

School Shootings

This was written in wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut, Dec. 2012.

There have been quite a few responses on the part of Christians, varying from “I don’t know what to think, so I’ll just pray for the survivors” to “It’s a judgment from God because we allow gays/abortion/evolution/etc.,” or because we “keep prayers out of schools” and so on.

There were times when God revealed the reasons as to why certain disasters occurred. Just off the top of my head I can think of a few:

- Sin and suffering entered because of Adam and Eve’s sin. For us not to recognize this and to look for some evolutionary or chemical cause, is foolish.
- The flood came because of the universal wickedness of mankind.
- Jacob was separated from his family because of his sin of deceiving his father.
- Achan’s sin resulted in the loss of the battle against Ai (*Joshua 7*).
- The sins of Israel and Judah in rejecting the words of the prophets resulted in the Babylonian Captivity.
- The rejection of Jesus’ message by the Jews resulted in the destruction of their city and temple.

To simply lament the loss caused by a tragedy without searching out the causes could be inadequate and dangerous. It could be just an attempt to hide from the truth, or to avoid responsibility. What if there is something we are doing to cause these kinds of events? By avoiding the search for the cause, we set ourselves up to suffer it again. And that could not be called mercy.

In the case of the suffering that Job experienced, he and his friends did not know the real cause, but we are given that “behind-the-scenes” look in the first chapter.

In the case of the Connecticut shooter, we probably don’t know enough to trace every cause of this. Some things are revealed (if they are accurate):

- The killer played violent video games a lot,
- His mother kept dangerous guns and taught the boy how to use them,
- The parents divorced,
- They had way too much money (which brings idleness),
- The killer had some mental difficulties.

Probably there were many other causes, such as worthless movies and books, the superficiality of modern culture, bad friends, a schooling system which weakens the moral judgment, and so on.

So in this particular case, without a clear knowledge of all the facts, and without God’s finger pointing to the causes, it would be better not to assume a quick cause, as is being done by some.

However, if we consider this tragedy as part of a larger moral declension in America (and the world), we as Christians should know the causes, for God has spoken to this problem throughout the Bible.

It is the presence of faithful believers who hold to righteousness that acts as a preservative or preventative in the world:

Matthew 5

¹³ You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

When the followers of God lose their grasp on the gospel, then they cease to be a preservative, and iniquity rises and increases.

The Flood

This happened before the flood when the sons of God (some of the faithful) joined themselves to the daughters of men (Cain's idolatrous descendants) and became "men of renown". This hastened the destruction of the world by the flood. It is not by coincidence that the chapter in *Genesis* dealing with the flood starts this way:

Genesis 6

¹ And it came to pass...

² That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

And the result?

⁴ There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

These two verses are inextricably linked together. The creation of "men of renown," or men who were idolized, led to the rise of great wickedness, and brought on the flood. How many faithful were left, who joined Noah in building the ark? Very few. The salt had lost its savor.

The Nation of Israel

The nation of Israel was in deep apostasy just before the rise of Babylon to rule the world. This is seen in their rejection of Jeremiah's message, and their stubborn refusal to recognize their own sad condition.

Had they been faithful, Babylon could have had no rule over them. This is shown by the account given in *2 Kings 19*, where under the rule of King Hezekiah, Israel was in a somewhat better spiritual condition. And while they were still suffering from the consequences of their sins from the past years, God was able to deliver Jerusalem by a signal judgment on Sennacherib's army. Sennacherib was the king of Assyria.

This kind of protection would have been available at all times, had they always been faithful. So the decrease of spirituality in Israel, meant the rising of the powers of sin, both in themselves, and in the world around them.

A second illustration of this principle in the nationhood of Israel is seen in the time of Jesus. About 150 years before He came to Earth, Rome had risen to be a world power, and had subdued the land of Israel. What kind of spiritual condition were the people in, when Jesus appeared? A terrible one. Their religion was divided between two factions: the Pharisees, who held to a legal form, with many outward observances; and the Saducees, a rich class who loved wealth, power, and position. There were very few who could appreciate the character of true religion as represented by Jesus. So this moral fall in Israel paved the way for the rise of Rome, and the loss of their privilege as a separate nation.

