could He have stopped it? Yes, it is conceivable that He could have somehow prevented the tragedy. But He did not. History tells us this siege was terrible on the Jewish people. Thousands of captured Jewish men were executed. Thousands of women and children were sold into slavery.

### Is God callous and uncaring?

Jesus would not stop that atrocity on His own people, the Jews. Since then the world has witnessed countless additional disasters among all nations and peoples. Christ has not prevented natural disasters, and more will occur in the future that He will not prevent.

The reality is that God will not “stop the rain” before a lot more falls. The sooner we come to grips with that reality, the



sooner we can make the changes in our lives to deal with the aftermath.

God does not leave us in darkness without understanding and hope. Does this make God callous and uncaring, an out-of-touch Creator without compassion for His creation? No.

The example of Christ weeping over Jerusalem shows God's deep feeling for the suffering of all peoples. But it also shows God is committed to letting human experience run its course.

This world is founded on the basis of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil described in Genesis. It is a world with all the natural beauty placed by God alongside the evil that is generated by the wrong choices of man.

It is a world where man can conceive inspiring art and music and good works while at the same time creating unimaginable horror and suffering. The recent 60th-anniversary commemoration of the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz is a grim reminder of the depths to which mankind can descend.

### Where can we find hope?

It seems there are so few contented people here on earth. For many, grief and sorrow are always their lot. How can the careworn find encouragement, understanding and hope? Can they grasp some measure of rest, refreshment and meaning

for their life by understanding the truth of the gospel?

The apostle Paul shows they can. He wrote with this in mind in his letter to the Romans. Beginning in Romans 8:22, Paul shows the natural world is in a state of tension waiting for the time when the full spiritual work of God will be made known. Even the elect of God suffer with all peoples, praying earnestly for the full Kingdom of God to be created on earth (verse 23).

This is God's will and plan being brought together according to His timing. It is a hope that requires the patience of a lifetime. God will bring His plan to pass. All things work together in the kaleidoscope of God's multifaceted plan, Paul tells us (verse 28).

He gives the assurance of God's vigilant care overarching the dark abyss that sometimes erupts upon the landscape. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

Who'll stop the rain from falling on our world? Jesus Christ will, when He sets His hand to restore the loving and peaceable Kingdom to the earth. That's what I remember when I listen to one of my favorite songs. ❖

## Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ repeatedly promised He would return to earth. That was a vital component of His message, the gospel—good news—of the coming Kingdom of God. What's the connection? Exactly what is the Kingdom, and what does it mean for you? Request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our Web site at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org)

## The Source of America's Bounty

The tragedy in Asia has brought out an outpouring of generous relief unprecedented in scale and scope. Upwards of \$2 billion in direct donations was pledged or given to help 5 million people displaced by the earthquake and tsunami.

In early January U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell paid a visit to the devastated area of Indonesia. Commenting on the catastrophe, Powell said he hopes the Muslim world, so alienated from America over the Iraq war, will be able to see "American generosity, American values in action."

What motivates this generosity? For decades America has been a giving nation. The Marshall Plan rebuilt a shattered and defeated Europe after World War II. For years American foreign aid has funneled money, food and technology into many countries. Out of its bounty, America has been a breadbasket for much of the world in times of crisis.

But the story of America began with the biblical patriarch Joseph. In Genesis 41 the story is told of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream, which foretold seven years' famine in Egypt after seven years of plenty. Pharaoh made Joseph

his prime minister, in charge of storing grain and preparing the nation for the coming famine.

When the famine struck, the Egyptians and nations were instructed to go to Joseph for food. Notice, "So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.' . . . So all the countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands" (Genesis 41:55-57).

The true story of how this applies to America and Great Britain today is told in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. This will take you through the biblical and historical information that convincingly shows the link between the descendants of Joseph and our modern English-speaking nations.

Today the world still comes to Joseph. It was American ships, helicopters and troops that were among the first to provide aid and comfort for tsunami victims. One army helicopter pilot said the day's work he did delivering aid to the destitute of Banda Aceh was the "best day of my life." ❖

# Reality TV—NOT!

*I could have titled this: "America, Get a Life!" Because the examples you are about to read are so outlandish, you might think they are exaggerations. But I assure you they are true (regrettably, considering what that says about America).*

by Cecil E. Maranville

**H**ave you noticed any ads for "reality television" programs in the last few years? You have, unless you've been on the proverbial "other planet" somewhere, for reality TV programs have become a mainstay of American culture.

In researching this subject, I found a minimum of 230 "reality shows"—that's right, 230. I am sure there are more, for the production of such programming is now as deeply entrenched in the Western world's entertainment industry as Mickey Mouse is in Disneyland.

They are trite, they are trashy, they are titillating—and they are treasure troves for TV networks, as Americans and Britons by the millions tune in several times a day to see them. In the United States every network is trying to cash in on the collective voyeurism of Americans gone gaga over the phenomenon: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, Bravo, E!, WB, UPN, MTV, VH1, Sci-Fi, TBS, USA, Oxygen, Showtime, Lifetime, Spike—even A&E, PBS and The Learning Channel! Besides the networks, there are privately owned syndicates making their own shows and selling them to the highest bidder.

It all has to do with the price that can be charged for advertising time. "Here's the real reason for the proliferation of reality television: Four out of the five spots on the most expensive television show list are held by reality TV shows. Leading the pack is *American Idol*, which 'costs on average \$658,333 per 30-second spot, while the Tuesday edition is slightly cheaper at \$620,000,' according to *Advertising Age*. *ER* follows the two editions of the FOX series, but in fourth place is *Survivor Vanuatu*, which is charging '\$412,833 for a 30-second spot, compared with \$390,367 during the 2003-2004 season.'

