

Commentary — From the Margins *Disasters, Natural & Otherwise*

On Good Friday 1964, I was a college Freshman; on Good Friday 1989, I was a mid-life graduate student at University of Alaska Fairbanks. For the quarter century between the Alaska earthquake that turned clay ridges into jelly and sent a tsunami ashore and when the *Exxon Valdez* spilled oil in Prince William Sound, creating an ecological catastrophe and a financial boondoggle, I watched Alaska and Alaskans struggle with ethics, personal, political, environmental. The Alaskan earthquake was as large or slightly larger than the quake that has killed more than two hundred thousand persons around the Indian Ocean. Less than two hundred died in Alaska. And from experience, I can assure those who will listen that Alaskans are not a thousand times more righteous than Asians. They are not ten times more righteous. They probably are no more righteous, with the possibly existing that they are considerably more unrighteous, for most Alaskans know what the laws of God are and most choose not to keep these laws that interfere with such Alaska construction traditions as *seven-twelves* (i.e., working twelve hours a day for seven days a week).

I have read, to their chagrin, leaders of the slivered churches of God who have linked the exceedingly deadly Indian Ocean tragedy to the earthquakes in diver places that will occur before the hard labor pains of the last Eve bringing many sons of God to glory begin. These leaders have nearly unanimously identified the quake as a punishment of God on unrighteous sinners, and they have universally offered literature showing that the endtime signs of Christ's return will include more earthquakes as if Christ has to warm up like a baseball pitcher before delivering an endtime spitter.

The problem with prophecy is that it has been sealed and secret: the revealing of the Son of Man begins with a [catastrophe](#) unlike anything humanity has experienced since the Flood of Noah's day. This event will not strike just poor nations and underdeveloped coastlines. It will strike everywhere all at once—and there will be no doubt that it is of God. It will not consist of a natural disaster here, and one there. It will be no more *natural* than the death angel passing through Egypt was a natural cause of death.

In Jesus' Olivet discourse, the beginning of sorrows is analogous to birth pains in a woman. Once the first pain strikes, a mother-to-be doesn't continue with business as usual. She won't be concerned about the NFL playoffs, or NBA championship games, or even whether her dishes get done. She won't be grocery shopping, or decorating the interior of her home, and she certainly won't be out bass fishing, or hunting deer, or going to work. Her work has started. Nothing else will now matter until the child is delivered. And so it will be when the Tribulation begins. Financial markets won't conduct business. Commodity exchanges will be shut down. And the great nation of China, a nation of firstborns that does not cover itself with the Blood of the Lamb, will be reduced to nothing as the spiritually circumcised firstborn son of God is [liberated](#) from its present bondage to the lawlessness residing in its members.

Although I missed the greatest period of profiting, I prospered as Alaska rebuilt herself after the 1964 quake. Within a short period the quake was just another happening,

not substantially different than any of the other causes driving Alaska's boom and bust economy. I knew how high the tsunami came in Kodiak—the height of its surge is marked on the side wall of the police station—but fifteen years after the fact, I gave no thought to the damage as I sailed a small boat around the islands and on out to Dutch Harbor. But such will not be the case when the Son of Man is revealed. And the recovery of spiritually circumcised Israel from the north country will be the remembered event of a thousand years. This will be the event that causes Israel to forget leaving Egypt, to forget leaving sin, to forget the passing of the death angels throughout all of Babylon. This recovery from, and defeat of death will be the truly great event that follows God turning His hand against two-thirds of humanity.

Natural disasters are of nature. They are not punishments for sin. For when God punishes, no human being will think a natural disaster has occurred.

The United States has been lucky—and has been protected. We have been given much, and much is expected from us. We cannot grow weary of well doing whenever a disaster strikes. We as a nation, and as individuals must respond to the best of our abilities. For some, this will be praying for those affected. That might be enough when it comes time to give an accounting for how we have lived. We know whether we have done all we could, and anything less is not enough.

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