The Early Church

It is always apostasy in the church that opens the way for the mystery of iniquity to fully develop and bring it's train of curses and immorality:

2 Thessalonians 2

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

² That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

The apostasy, or “falling away” in the church, that Paul mentioned here, led to the development of that persecuting monster, the Papacy, which brought on the curse of the Dark Ages. This “falling away” was foretold in prophecy, both in the book of Daniel (the little horn power of chapter 7), and the Revelation (the composite beast of *Revelation* 13). A comparison of these two chapters, along with Paul’s description in *2 Thessalonians*, will show that these verses are describing the same power.

In Our Time

The spiritual rule of the Papacy over men’s souls, was brought to an end through the rise of true religion again, in the Protestant Reformation, the translation of the Bible, and the various reform movements that followed.

But in our time, the apostasy of modern Protestantism is bringing on the destruction of our world. This is particularly mentioned in the latter half of *Revelation* 13, and continues on until the end of *Revelation* 19. The beast with “two horns like a Lamb” could only be the United States of America, founded upon the two peaceful principles:

1. Republicanism (individual rights and freedoms) and
2. Protestantism (separation of church and state; the rights of conscience).

This nation arose just after the Papal “beast” (*Revelation* 13:1-10) received its “deadly wound”, the end of it’s civil power, at the hands of the French Revolution in the late 1700’s. The tyranny of kings, and of the Catholic hierarchy were finally broken by the planting of liberty in America.

America was particularly blessed with the fruit of the Reformation, as a nation that brought civil and religious liberty, in a very practical way, to the world, and which allowed the gospel to flourish without the persecution of kings and priests. This influenced most of the nations in our world, who copy her democratic and non-discriminatory system.

Therefore the most influential force in the world, could have been Protestantism, working through the advantage provided by American freedoms.

But the salt has lost its savor and been corrupted by the riches of the world. America (and the American churches) have followed the course of Solomon, who turned God's advantages into commercialism and money-making.

The love of money has leavened her doctrine, until sin is permitted and even taught openly as the "way of love." The commandments, which should have revealed sin, have been set aside as "legalism and bondage."

A New Type of Spiritualism

In their place, a new type of spiritualism in which feelings and impressions are the guide, has taken its place. It is called "the moving of the spirit". But it can't be the "spirit of holiness" (*Romans 1:4*) for it does not lead to purifying the flesh and spirit from unclean habits.

Nor does it lead to the "unity of the Spirit" (*Ephesians 4:3*), for then there would cease to be so many sects of religion, and all would come into agreement, as they did in the early church.

Nor could it be that "Spirit of truth" (*John 16:13*) which Jesus promised to give to lead us into *all* truth, for there has been no advance in real truth in any of the Protestant churches since their fathers fell asleep in death.

This new kind of religion has leavened the people, until its influence is felt in all areas of society. Instead of firm obedience, denial of the lusts of the flesh, and seeking earnestly for righteousness, the “end justifies the means” is the new law. All manner of sin, deceit, unrighteousness, lying, feasting, hatred, self-exaltation, and pride, may be indulged in provided God’s name is tacked on.

The Rejection of the Everlasting Gospel

This declension is marked out in prophecy in *Revelation 14*. In verse 6 of that chapter, a special everlasting gospel message about the hour of God’s judgment is foretold. This message is followed by another one, calling upon people to separate from Babylon. So first comes the preaching of a special gospel message, and then separation.

What we should understand from this is that not all would receive this message, and therefore a separation would be necessary. The same thing happened when Jesus came: not all accepted His gospel message, and so there was a separation.

Those who rejected the message became “Babylon”. This name came from the nation of Old Testament times, whose religion predominated a large part of the world, and who ruled that world for a short time, during the days of the prophet Daniel.

The term “Babylon” is thus synonymous with a false religious system. Those who refuse God’s message do not give up their religion, they just cease to have any part in God’s kingdom, and go on to build their own imaginary religious kingdom. This suits Satan well, and he uses such systems to war against the truth.