"*The Apprentice* is next, with an average cost of \$409,877 for a 30-second ad. Other reality TV series of note: NBC's forthcoming *The Contender* charges \$330,000 for half a minute, while UPN's *America's Next Top Model* gets \$92,045 for the same amount of advertising time" (www.reality-blurred.com, Sept. 27, 2004).

One could literally pursue a career in reality TV. Need a job? They're casting in Los Angeles for Mr. Romance. "CASTING ROMANTIC STUDS IN



*A common theme of many reality shows is putting contestants through embarrassing or humiliating stunts.*

*Consider Fear Factor.*

LOS ANGELES: MR. ROMANCE is the sexy new reality contest from the Oxygen Network. We are looking for hot men in great shape to show the women of the world their personalities, passion and winning sense of romance. Men over 21 are invited to an OPEN CASTING CALL . . . Be ready to show your romantic side, come dressed in any fashion that would inspire a woman to swoon, and tell us why YOU should be MR. ROMANCE!"

## **Immature programming for immature viewers**

I think that the only way one could call this programming "reality TV" is by exclaiming, "There *really* are networks, producers and actors creating this stuff!" Or, "Millions of people *really* are watch-

*It all has to do with the price that can be charged for advertising time. "Here's the real reason for the proliferation of reality television: Four out of the five spots on the most expensive television show list are held by reality TV shows."*



*One reality show that airs in more than 200 U.S. markets, as well as in more than 80 countries, is Cheaters. Although it is nothing more than voyeurism, its Web site makes an attempt to seem “caring” and even a “public service.”*

ing it!” But they aren’t real-life in nearly any other respect.

Here’s another ad, which illustrates the shallowness of what is becoming the mainstream of today’s American television. “WANTED: BEAUTY/FASHION VICTIM WHO’S READY FOR A CHANGE: Is your mom as brutally frank as Simon Cowell? Does your best friend have it out for your wardrobe? Or is your boyfriend nagging you to change your style? Well, here’s their chance to say what they think and make you over on Style Network’s new show, *How Do I Look?*”

The one way that the programming is “real” is in showing the worst of human nature—jealous, catty, gossipy, immodest, uncontrolled and unrefined. One new MTV show this season, *My Super Sweet 16*, takes you behind the scenes of 16-year-olds preparing for wild parties. Teen contestants do such “real things” as shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue for their party dresses. The “entertainment” is in viewing the eye-scratching jealousy between the teenagers and the hair-pulling frustrations of their over-indulging parents.

Young people “really” can be obnoxious, spoiled and self-absorbed. Parents

“really” can be clueless. But this isn’t reality. It’s a demonstration of some of the worst aspects of man’s carnal nature.

A common theme of many of the shows is putting contestants through embarrassing or humiliating stunts. Consider, for example, a recent *Fear Factor* (NBC’s huge success), in which each contestant couple had to get 15 cow stomachs across a pond. The men stood on the shore, throwing the stomachs at the women, who were perched on platforms in the middle of the water. Of course, the bovine bellies fell into the pond, requiring the women to swim to retrieve them one by disgusting one.

Defenders of these lame stunts say that they cause contestants to face their worst fears, making them stronger for it. That’s silly. No one’s worst nightmare really includes having to catch or bob for a cow’s stomach! (At least not until after watching the show!) There’s nothing real about the idiotic show.

### **Producers must be using the Bible**

Do you wonder where the Bible might speak to this phenomenon? Read

what Paul wrote to first-century Church of God congregations about behavioral issues: “When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin” (Galatians 5:19-21, New Living Translation).

It may startle you to see how perfectly it describes reality television. You would think that the programming creators used Galatians 5:19-21 as a model for their work.

The problem with that is that these activities are models for disaster! People who practice them will fail in the worst possible way, that is, in the purpose for which they draw breath. I did not give you all of verse 21 above. The remainder is: “Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life *will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*” Preparing for that Kingdom is why every one of us is alive. Failing to be a part of it is the ultimate of failures. Being in it represents true reality.

Sometimes it can seem to Americans, Britons and others living in democratic societies that a large part of our inalienable rights is the right to indulge in entertainment of all kinds, regardless of how inane, coarse or silly it might be. Sadly, it must seem like that to people who watch America and other Western nations from beyond their borders. We must seem immoral and utterly devoid of virtue.

One reality show that airs in more than 200 U.S. markets, as well as in more than 80 countries, is *Cheaters*, “the reality television show that confronts infidelity and the breach of trust in an effort to expose relationship problems and help empower the injured party” (statement from the producer’s Web site).

Although it is nothing more than voyeurism, notice the crude attempt to seem “caring” and even a “public service.” Their self-description continues: “*Cheater’s* surveillance cameras [enable viewers to witness] actual true stories, filmed live, documenting the pain of the spouse or a lover caused by infidelity. The



program is both dedicated to the faithful and presented to the falsehearted to encourage the air for renewal of temperance and virtue.”

What utter nonsense! It is pornography whitewashed and wrapped in tissue-thin human reasoning. But the pig wallowing in the slop is not made clean by a soft-spoken “oink.”

### “Sexual immorality” broader than “adultery”

The New Living Translation doesn’t capture the full impact of Paul’s meaning with the words “sexual immorality.” The New King James Version has “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, [and] lewdness.” Today’s biblically illiterate society doesn’t realize that there is a difference between these words.

Adultery is sex with someone other than your spouse. Fornication is normally defined as sex with anyone when you are not married. Uncleanness and lewdness have to do with inappropriate actions and thoughts, especially of a sexual nature.

Sadly, a large number of American young people do not understand that there’s anything wrong with sexual thoughts about or actions between people who are single—so long as they are consenting. They fail to realize that mutual consent does not rewrite the inflexible laws of God that govern human behavior. Consequently, people by the tens of millions are willing to watch graphic images that titillate the senses.

