

God's Tears

El Niño is spawning worldwide destruction...

And God Cried

PRE-FLOOD (2850-2270 BC). "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth... and it grieved Him to His heart." (Genesis 6:5,6 NRSV) **Yes, God cried.**

EUROPE (1096-1100). During the crusades, Christian soldiers enroute to the Holy Land slaughtered Jews on the way. Some were herded into their synagogues. Cries of anguish shrilled unto heaven as the wooden structures were torched. **And God cried.**

EUROPE (1941-1945). Six million Jews were hunted, hounded, driven, butchered, gassed and burned in the Holocaust. **And God cried.**

HIROSHIMA (August 6, 1945). A single atomic bomb claimed 129,558 victims and terrified the world. **And God cried.**

THE WORLD (1914-1996) Over 175 million were killed as a result of the insane policies of governments like Germany, Communist Russia, Cambodia, etc. **And God cried.**

THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES (1990s). Each day 40,000 babies die of starvation. **And God cries.**

Then there are the personal tragedies of loved ones endured daily by hundreds of thousands— the senseless death or mutilation on the highways, babies who are born physically deformed or mentally deficient, and the victims of senseless crime. Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other disasters steal the lives of millions in their onslaughts of destruction and deprivation. The psychological tragedies of dysfunctional families, drug addiction and the multitudes of lonely, neurotic homeless people have left tens of thousands of families emotionally scarred. **And God cries.**

Yes, these statistics fill the daily news, but only when they strike us or our loved ones are we overwhelmed with the pain of tragedy. Everyday these statistics have faces—millions of faces of real people shattered emotionally and mentally. The cries of sickness, sorrow, suffering, and death encircle the globe. Not one of us can comprehend the enormity of the total sufferings of all humankind. Only God can and does see this humongous picture of human miseries. **And God continues to cry.**

The infinite Creator and God of the universe wants to convey to mere earthlings—frail humanity— His compassion and love for us. How can one so omnipotent communicate His capacity to suffer with finite man? He uses an imagery we can understand — “tears.” Far from being an indication of weakness, God's imagery of shedding “tears” assures us of a profound fatherly care and concern. Just how deep is his fatherly love?

God's dealing with Israel is a microcosm of his relationship with all humankind (Isa. 43-44; Rom. 11). A parent might discipline a child by remanding the child to his room for the evening. A loving parent feels the pain of the child's punishment and often recalls the many wonderful times they shared together. Likewise, it hurts God when he chastens His people. Listen to the parental sorrow of God in Jer. 6:26: “Thus says the Lord... Oh my *poor people*, put on sackcloth... for suddenly the destroyer will come upon *us*” (NRSV). This is incredible. The “us” class is God and Israel. God puts Himself in the picture of sharing Israel's suffering. This assures us that God chastens in love. Listen to a loving father's thoughts of nostalgia while He is chastening Israel, a disobedient son:

“Truly, Ephraim [Israel] is a dear son to Me, A child that is dandled! Whenever I have turned against him, My thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love. Declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 31:20 (JPS)

How do we know that God's expressions of fatherly love — a love that felt Israel's sufferings during her chastening — were true? The rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 is the proof. It is a miracle of history. Never before has the polity of a nation been destroyed, its people scattered to the ends of the earth and then regathered nearly 2,000 years later to their ancient homeland to be reborn as a nation. God's fatherly chastening of love will continue to restore the Jewish people to full favor and belief. Israel's restoration is the precursor of all mankind's restoration to God's full love and favor in His Kingdom. Romans 11:15 states that Israel's restoration to Divine favor will mean life from the dead for the whole world.

Oh, what a marvelous God we have! “In our affliction He is afflicted” (suffers), and this is our assurance that God's chastenings are rehabilitative so that His “beloved” wayward children might be restored to the bosom of His favor. Yes, God chastens to heal! Isaiah 63:9; 19:22

Why Does God Permit Evil?

A suffering God puts the question of the permission of evil in a practical perspective. If God shares our suffering why would He conceive a plan that would result in His own suffering? The question is no longer — why do good

people suffer or why do innocent children suffer? Rather, why has God permitted a horrific human history of blood, tragedy, pain and mental anguish that would just tear away at His fatherly emotions of love?