So the faithful who did receive that “everlasting gospel” message were to “come out” of Babylon so that they would not partake in the consequences of her warfare against God’s truth.

After this, another message followed, warning about the worship of the beast and his image, and those who were faithful to this warning were particularly marked out by keeping the commandments of God, and having the faith of Jesus. It is obvious then, that “Babylon”, “the beast”, and the “image of the beast” must be distinguished by their opposition to “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

No Law = No Judgment

And so here is clearly foretold a falling away from the law and gospel of God, a weakening of those claims upon the conscience. And this falling away was to be accomplished by religious groups who had apostatized from the primitive faith and godliness by rejecting God’s “everlasting gospel” which contained a warning message about the judgment.

And since the judgment is based on the law of God, and how humans relate to it, any rejection of the judgment message must include a rejection of the law of God.

And so today it is very commonly taught in our professing Christian churches, that there is to be no final judgment for the Christian, and therefore, no accountability for acting contrary to the profession of a follower of Christ.

Speaking Like the Dragon

That American Protestantism would be the force leading in this rejection of God’s law is indicated in the previous chapter in *Revelation*. Right after marking out the two-horned beast, whose horns [principles of power] were “like a Lamb” [peaceful and just], the prophecy continued, “and he spake as a dragon” (*Revelation* 13:11).

This two-horned beast would go on to act like the previous dragon power before him, which was the Papal power. Warfare against God’s law, against His gospel, against His saints, are all foretold here. Union with the state to persecute in the

name of God is also included, since this was the power exercised by Catholicism in her day of rulership.

The link is further cemented by the warning of the third angel in the next chapter in Revelation. After rejecting the “everlasting gospel”, and becoming “Babylon”, a warning is given against the “beast and his image”, which are the same things mentioned in *Revelation* 13, as being associated with the two-horned beast. So the latter half of *Revelation* 13 goes along with *Revelation* 14:6-12. They are speaking of the same powers, and the same conflict.

Trampling Down Human Rights

The act of setting aside the law of God (by the preaching and example of our modern churches) takes away the only real barrier for the protection of human rights. Human life becomes cheap and easily expended when there is no moral law pressing itself on the conscience of man and acting as a restraint. When men are valued according to money, party agreement, family ties, or some other standard, then human rights will be trampled upon.

The law of God protects the rights of each individual from robbery, killing, adultery, lying, coveting, and disrespect. Take away that law, or lessen its claims, and just so much do you allow all those sins to flourish, and human rights to be trampled in the dust.

Lessening the claims of the law of God is a small act, a tiny beginning. But like the avalanche, it begins with a small movement, but ends up as a destroying mountain of death.

When human rights and dignities are cheapened and set aside for the sake of money, feelings, or personal and group advantage, then it is little wonder that some less stable humans take this attitude to its logical end, and destroy life wantonly. In these violent acts, we see the full fruit of this evil plant.

And the loss of respect for human rights means the loss of one of the lamb-like horns: Republicanism.

We should be able to identify these causes, and every new calamity is a further warning to us to separate from these false practices and return to “the old paths, wherein is the good way” (*Jeremiah* 6:16).

Trampling Down Spiritual Rights

The loss of the other horn (Protestantism, separation of church and state, the rights of conscience) takes place as an attempt of the apostate churches to control the declining morality of the people, through civil enactments.

As morality declines, problems increase: problems in nature, problems in finance, problems in behavior. When the problems become bad enough, and human governments are powerless, people will look to God for a solution. And since the churches claim to represent God, the people will look to them. Their answer will be to impose civil control.

This civil control will not be “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,” for they have rejected that message. Instead it is their own commandments and their own substitute for real faith. And this will be but to enact national apostasy, even in the face of the warnings God has given and will give through His faithful.

And national apostasy will lead to national ruin. It led to ruin in the times of the flood, in the times of the nation of Israel, and in the times of the early church. And America, “land of the free”, land of the “salt of the earth”, will not escape.

Luke 14

³⁴ Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

³⁵ It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.