When the U.S. president referred to Jesus’ warning that peering lustfully at a woman was the same as adultery (Matthew 5:28), the nation howled its derision. No, that wasn’t President George W. Bush; it was President Jimmy Carter over 25 years ago. How much less spiritually attuned are Americans today?

The Bravo Network seems the most intent on blatantly promoting one expression of immoral behavior through homosexual themes. It is starting a spin-off from its immensely popular and immensely absurd *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. In *Queer Eye for the Straight Girl* a team of gay stylists makes over Los Angeles area straight women.

This season, Bravo starts the first gay dating series, *Boy Meets Boy*. In the first

episode, 15 “suitors” that the show calls “mates” vie for the affection of one gay man. The man gets advice from a friend after he spends time with each of the 15 contestants. The object is for him to select one to be his “mate” for a vacation in New Zealand.

Most readers of *World News and Prophecy* will find even reading this to be unpleasant, much less watching it. But the writers and producers of the show have a different audience in mind. They are obviously targeting those who do not have a biblical approach to homosexuality in mind, wanting to “educate” them into accepting homosexual behavior as normal.

They push the boundaries even further by having a mixture of straight and

*The vast majority of so-called reality TV isn’t real life. It’s contrived, made-up. It’s a cheap promotion of all that’s ungodly. It showcases everything that is evil about America, instead of everything that is good.*

gay men among the 15 contestants. So while the gay “star” believes he is selecting from among all gay contestants, he will be intermittently surprised by discovering a man who is not gay.

Why would they do anything like that? The network’s Web site says it is “an interesting twist allowing for numerous avenues of heated on-air discussions in debates that challenge socially preconceived notions of what is considered gay and straight behavior.”

### Spiritism

“Participation in demonic activities” (from Galatians 5:20 in the NLT; “sorcery” in the NKJV) is also part of “reality” programming. Take a look at *Housebusters’* ad for “expert” consultants.

“*Housebusters* investigates the secret forces at work inside a home and attempts to resolve the problems of the homemaker. Feng Shui [a Chinese system for detecting good and evil spirits in nature] consultants, psychics and witches reveal

how a home makeover and clearing energy will create a healthier environment . . . We’re looking for hip and attractive experts in these areas!!”

Then it solicits “experts” in each “profession” who are “extremely knowledgeable and full of personality.” And the ad posts the rate of pay at \$1,000 to \$2,500.

And take a look at *Survivor*; one of the most popular and profitable reality shows. Here is a brief description of a recent episode: “The main thematic elements in *Vanuatu* are that sorcery is real and the dead have power over the living” (Jeffrey Clinard, “*Survivor: Vanuatu—Advice for the Remaining 17*,” Sept. 20, 2004, www.realitynews.com). Spiritism can be a highly dangerous activity! To understand more, please request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*

### Far from reality

The vast majority of so-called reality TV isn’t real life. It’s contrived, made-up. It’s a cheap promotion of all that’s ungodly. It showcases everything that is evil about America, instead of everything that is good.

Are you looking for inspiration? Read a book about a *real* person who achieved something *real*, instead of looking for inspiration from pretend achievers who perform silly make-believe “challenges” on television.

Do you want to improve your life? You won’t be able to accomplish anything through watching a parade of contestants having themselves made over on TV. Begin to exercise; take up a sport; take a course in a subject of interest.

Do you want wholesome friendships and an enduring love relationship in marriage? None of them is possible through the pop psychology you will get between commercial breaks. But you *really* can enjoy such relationships.

We have some wonderful material with which you can begin: *What Is Your Destiny?*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*.

There are real people, people who live normal lives, people who never have to throw cow’s stomachs around. Spend your time with them, instead of with the people with whom every network in the television industry demands that you spend your time.

Get real, America! ❖

# The South Asian Tsunami: Foretaste of Things to Come?

*Where do major catastrophes like the South Asian tsunami fit in the long train of prophetic events?*

by John Ross Schroeder

*While this was a natural disaster, human culpability in the high casualty toll is greater than most had originally imagined.*

For several weeks after the disaster, newspapers and magazines regularly devoted several pages to the ongoing effects of the deadly tsunami that struck South Asia Dec. 26. Poignant accounts of tragic personal losses of family and friends put a human face on mounting death-toll statistics. Encouraging stories of incredible heroism and a groundswell of sympathy, expressed in generous contributions from countries all over the world, reminded us that we are our brother's keeper.

Inevitably, many religious leaders reacted with a desire to give both their followers and the general public a philosophical framework in which to deal with these unacceptable events. Some responses might be rather surprising.

The title of one article was "If This Was an Act of God—What Was God Thinking?"

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in an article in the Jan. 2 *Sunday Telegraph*, wrote: "The question—'How can you believe in a God who permits suffering on this scale?' is therefore very much around at the moment, and it would be surprising if it weren't—indeed, it would be wrong if it weren't. The traditional answers will get us only so far."

## **Assessing responsibility properly**

We addressed several important aspects of the theological dilemmas in an article in the January issue of *World News and Prophecy*. (More understanding can be obtained by requesting our free brochure *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*) The disaster struck during our very tight editorial cycle, which enabled us to provide only a brief analysis in the last issue.

But with the added perspective of the passing of time—and with often-unrealized

factors since coming to light—we can better assess the meaning of the tragedy and how those factors relate to biblical prophecy. Due to space limitations, however, we can only cover a few of these factors.

While this was a natural disaster, human culpability in the high casualty toll is greater than most had originally imagined. As one commentator cannily observed, "The Almighty might have His critics over the tsunami, but the actions of humankind made it worse."

This particular writer, environment editor Geoffrey Lean, went on to explain: "In the past, the shores of the Indian Ocean have been protected from tsunamis, tidal waves and the angry seas stirred up by cyclones and typhoons by a double barrier of coral reefs and mangrove swamps. The solid barriers of the reefs broke up and slowed down the waves while the tangled roots and dense vegetation of the mangroves absorbed much of their remaining energy.