To fully understand why God permits evil, we must go back, back to when God dwelt alone. God desired to have a family, to be a parent—the Heavenly Father. Most loving parents are not overly protective; rather, they are willing to permit hard knocks realizing it will cost themselves dearly in pain as they watch their children struggle to maturity.

God knew his children could be happy individually and collectively only if each one loved and obeyed God's laws for the well being of all. Therefore, God created Adam and Eve in "His own image" — with free will and moral discernment. God could have programmed the ideal man — utopia would have been inevitable — but man would be no better than a robot, without true happiness. But giving man a free will had a built-in dilemma. God told Adam that if he obeyed he would live. If he disobeyed he would die — "dying thou shalt die" (Genesis 2:17). Because of lack of experience God knew Adam (or anyone of us in the same position) would disobey.

A parent will tell a baby not to touch the stove because it is hot. But what does a baby know about pain? Inevitably the baby will touch the stove. A wise parent will lightly and quickly place the child's hand where the heat is not too severe. Likewise, God is giving mankind a controlled experience with sin.

Knowing Adam would disobey him, God lovingly planned for man's redemption BEFORE creating the earth and man. In 1 Peter 1:19-20 Jesus is spoken of as "slain before the foundation of the world." This meant a plan that would deeply grieve His fatherly heart as He watched man trampled down by the machinations of evil while learning the consequences of sin. Further, it would cost the ultimate in fatherly suffering — watching His only begotten son suffer the agony of being vilified and crucified. God's gift of Jesus was the greatest demonstration of fatherly suffering in history.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed, God withdrew His fellowship. Loneliness, stress, and depression overwhelmed them rendering both the mind and the body prone to disease. The dying process began. The latest scientific research confirms this Biblical account of man's "fall" into sin. Fear, hostility and aggression became the norm. Exploitation, crime and violence were the inevitable consequences. Yes, Adam's children, the human race, were born sinners worthy of death (Psalm 51:5; Romans 6:23). This is "the sore travail God hath given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith" (Ecclesiastes 1:13; 3:10).

After Adam and Eve disobeyed, they were cast out of their Edenic paradise into the unfinished earth, where the components of nature were yet unbalanced. Man is learning by experience the bitter consequences of sin and evil. Remember — the parent who remanded his child to his room for the evening had loving thoughts of their continued relationship. God has remanded His human children to their room — the unfinished earth. In their “affliction He is afflicted” and He has wonderful loving thoughts — recorded in the Bible prophecies — concerning their restoration to His favor. Yes, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “as in Adam all die” but he continues, “so in Christ shall all be made alive” in the Kingdom. Why? Because Jesus died “a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9).

A Suffering Savior and Suffering Christians

Before all are made alive in Christ’s Kingdom, God is training Christians — a “little flock” (Luke 12:32) — that they might reign with Christ in his Kingdom as priests and kings (Revelation 20:6). Like Christ, they are being made sympathetic priests through suffering (2 Timothy 2:11-12). While the minds of men are now scarred and twisted by tragedy, Christians experience the same disasters but are healed and made compassionate by the power of the holy Spirit (1 Cor. 10:13). Why? They will be able to heal the minds of their fellowmen when men come forth to their probation or trial time in the Kingdom (John 5:28-29, NAS, NRSV). Mankind will have a vivid remembrance of the bitter effects of sin and evil. Then they will learn the joyful rewards of living righteously with their fellowman and make their choice for eternity (Jeremiah 31, 34).

Many scriptures reveal that the majority of mankind will share the joys of eternal life. The foreknowledge of God’s own suffering proves that the permission of evil is a necessary experience for man’s eternal welfare. God’s fatherly sorrow contains no anxiety like a human parent. With Divine serenity, He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). All the forces of evil are overruled for man’s eternal welfare (Psalms 76:10). By faith we can have this same peace of God (Phil. 4:7). The present sufferings are but a moment compared with the joys of eternity (2 Cor. 4:17, 18).

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