

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



September 3, 2017

God and Harvey

It's easy to take cheap shots at God following a natural disaster like Hurricane Harvey.

But the hearts of the wise will view such calamities in the larger context of God's whole creation.

“You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over; that they may not return to cover the earth” (Psa. 104:5-9).



Skeptics use natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey to mock belief in God. Surely a good and all-powerful God, if he really existed, would not allow such tragedies to occur. Watching the news reports of the thousands of people whose lives have been upended by this catastrophe, it's easy to understand the appeal of this argument.

But Psalm 104 invites us to look at the bigger picture. It is a poetic retelling of the six days of creation in Genesis 1. The verses quoted above describe the events of the third day—the separation

of the oceans from the dry land (see Gen. 1:2, 9). God has “set a boundary” that the waters cannot pass over. He has overruled that boundary just once in history (Noah's flood), but promised that it would never happen again. And despite some awful floods here and there, it hasn't. Nature is subject to limits, and humanity does not fear total annihilation from its awesome power.

As terrible as the destruction wrought by hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and similar events might be, they do not define the character of God's creation. They are exceptions in a world governed by natural forces that display remarkable regularity. Natural disasters are newsworthy precisely because they are so infrequent. The fact that we can sit back and philosophize on the reasons for such anomalous events is itself a compelling argument for a master intelligence that keeps everything running smoothly.

Think about it. Humanity thrives *precisely because* nature is so predictable and resilient. The rest of the Psalm describes the hydrological cycle

(v. 10-13), botanical laws (v. 14-18), and the cyclical nature of days and seasons (v. 19-23)—all of which make life on this earth not just possible, but pleasant. The earth and everything in it are expressions, not of God's capriciousness, but of His care for His creation (v. 24-28). Even the cycle of life itself, with generations coming and going, is a demonstration of God's commitment to “renew the face of the earth” (v. 29-30).

Hurricane Harvey was a terrible disaster, and the lives of those who were impacted by it will never be the same. Yet at this writing the skies have cleared, and the clean-up and rebuilding has already begun. Millions of people will get on with their lives, relying on the resources of an abundant and self-healing earth. It's almost like Somebody designed it for that very purpose.

Yes, hurricanes are a part of God's creation, and they remind us of how puny we really are in this awesome universe. But the rest of His creation, with all the beauty and bounty it provides, is an even greater reminder of how much God loves and cares for us. Embrace it!

– David King