*"Yet both have been increasingly destroyed [by man] over the past 50 years, leaving coasts, and their people, defenceless"* (*The Independent on Sunday*, Jan. 9, emphasis added throughout).

According to Mr. Lean, only about a third of the world's coral reefs are still healthy, with up to one fifth already destroyed. Fishing (using dynamite), pollution, quarrying for construction materials and global warming (a disputed point) have been named as the primary culprits. Mangroves have also been cut down and removed in favor of tourist resorts and shrimp farming.

Specific areas still protected by healthy coral reefs and mangroves sustained much less damage to property and much less loss of human life. The islands of Diego Garcia



and the Maldives, isolated and vulnerable in the Indian Ocean but ringed by coral reefs, serve as two examples.

### A feeble warning system

The British *Sunday Times* stated: “Scientists fear such a catastrophe was looming. So why were there no warnings?” (Jan. 2). A *USA Today* editorial said: “On the day a tsunami killed 140,000 people, scientists and government officials scattered across the Pacific and Asia had inklings of an impending disaster in time to save lives. Yet even in this age of instant global communications, *the message never reached those in peril*” (Jan. 7).

Bureaucratic bungling was partially to blame. Also the Indian Ocean area has no sophisticated warning system like the one wealthier countries encircling the Pacific Ocean have created for their protection. Holiday time was yet another factor.

American geophysicist Dr. Stuart Weinstein was on hand in his Hawaiian office when the instruments in the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center revealed the massive Indian Ocean quake. Dr. Weinstein’s duties embrace 26 nations around the Pacific Rim. But there was no contact book, plan or emergency telephone links for spreading the alarm for the Indian Ocean area of South Asia.

Nonetheless, everyone available began telephoning what numbers they could muster in the endangered areas. But it was Christmas Day in Hawaii and the day after in South Asia. A lot of people were away from their desks. Telephones rang and rang with no answer. A very few who finally did come to the phone listened a little while and then hung up. Somehow the message didn’t get through to them. Finally, Dr. Weinstein broke down and cried because he knew what would inevitably happen.

### The ignorance factor

Nonetheless, many lives still could have been saved even in the last minutes before the tsunami struck had people known what to do. When people saw the tide suddenly retreating back into the ocean area, a few knew



Reuters/Lucy Pemoni

*Geophysicist with the U.S. National Weather Service demonstrates how tsunamis start at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii Jan. 3.*

to run the other way to as high a ground as possible. Some heeded their shouts of warning and followed. Many, however, stood around to watch the curious sight only to be engulfed by a fast-moving wall of water minutes later.

We should learn crucial lessons from this! Ignorance of warning factors spared no one. Similarly, ignorance of Bible prophecy will undoubtedly prove disastrous in the coming biblical day of visitation.

The Bible is a book full of prophetic warnings. They apply to us individually and directly if we persist in failing to acknowledge that God created a moral universe and fail to govern our actions accordingly.

His Word tells us that in ancient times mankind had become exceedingly wicked in both thought and action (Genesis 6:5). To preserve a tiny remnant of humankind and to protect His plan and purpose for humanity, God destroyed all except Noah and his family in a great flood. But first, there were 120 years of merciful warning.

The New Testament calls Noah “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). But instead of acting on Noah’s words of warning, his generation likely only made fun of a preacher who

would build a giant boat on dry land—that is, until it began raining for days and days and wouldn’t stop. Some of these people no doubt finally believed God and His prophet, but it was far too late.

We know from Scripture exactly how much time they had from when God decided to act. Had they really repented while it was still time, the Flood wouldn’t have happened. The inhabitants of ancient Nineveh repented at Jonah’s preaching and they were spared. God is no respecter of persons.

The Scripture says that “God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (1 Peter 3:20, New International Version). The Bible doesn’t say whether Noah told his contemporaries exactly how much time they had remaining. But he must have told them in general terms that their days were numbered. Today we ourselves don’t know how many months or years remain on the clock—how much time we still have to get our act together.

### Peter warns our generation

In principle, the warnings of Noah apply today in our modern age. The apostle Peter wrote: “First of all, you must understand that *in the last days*



*Indonesian soldiers patrol an empty shopping street devastated by the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, Jan. 22. Nearly a month after the tsunami, aid workers continue to pull out hundreds of bodies every day from the rubble.*

scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” [of Christ] he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’” (2 Peter 3:3-4, NIV).

Cynics are usually sinners as well. Jesus Christ Himself said behavior just before the time of His second coming would parallel human conduct in the days of Noah.

At least in principle, God warns the modern descendants of ancient Israel in Leviticus 26 and in Deuteronomy 28 of what will happen if they go astray from Him and His laws. The overall message is one of cause and effect. (If you would like to understand who these descendants are today, please request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Later God raised up the Hebrew prophets to warn the people of Israel and Judah. But with few exceptions, neither nation heeded these warnings from the Creator.

Ezekiel, a priest of God taken captive by the Babylonians when they conquered Judah, was specifically chosen by God as a watchman for the house of Israel (Ezekiel 3:1, 4, 5, 7, 17)—which had already gone into

captivity a century before. So His prophecies would have to be fulfilled at a *later* time—logically during “the latter days” or end time.

As of a result of its sins, the northern kingdom of Israel went into captivity, followed by the kingdom of Judah 132 years later. Many Old Testament prophecies are dual in nature, meaning they have an initial, preliminary fulfillment and a primary fulfillment later.

According to Jesus Christ’s words in Luke 21:22, most will see this primary fulfillment during the time of the end. (To understand more fully, please request our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. These two publications will show you where the world is headed.)

