



"By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sin by national calamities."

—George Mason

31-Dec-04

Was the Wave a Warning?

The devastation has shocked [the world](#). So far, the official count is 124,000 dead and an untold number still missing. One report claims as many as 400,000 could be dead *in Indonesia alone*. Various aid agencies like the Red Cross and the World Health Organization are asserting that the numbers of dead will only continue to rise as cholera, typhoid, and other epidemic diseases set in due to contaminated drinking water. Not since a cyclone hit Bangladesh in 1991, leaving 139,000 dead, has the world witnessed such a spectacular "act of [God](#)," as insurance companies label it.

While the world is shocked by the devastation, it may be additionally startling to those with an understanding of biblical history and prophecy to realize that the ruin has been localized in Gentile nations. Those who know the identity of the "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel and generally understand the prophecies related to her place and condition during the time of the end, are watching and [waiting](#) for the blow to fall on apostate modern Israel—America, Canada, Britain, northwestern Europe, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Modern Israel, with its preeminent position in the world and its foundation in the so-called "Judean-Christian ethic," is surely more deserving of correction and punishment ([Amos 3:1-2](#)). Is there a reason the

nations of southern and southeastern Asia have been so affected, yet those of modern Israel were relatively unharmed?

Before God sent ancient Israel into captivity by the Assyrians, He spent some time dealing with the Gentile nations surrounding her. In the [book of Amos](#), seven chapters are devoted to God's judgment on Israel. However, these chapters come *after* God judges Syria ([Amos 1:3-5](#)), Philistia ([Amos 1:5-8](#)), Tyre ([Amos 1:9-10](#)), Edom ([Amos 1:11-12](#)), Ammon ([Amos 1:13-15](#)), Moab ([Amos 2:1-3](#)), and Judah ([Amos 2:4-5](#)). With the exception of Judah, none of these nations had ever known the true God. They may have had a limited knowledge *about* God, due to their proximity to Israel, but God never revealed Himself to them in the same way He did Israel and Judah. Was God unfair?

Obviously not. Even though the Gentile nations did not have the true religion, God says that every person, to a greater or lesser degree, knows what is moral and what is not ([Romans 2:14-15](#)). The fact that man silences his conscience is no excuse for depravity ([Romans 1:18](#), 20-32), although it does show a cause and effect relationship. God held the Gentiles accountable, not for the finer points of understanding Him and His way, but because they had failed in their moral responsibility toward their fellow man—and consequently toward Him.

As the booklet [Prepare to Meet Your God!](#) explains, Syria was condemned for her use of "total war"—taking no prisoners and leaving nothing productive behind, similar to the Islamic terrorist tactics employed in the Indonesian region of Aceh. The Philistines were guilty of selling a whole nation into slavery for profit, just as girls, young and old, are commonly sold into prostitution in various Southeast Asian countries. Tyre was judged for her dishonest business practices—the pledged word of Tyre was always negotiable, depending on what was in her best interest. Edom was also guilty of slave trading and of harboring bitter enmity against Israel that broke out in acts of aggression. The Ammonites were guilty of reckless cruelty against the helpless, especially the expectant mother and the unborn child. Do we not see the same callousness worldwide with regard to abortion?

What we should remember is that, although God's judgments in Amos are initially addressed to the Gentile nations, His real focus is on Israel's

transgressions. Perhaps part of the reason for this order is that God is showing the truth of [Numbers 32:23](#) (RSV): "Behold, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your [sin](#) will find you out." God would not be just to leave unrepented sins, national or individual, unpunished.

Perhaps another part of the reason God begins with the Gentiles is, in His mercy, to give Israel yet another chance—to give her more [time to repent](#) and turn back to Him. If ancient Israel had been astute, she would have realized that God is still on His throne and very active in His creation. The calamities of the nations around her should have made her look to her own house and consider her own ways. But she could not be bothered, and the result was devastation by war and the captivity of the survivors.

The important thing for us to consider is that, though the most recent "act of God" directly affects the Gentile nations, it does not mean that God has forgotten about Israel. He just has not decided to set things straight in Israel at this time. But the Bible is clear—that time will come, if we do not see the wave of destruction as a warning to us and act accordingly.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Divine Warning](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

America, like ancient Israel described in Amos 4-5, has drifted so far from God's way that they do not have a clue as to what to repent of. Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, the leadership of America (both political and spiritual) essentially absolved itself from any culpability, refusing to acknowledge that our national collective sins were at least a contributory cause for this horrible occurrence. This tragic disaster, hideous as it was, provides a wake up call to the nation, but more importantly to God's church (Joel 2:17) to provide a witness.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Is God to Blame?](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The September 11 bombings were certainly tragic and terrible. Some have since asked, "Was God involved? Is He to blame?" John Ritenbaugh soberly answers some of these tough questions, concluding that God certainly allowed them to occur for our ultimate and eternal benefit.

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