

God Is With Us In The Storm

September 11, 2005

Rev. 22:10-15 (Living)

Then he instructed me, "Do not seal up what you have written, for the time of fulfillment is near. [11] And when that time comes, all doing wrong will do it more and more; the vile will become more vile; good men will be better; those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness."

[12] "See, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me, to repay everyone according to the deeds he has done. [13] I am the A and the Z, the Beginning and the End, the First and Last. [14] Blessed forever are all who are washing their robes, to have the right to enter in through the gates of the city and to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life.

[15] "Outside the city are those who have strayed away from God, and the sorcerers and the immoral and murderers and idolaters, and all who love to lie, and do so.

Today in the anniversary of what has come to be known all over the world as 9/11. On September 11, 2001 our world was drastically changed when several planes were hijacked by Muslim terrorists. Two of them were flown into the world Trade Center in New York, one was flown into the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and another one that the hijackers planned to fly into the White House ended up crashing in Pennsylvania.

Over 3000 people lost their lives.

The skyline of Manhattan was changed forever.

The financial trade center for 150 nations was completely destroyed.

The world's economy was greatly tested.

People lost their life's saving in the stock market.

We declared war on the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

We are spending billions upon billions of American taxpayers dollars to try to rebuild that nation.

Hundreds of our military personal have been killed and thousands more have been injured.

On December 26th of last year, the day after Christmas, an earthquake in the Indian Ocean created a tsunami that devastated the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand and other countries with waves up to 100 feet. It caused damage and deaths as far as the east coast of Africa.

Between 170,000-250,000 people died as a result of that terrible catastrophe.

Two weeks ago, a hurricane named Katrina hit New Orleans and the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama that has turned out to be the worst disaster in U.S. history.

Unknown thousands have lost their lives and families.

90,000 square miles of the United States has been destroyed.

1 million US citizens have been displaced.

6000 hospital beds in a major city has been abandoned.

80% of New Orleans was flooded.

Thousands of children are attending schools in other states.

100,000 Military, Coast Guard, and Police officers have been deployed to try to help.

What in the world is going on? Why are so many catastrophic events taking place?

I don't have the answer to that question and neither does anybody else.

When the hijackers flew those planes into the Trade Center there were those who blamed it on God. They said it was His judgment on America for all the sin in this nation.

When the tsunami hit those countries that were mostly Muslim countries, there were Christians who said it was God's judgment on the Muslims.

When Katrina hit New Orleans, some Muslims were saying it was Allah's judgment on the great Satan called America. Some Christians were saying it was God's judgment on sinful New Orleans.

Why can't we just say we don't know why these things happen. Why do we have to blame God for everything bad that happens?

When bad things happen we call it an act of God. When good things happen we want to take the credit.

The truth is, when evil men do evil things, they are responsible, not God. The evil men who flew those planes into the World Trade Center were responsible for what they did. They will spend eternity in hell for their actions.

We live in a world that is governed by certain laws of nature.

In the winter time when conditions get just right it will produce snow. Other conditions produce ice. Other conditions produce blizzards. If you happen to get caught in one of those blizzards and you do not have the proper clothing, you could freeze to death. If you happen to live in a city in the north where it gets real cold, you have to prepare for cold weather.

In the summer time when the waters of the oceans get warm and low pressure forms over those waters, it produces tropical storms. Some of those tropical storms turn into hurricanes. Some of those hurricanes get very big and cause terrible destruction. If you happen to live on an island or along the coast where hurricanes form, you stand a chance of being hit by one.

If you live in New Orleans, a city built below sea level and only protected from the sea by levees, you live with the knowledge that if a category 5 hurricane hits, your city will be destroyed. That is what happened two weeks ago. People in California live with the knowledge that one day there will be an earthquake that will destroy their homes and their cities. People who live near volcanoes live with the knowledge that it could erupt and destroy their homes. Those are facts of nature that we all have to accept.

I choose to leave it at that. Hurricanes arrive when the prevailing winds, ocean currents and frontal zones combine in ways that make these storms more likely at this time of year. That hurricane could have just as well hit Houston as New Orleans. The same is true of earthquakes, tornadoes, or floods, all of which are directed by the forces of nature. And when they occur they affect everybody, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the Christians and the non-Christians. I think most people understand that and that is why when a catastrophe hits our neighbors we want to help because we know that it could have been us rather than them.

If your house was spared and someone else's house was destroyed don't think that it is because you are a better person than them. We're all sinners who have been saved by God's grace. Be thankful that your house was spared and be helpful to your neighbor whose house was destroyed.