Jesus Christ delivered His longest prophecy to His disciples not long before His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. Recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, He spoke of key trends and events that would precede His return to earth—one of which was “nations . . . in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea” (Luke 21:25, NIV).

Then, near the end of the first century, the apostle John wrote the book

of Revelation outlining world events during the time of the end. This long prophecy, too, foretells that natural disasters will play a major role in human affairs in the end time.

### Intensified natural disasters

According to information reported on BBC News online, global disasters in general are on the increase. Late last year the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) released its statistical survey in association with the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at the University of Louvain in Belgium.

The BBC stated: “Events including earthquakes and volcanoes, floods and droughts, storms, fires and landslides killed about 83,000 people in 2003, up from about 53,000 deaths 13 years earlier, the ISDR said.” The BBC report also said that “254 million people were affected by natural hazards last year—nearly three times as many as in 1990” (Sept. 17, 2004).

The ISDR observed: “Not only is the world globally facing more potential disasters but increasing numbers of people are becoming vulnerable to hazards” (ibid.). An earlier BBC News online report warned that “giant tsunamis, super volcanoes and earthquakes could pose a greater threat than terrorism” (Aug. 9, 2004).

Please note that the disturbing results of these surveys and the resultant observations were all released *before* the giant quake and tsunami that rocked South Asia a few months later.

### Summing up the scene

Journalists are not statisticians or experts in monitoring natural disasters. They can only report what scientists and geophysicists tell them. Often the writer’s role is one of summing up, tying things together or putting events in context. Columnist Sharon Wright did exactly this for Britain’s *Daily Express*.

“Flooding chaos could become a way of life for all of us—because the impact of the merciless weather *has to be seen in the context of extreme natural phenomena across the world*. One by one over the past 12 months,

events have been falling into place like the pieces of a deeply disturbing jigsaw puzzle.

“Rivers across Britain are bursting their banks. There’s no snow [yet] in the Alps . . . Bears near St. Petersburg are refusing to hibernate. Rain in the Sahara sent a plague of locusts to Africa . . . The list is long and very soon may become endless” (Jan. 14).

In addition, a record *eight* hurricanes lashed Atlantic islands and coastal regions in 2004, and the Canadian arctic became so warm last summer that Eskimos reported seeing wasps there for the first time. Extremes in weather may be becoming the norm.

### **The book of Revelation’s warnings**

The final book of the Bible speaks of major end-time happenings when natural disasters occur in extremes. The time of the end is not a normal time. Revelation talks of gargantuan events with massive numbers of people perishing as a prelude to the second coming of Jesus Christ. We may be on the verge of entering these troubling and tragic times.

(Please request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to better understand these coming events.)

Scientists and politicians speak of improved warning systems to lessen the loss of life when disasters do occur. One can applaud any workable protective measures that humans can implement for themselves. Ultimately, however, our only sure protection is in the hands of the Eternal God.

Jesus Christ urges us to pray that we would be worthy to escape the effects of these end-time events and to stand before Him at His return (Luke 21:34-36). Many of the Psalms encourage us to trust in our Creator for protection.

### **The tsunami a turning point?**

A page-one newspaper headline asked: “Could the Tsunami Disaster Be a [Positive] Turning Point for the World?” (*The Independent*, Jan. 4). Fifteen respected British shapers of

public opinion addressed this question. More than half were cautiously optimistic and guardedly hopeful. But a substantial minority said things like: “Sadly, I don’t think it will happen,” “We have been here before,” “I think most people will simply forget,” “It was the same after Sept. 11” and “I don’t believe in altruism.”

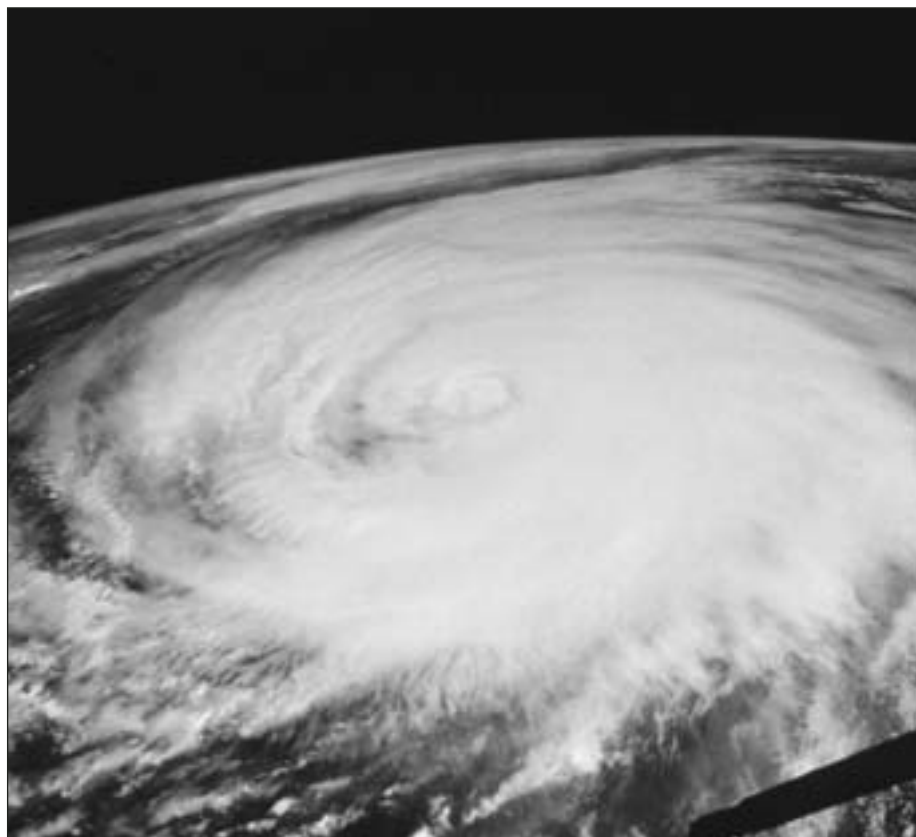
This disaster could be a genuine turning point if we truly mended our way of living. But barring a real national repentance in many nations, this tsunami is only the beginning of sorrows. Only a few weeks later it had

God coupled with a turning away from evil.

