

“ACTS OF GOD”—HOW DO YOU VIEW THEM?

Note to the speaker:

Help audience to see that (1) many so-called acts of God are often caused or made worse by men, (2) true acts of God are often ignored by men to their peril, and (3) we are facing the greatest act of God in all human history

PREVALENCE OF DISASTERS, A SIGN OF THE TIMES (8 min.)

Many feel there have been more disasters lately, and they are right

New Scientist (October 5, 1991): “The world can expect more disasters in the 1990s than in past decades . . . There were 523 disasters reported in the 1960s and 767 in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the number had reached 1387”

1992 *Britannica Book of the Year*: “In [the United States] . . . twenty-seven catastrophes during the first six months were the largest number ever recorded before midyear”

Time magazine (September 14, 1992) reports that in one month (mid-August to mid-September) a volcano erupted in Alaska; an earthquake struck near Alaska’s Andreanof Islands and another in Kyrgyzstan in the former Soviet Union; Hurricane Andrew slapped the Bahamas, Florida, and Louisiana; Hurricane Iniki hit Kauai in Hawaii; Tropical Storm Polly drenched eastern China; Typhoon Omar raked Guam and the Philippines; flash floods swept the valleys of the Hindu Kush; and tidal waves devastated 200 miles of coastline in Nicaragua

(Can mention any current disasters)

People often refer to such catastrophic events as “acts of God”

Since time immemorial, people have attached special significance to such events, regarding them as expressions of the displeasure and wrath of God or as punishment from him

In China they were viewed as signs of heaven’s displeasure with the ruling dynasty and as portents of political upheaval

The 7.8-magnitude Tangshan earthquake of 1976, which killed 240,000 people, struck just six weeks before the death of former chairman Mao Tse-tung and was interpreted by some as a portent from heaven signaling a new era in Chinese history

Thus, some people are indirectly blaming God for these calamities

When disasters strike, people often cry out against God

Is God really responsible? How do you view the matter?

THOUGH BIBLE FORETELLS THEM, DISASTERS NOT ACTS OF GOD (10 min.)

Jesus, in his great prophecy about “the conclusion of the system of things,” mentioned food shortages, earthquakes, and pestilences (Mt 24:3, 7; Lu 21:11)

The apostle John foresaw food shortage and deadly plague (Re 6:5-8)

Does this mean God causes such events to happen? No!

Being omniscient, Jehovah can foresee outcome of imperfect human endeavors and state beforehand the results (Isa 42:9; 46:9, 10)

Many devastating disasters were results of acts of men

(Use material from *Awake!* of June 22, 1986, pages 17-19, as time permits, but highlight the following three aspects)

Humans misuse natural resources and abuse the environment, making it more prone to disasters

The way people live makes them more vulnerable when disasters strike

Often people ignore warnings, making results more destructive

Clearly, humans have often been responsible for disasters, with heavy losses of life and property

God is not the cause of such calamities

WHAT ARE “ACTS OF GOD”? (12 min.)

Why, then, does Bible speak of God as sending floodwaters, fire and sulfur, and so on, to destroy the wicked?

Were not such disasters “acts of God”?

The term “act of God, in law, is an accident that arises from a cause operating without interference or aid from man,” says *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1991 Edition, Volume 1, page 122

However, the events recorded in the Bible were neither accidents nor intended to make people suffer indiscriminately

All genuine acts of God are righteous and purposeful. (De 32:4; Isa 55:10, 11) They must meet three criteria:

- (1) They are in harmony with God’s purpose
- (2) They are preceded by advance warning from God
- (3) They are accompanied by divine directions for survival

Consider some examples of true acts of God

Describe Noachian Flood, and explain how it meets the above three criteria (Ge 6:5-7:10; 2Pe 2:5)

Describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and explain how it was an act of God (Ge 18:20-19:26; 2Pe 2:6-8)

(Use material from *Awake!* of August 8, 1986, pages 6-7)

Failure to acknowledge warning leads to disastrous end (Ex 9:15-17; Lu 17:26-30)

GREATEST OF ACTS OF GOD YET TO BEFALL MANKIND (10 min.)

We are facing the greatest disaster ever (Mt 24:21)

Culminates in Armageddon, “the war of the great day of God the Almighty,” not a nuclear holocaust or other man-made disaster (Re 16:14, 16)

It will be selective (2Th 1:8-10)

It will bring present wicked, selfish system of things to its end (2Pe 3:9, 10)

“Great tribulation” will be an act of God unmatched by any other calamity that has ever happened (Isa 28:21)

It will be an indisputable act of God because it meets all the criteria

(1) It is in harmony with God’s declared purpose (Jer 25:31-33; Zep 3:8)

(2) Advance warning is being given worldwide (Mt 24:14; Ac 20:20)

(3) Directions for survival are provided (Zep 2:3; Joh 17:3)

Unparalleled destruction is certain, yet survival is possible (Zep 1:14-2:3)

As with the Israelites at the threshold of the Promised Land, the choice is yours (De 30:15-20)

BLESSINGS FROM FUTURE WONDERFUL ACTS OF GOD (5 min.)

After removal of wicked, there will be an abundance of peace (Ps 37:10, 11; 72:7)

All the damage mankind has done to the environment will be reversed (Isa 35:1-7; 55:12, 13)

Poverty, economic and social injustices, will be rectified (Ps 72:16; Isa 65:21-24)

Peaceful, just, and righteous conditions will be brought about by “the very zeal of Jehovah of armies” (Isa 9:7)

They will be the results of the most wonderful acts of God for mankind

You can enjoy the blessings if you heed God’s warning now and take action for survival (Mt 7:24, 25)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read. Source material in parentheses need not be mentioned)