It does seem, however, that these terrible acts of nature are becoming more and more devastating and more and more frequent.

The Bible warns us to take heed when these things occur. It says that it is a sign from God that Jesus is about to return.

Jesus said.....

Luke 21:25-28 (NKJV)

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; [26] men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. [27] Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. [28] Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because **your redemption draws near.**"

Matthew 24:7-8 (NIV)

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. [8] All these are the beginning of **birth pains.**

1 Thes. 5:1-3 (NIV)

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, [2] for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as **labor pains** on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Romans 8:21-22 (NIV)

that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

[22] We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the **pains of childbirth** right up to the present time.

The Bible is very clear about the second coming of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt about the fact that He is going to return to this earth and set up His kingdom here. The only question is when?

Jesus said.....

Matthew 24:36 (NIV)

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

But Jesus did say.....

Matthew 16:2-3 (NKJV)

..."When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; [3] and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

In other words there will be things to look for that will indicate that His coming is near. He calls those signs "birth pains".

He said, "when you see earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, political strife, wars and all those sorts of things happening on a scale that is greater than you've ever scene before, it is a sign that My coming is drawing near."

Any of you who have children know about birth pains. They start out mild and infrequent and they grow increasingly more intense and frequent as the actual time of the birth gets closer and closer.

Jesus said that's the way the signs of His second coming would be.

If you have any spiritual discernment at all you have to realize that the Lord is trying to tell us that His coming is drawing near.

The Bible says something else about the days we live in. It says that before the second coming of Christ... "all doing wrong will do it more and more; the vile will become more vile; but good men will be better; those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness."

Have you notice the drastic difference in the actions of people during this time of crisis in New Orleans?

The vile have become more vile but those who are holy have opened their hearts, homes and pocket books to those who are suffering.

The ungodly in New Orleans were cursing God and looting stores and raping young women and shooting at the police and those who were trying to help them.

But godly people in Louisiana and throughout the United States and around the world have responded with love and help.

The Bible warned that it would be that way. All these things point to the return of Christ.

By the way, I want you to know that God loves you.

When the storm comes it is easy to be filled with despair. When you read the Psalms you discover that the great psalmist of Israel was at times overcome by despair.

Psalm 69:1-3 (NKJV)

...A Psalm of David.

Save me, O God!

For the waters have come up to my neck.

[2] I sink in deep mire,

Where there is no standing;

I have come into deep waters,

Where the floods overflow me.

[3] I am weary with my crying;

My throat is dry;

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

David was filled with despair.

Many are filled with despair because of the hurricane.

I know you have seen the poor African American man on the news. They showed it over and over. His name is Harvey Jackson.

He was standing in the street with his son wearing a yellow jersey and the female correspondent asked him, “Who was in the house with you?”

“My wife,” he said.

“Where is she now?” she asked.

“She’s gone. I hold on to her hand as tight as I could. I tried. But, she told me, ‘You can’t hold me...take care of the kids and the grand kids.’”

The correspondent asked him, “Where are you going?”

As he walked away sobbing, he answered, “We have no where. I’m lost. That’s all I had. That’s all I had.”

Every time I saw that scene it tore me up. I wanted to tell that man that God loves him and there are a lot of godly people in this world who love him and are willing help him.

Matthew 24:37-42 (NKJV)

³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour^[a] your Lord is coming.

Yes, we are living in the last days. Yes, nature is in an uproar. Yes, we are living in perilous times. But these are also momentous times, times when the church will do mighty exploits in the name of the Lord.

Isaiah 60:1-2 (NKJV)

Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

[2] For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the Lord will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.

Outside there is spiritual darkness. But inside there is a great move of God. His glory is going to be manifested as never before.

Joel 2:28 (NKJV)

"And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.

Our God is a great God! I see Him working in a great way through His people right now. He is there behind police badges. He is there in the fireman's suit. He is there in the Coast Guard officials, marines, Red Cross, EMTs, Salvation Army, FEMA, neighbors, governors, mayors, nurses, the president, and He is there in the thousands of churches that have opened their hearts to those who are hurting.

We need each other!

The Bible says...

Matthew 18:20 (NKJV)

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

When we come together in pain: He is with us. When we come together to worship. He is with us. When we come together to pray. He is with us. When we come together in compassion to help. He is with us.

When storms destroy our communities and we Christians bind together, He is there.

He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. When we gather together in His name He is with us in a special way to comfort, restore, refresh and renew our spirits. We realize that we are not alone.

I want our guests from New Orleans to know that God has not forsaken you.
He is with you and He will provide for your needs.