You can turn from your sins regardless of what your neighbor or the nation does. The clear lesson throughout Scripture is simple: *You are responsible for yourself.*

### **Recommended reading**

How much do you understand of what Bible prophecy reveals about the end time? Does the Bible talk about natural disasters such as great earthquakes, volcanoes and floods? You need to understand! Request or down-



*A record eight hurricanes lashed Atlantic islands and coastal regions in 2004. (Photo © 2005 www.photos.com)*

largely disappeared from media headlines. There were some hopeful signs of American repentance after 9/11, but in most cases they turned out to be very temporary.

In Hosea 6:4, God described our fleeting forays into righteousness as like the “early dew that disappears” (NIV). They don’t turn out to be permanent. Real repentance involves genuine sorrow and true confession to

load our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. You can find them at [www.ucg.org/booklets](http://www.ucg.org/booklets).

Also, to understand the way of life God wants us to begin living, request our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*. It’s a good first step to learning God’s definition of true righteousness. ❖



# The United States of Europe—A Growing Threat to American Interests

*Americans remain largely unaware of the European Union, now the world's biggest single economy and most powerful trading system. Bible prophecy shows that a closer union of European nations will soon be upon us.*

by Melvin Rhodes

*Europe is on the rise to becoming the world's greatest power—for one of the lessons of history is that the world's greatest economic power eventually becomes the dominant political and military power.*

**T**he *United States of Europe* is the title of a new book by T.R. Reid, a *Washington Post* writer who lives in Colorado. Mr. Reid was interviewed about his book on NPR's *Diane Rehm Show* early in January.

After being interviewed by Ms. Rehm, listeners were able to call in and ask questions. When asked if he thought there was a connection between the new United Europe and the prophesied “Beast power” of Revelation, Mr. Reid said that he had not thought of that. He was not a Bible student and this was not a subject with which he is familiar. Mr. Reid, then, is writing purely as a journalist and an observer of the European scene that he has been reporting about for many years.

His basic message on the program was that Americans are largely unaware of what he described as the greatest threat to American interests on the planet, the European Union.

When asked to compare the EU to the United States, Mr. Reid pointed out that Europe leads America in every way, except militarily. The population of the EU is greater and growing faster as more countries apply to join. Its trading power around the world is infinitely greater. Its currency is stronger than the American currency. Its gross national product is higher and, although its military is weaker, its diplomatic strength is greater.

The EU seems to have crept up on most Americans who remain largely unfamiliar with this behemoth across the Atlantic. Now comprising 25 countries and likely to increase to about 35 in the next 10 years, the EU is the world's biggest trading power, which gives it economic and political clout around the world.

This does not mean that everything is going well for Europe. Some of the members of the EU suffer from high rates of unemployment,

around 10 percent. They have aging populations with the result that they are sitting on a demographic time bomb. How will they finance the generous benefits for the elderly a few years from now when their workforce dwindles?

But the fact remains that Europe is an idea whose time has come! Just as Queen Victoria presided over the rise of the greatest empire in history and the 20th century saw America's rise to greatness, so Europe, in turn, is on the rise to becoming the world's greatest power—for one of the lessons of history is that the world's greatest economic power eventually becomes the dominant political and military power.

Europe and America today are in a similar situation to America and Britain in the 1920s. After World War I, the United States could have been the world's dominant military power if it had wanted to be, having become the greatest economic power. But the United States was content to let the British Empire continue to dominate the world.

The EU today has the economic power to be the world's greatest military power but remains content to leave that role to the United States.

One reason for this is memories of the two world wars that decimated Europe in the last century—Europeans prefer quiet diplomacy to military expeditions. Europe has been described as Venus, while America is Mars. The continuing problems that beset the United States, Britain and Australia in Iraq have only served to confirm this priority in the minds of continental Europeans.

## **Europe and America—the great divide**

The widening gap between Europe and America is highlighted in the January-February issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* in an article by British historian and American resident, Niall Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson is a professor of histo-

ry at Harvard University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Mr. Ferguson's article shows that a Bush defeat in the recent U.S. election would not have made any difference in transatlantic relations. "It is Europe, not America, that is drifting away," writes Mr. Ferguson.

Mr. Ferguson shows that this has been the case for the last 15 years. The end of the Cold War meant that Europeans no longer needed Americans to defend them. Russia is no longer seen as a threat. So perceptions have changed. Attitudes toward the United States are now very different from what they were 20 years ago.

A second reason Europe and the United States are going their different ways, according to Mr. Ferguson, is Islamic extremism. "To Americans, Islamism has effectively replaced Soviet communism as a mortal danger. To Europeans, the threat of Islamic terrorists today is simply not comparable to that posed by the Red Army twenty years ago—not great enough, in other words, to require transatlantic solidarity under U.S. leadership."

Mr. Ferguson adds the ominous words: "Indeed, ever since the Spanish elections early last year, many Europeans have behaved as if the optimal response to the growing threat of Islamist terrorism is to distance Europe from the United States."

There is also a religious dimension to the growing split, as Mr. Ferguson's third reason for the increasing distance is "the precipitous decline of European Christianity over the past three decades." He added that "American religious observance is significantly higher than European; so is American religious faith."

The Bible shows us that before the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, there will be a final revival of the Roman Empire. The present European Union certainly has the potential to realize the fulfillment of the prophesied Beast power. However, there are presently 25 nations in the EU and the book of Revelation clearly states, "ten kings . . . will give their power and authority to the beast" (Revelation 17:12-13).

To many this would indicate that the

EU is not the embryonic Beast power. Alternatively, some think the EU must first collapse and then be replaced by the apocalyptic Beast power. However, there is a third possibility, as seen in the Jan. 17 U.S. edition of the London-based *Financial Times*.

### Two Europes on the horizon?

Wolfgang Munchau's article "Europe Must Find a Way to Deal with 'No' Votes" was all about the new European constitution. Earlier in the month, the 25 governments of the EU signed up for the new federal constitution that will create the United States of Europe that Mr. Reid has written about—though its name will remain the European Union.

But there's a problem. Some of the 25 countries have promised the electorate a say in this monumental development. The unanswered question is, What will

*"The politically strengthened eurozone would act as a hub for future economic and political integration. It would be the logical choice of a hard core because it would constitute the greatest degree of integration the EU has achieved so far."*

happen to those countries that vote "no"? Mr. Munchau suggests that Europe already has the answer.

"An intriguing possibility would be to split the EU in two—an outer part, and the eurozone." At the present time, excluding the 10 new members that only joined last May, 12 of the earlier 15 EU members use the euro. Sharing a common currency has certainly bound these nations together in an increasingly common destiny. The 10 new members and future new members will all be required to embrace the euro as soon as they meet the strict fiscal conditions required for entry.

Of course, this would leave Britain out, just as it has found itself on the outs during the Iraqi war.

Such a division would create a two-

tier Europe, a possibility that has been discussed before. There would be an inner core of fully committed European nations and an outer group that would be a part of the trading system but would stay out of future political developments. This would certainly suit most British voters at the present time. This might also be preferable to many of the continental Europeans.

Rather than weakening Europe, it would ensure that those who wanted to could fully unite to create a superpower to rival the United States of America, while the others would effectively be captive nations without a voice yet within the great European trading system. Such a move would even solve the perennial problem of Turkey, which could join the lower tier of Europe, thereby not threatening the interests of the fully committed.

Mr. Munchau writes: "The politically strengthened eurozone would act as a hub for future economic and political integration. It would be the logical choice of a hard core because it would constitute the greatest degree of integration the EU has achieved so far." He suggests: "All EU countries should in principle have the right, but not the obligation, to join it. But membership would come with the implicit obligation to pursue further political integration."

Mr. Munchau's suggestion would certainly fulfill the outline of future events shown in Revelation chapter 17. In this passage the 10 kings voluntarily give their power to the Beast, the supreme federal leader. Revelation 17:13 says, "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast."

This final union of European nations will be unlike any other before it—in all previous attempts to reunite Europe and resurrect the Roman Empire, it has always been by the conquest of one man trying to restore the glory of ancient Rome. Other conquered nations were therefore intrinsically opposed to the new empire.

This time it will be the voluntary coming together of 10 nations (kings or leaders) who will then give their power and authority to the Beast, the federal leader who will become the most powerful political figure on earth. ❖

**“QUIET MIND,”** (Continued from page 16)

listen a tad bit longer? Do we put in an honest day’s labor for an honest day’s pay with perhaps a little more bounce in our step? Have we stopped criticizing everybody else and taken a good, hard look in the mirror at our own shortcomings?

Have we divorced ourselves from the intake of filth, garbage and immoral waste that passes itself off as “entertainment” by the self-proclaimed “creative community” of Hollywood? Such entertainment never would have made it through the front gate of your grandmother’s yard, much less dominate her front room.

Have we even taken time to stop and consider what life is all about? That’s hard to do in a world of cell phones, pagers and the intrigue of Internet communication, which interrupt our ability to truly focus and fence in the private property of our time to ponder the course of our lives.

So what will it take for us to not only be jolted into reality, but also to keep us there? After three years, we just had another global wake-up call to the reality that time is short! A quarter million people were wiped out in one day. It could happen to us! Will we have another one, two, three or four years till we are given another troubling jolt of reality? Or will this tragic event affect us in the way God would want? How will we respond? And what do I mean by respond?

### **How have you responded?**

A lot of people around the world have responded wonderfully to the immediate needs of the tsunami victims. Millions of people have donated financially what they could to stave off hunger, thirst and pestilence. Individuals, families, congregations, schools, big business and Hollywood have all lent a helping hand and heart. Some of that funding is going to make a big difference—the difference between life and death.

It’s a quandary of human nature why at times it is easier to reach out to people we don’t know or will never meet than to be emotionally available to the people right around the corner. Yes, the nameless thousands need our help and still do. But those we do know, who share our homes, live in our neighborhoods, sit across the



*Indonesian tsunami survivors receive food and water from a U.S. helicopter in Aceh Jaya district Jan. 5. (Reuters/Alres Alia)*

aisle in school or sit down the row from us in church, also need our special touch and outreach.

At the same time, others have been wary of giving. Some have described the 9/11 attack and the recent tsunami event as God’s punishment on materialistic sinners, infidels and lowlifes who pander to prostitution and child slavery. Perhaps you have run into some in religious circles who say, “They had it coming!” The same kind of religious crowd, who proclaim, “Amen, Lord! Who’s next?”

When I think of such people, my mind drifts back and focuses on the video I saw of a lone boy playing in the sand on a sunny day, not aware of the churning behemoth of water about to sweep him up, under and away. But for some it’s easy to overlook that casualty, because they have an inner drive to condemn others, while they themselves squeak out lives of quiet desperation and unfulfilled commitments to God and man.

### **How Jesus approaches disasters**

Long ago, Jesus spoke to both kinds of people, and to all peoples of all times, after a couple of grievous events had struck the Jewish community. Perhaps the questioning of the Rabbi was meant to “size Him up,” but as usual, He turned it around and asked the audience to measure themselves.

Luke 13:1 begins, “There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.” Pilate had apparently put to death some Galileans as they were offering worship sacrifices in Jerusalem. We don’t know the complete story. The Galileans were known as hotheads and firebrands, and perhaps they had tried to stir things up and simply got their “just desserts.”

The theology of the day attributed individual suffering to individual guilt. Surely the Galileans had sinned! But Jesus answered with a challenging question, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” He refocused the audience’s attention off the victims and turned it right on themselves—what are you doing with your life before God? Now is the time for complete and incontrovertible change—repent!

But He didn’t say it just once. Again He brought up another recent calamity in verse 4. Jesus asked, What about “those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?”

These were people who for one rea-



son or another had been possibly building for the Romans or their puppets, the Herodian regime. Traitors or turncoats perhaps? Had they, too, received their “just desserts” for collaborating with the conqueror? Once again, Christ separates the disaster from sin, “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Again, He shifts the focus off “the other guy” and squarely places it on the survivors, those who are living and how they will now live out their lives.

### Our calling is not about worry

So how are we, the living, doing? When it is all said and done, most of us fall into three categories. Some of us willingly give our money but are unwilling to repent, that is to change, and give God the most important gift of all, ourselves. Some of us are more than willing to harshly judge a spiritually blinded world as simply ripe for divine judgment, but don’t recognize our own blindness to the light of God’s merciful ways.

And some of us, well, we’re worried about the next shoe to drop, be it a terrorist attack, natural disaster or an unexpected mishap in our family. We’re just born worrywarts. We live a life of worry rather than a life of hope. As people of faith, we forget that worry has no part in God’s provisions. Worry is simply not a responsibility that God has assigned to those who have chosen to follow Him. Because God has reached down and called us and infused us with a glorious and life-changing reality, our obligation to God and others is to always bring more to life than life brings to us.

*World News and Prophecy* will continue to report the news of the day, the calamities of tomorrow and offer the prophetic framework to understand the times in which we live. We will show the need for the return of a just and loving Christ.

Until that return, history and the Bible teach us that buildings will continue to fall, waves will continue to crash, wars will be fought and innocent children will die. I wish it were otherwise, but it is not. Such events, played out here below, are not allowed for some cruel, dead-end purpose by a loving God. They are designed to allow for a man to “come to himself” so he can come to God and stay there.

The apostle Paul was aware of the times in which he lived. He recognized, that for the living, time was short and precious. He patiently urged: “And do this, knowing the time, that now is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:11-12).

### Time to get a little quiet

Yes, it’s time! Time to make a change. Time to stop being overwhelmed by the roar of self, the screaming headlines, the whirl and twirl of technology and the ever-present whisper of worry. It’s time to get a little quiet, so we can hear the voice of God.

We’ll need that quiet mind that enables us to hear God’s voice for the days that lie ahead. Days filled with startling news. Days filled with prophecy coming our way. And, yes, days with God firmly by our side and firmly planted in our heart.

Isaiah 30:21 says, “This is the way, walk in it.” Perhaps the famous Scottish writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, best captured the essence of this scripture when he wrote this prayer. It’s a prayer about a changed life. It helps produce a life that makes room for God, and thus a “quiet mind,” even in troubling times.

Let’s consider Stevenson’s prayer: “Lord, behold our family here assembled. We thank Thee for this place in which we dwell; for the love that unites us; for the peace accorded us this day; for the hope with which we expect the morrow, for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies that make our lives delightful; for our friends in all parts of the earth . . .

“Give us courage, gaiety, and the quiet mind. Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies. Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavors. If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another.” Amen.

Now let’s meet the future. ❖

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by Robin Webber

## The Quiet Mind

Once again in recent weeks, humanity came face-to-face with its own mortality. It was a sobering global awakening as pictures of the tsunami devastation came swirling into our homes and engulfed our sense of security. We watched in stunned disbelief and horror as the ocean water rose and angrily swelled through the city streets and coastal villages of Asia and Africa. The sea came, it saw and it conquered. What was became no more!

In seeing all of this sudden destruction, my mind drifted back to the prophetic warning spoken by Jesus Christ: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know till the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

These verses dramatically pinpoint the reality that each of us can become mesmerized and slip into a realm of static unawareness of this life's temporary nature as we pass through the normal cycles of the human experience. We can become lulled into a sublime unreality that nothing will ever shake up our well-insulated world. It's the same notion that everyone else's sand castle will topple, but somehow our well-built edifice will never quite crumble in the same way.

### Not in control of our lives

But being well insulated from possible calamity is a falsity that needs to be shattered. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton summed up our feelings with words we all know and feel, but don't want to think about. He concluded, "The big lesson here is that we simply are not in control of our lives!"

And this bit of neglected wisdom came from a man who has experienced every perk, privilege and protection afforded to the world's most powerful office.

No, we simply will never truly know what is around the bend. There are elements of this natural world that are simply out of our control. But does that mean we can't be in control of many aspects of our lives today?

Why such a question? Because, I simply ask myself, "What will it take for people to wake up and shake up their aimless existence and take control of their inner beings with the purpose-filled design that God intends for each of us?"

Why this frustration on my part? Just think back a little over three years to that day of infamy—9/11. You know, the day that the towers fell in a heap of dust, along with 3,000 victims, on the narrow streets of lower Manhattan.

Seemingly, for a brief glimmer of time, people changed. They reached out to one another. We each looked at our families and neighbors just a little bit differently, as if we were all God's children needing a hug. We made resolutions that we were going to get rid of old and worn-out ways of mishandling others and ourselves. But how long did such a noble goal last for the world, for the nation, for you? Did the shelf life of our good intentions last any longer than the mayonnaise in our refrigerator?

### Let's peek under the covers

Let's take a peek under the covers and see what's going on. It's reality-check time! Are we more committed to our mate than ever? Do we spend more or less time with our children? Do we call our aging parents a little bit more and

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