

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

How Does God's Word Guide us to Understand Disasters, Massacres & Bad Things That Keep Happening all Around Us?

Luke 13:1-5; Revelation 1-6, 19

Please open with me in your Bibles to God's final written communication to humanity.

God's Final Written Communication to Humans

The Book of the Revelation is unique. These 404 verses were sent to the Earth by God the Father, through His Son: the Lord Jesus Christ. Those final written words are part of the Holy Scriptures, inspired by God, sent through His Prophets and Apostles, to us who hear His voice.

The flow of Revelation is simple to see.

- **Chapter 1** is Jesus Christ showing Himself as God the Son in all His glory, like the Sun's blazing light.
- **Chapters 2 and 3** are His personal letters to the churches that bear His Name.
- **Chapters 4 and 5** are His guided tour of the Throne Room of God Almighty.

But as we turn the page to Revelation 6, everything seems to change. Before we launch into this biggest section of Revelation, covering the fifteen chapters from Revelation 6-20, we need to conclude this study of the Throne Room of the Universe.

Why Did God Send Us Revelation 6-20?

The last thing we need to consider is: *why do we even need Revelation 6-20?*

Why would God devote the majority of His final words to humanity, portraying such gloom and doom? As a warning.

Why do we need to read God describing disasters, plagues, solar storms, wars, murders, famines, demon armies, and hard-hearted human rebellion? As a reminder.

Or even more simply: why does God choose to make His Last Words almost exclusively negative? Out of 404 individual verses only 25% of them or 1/4th could be called positive,

or encouraging. The rest of the verses are about sins, horrors, warnings, and blazing judgments poured out. That is a ratio of 3:1. There are three sharp warning verses for every one encouraging verse.

That is the Lesson God Wants us to Learn

There is the lesson of the Book of Revelation for us. Nothing has really changed in the ratio of positive to negative from the first time Jesus spoke, and His words were written down. If you closely read Christ's words you find them similarly laced with warnings.

Turn with me to Luke 13 this morning, and I'll show you what I mean in. Jesus is speaking to the largest crowd of His ministry, and He warns them over and over.

The portion we will read in Luke 13 is a continuation of a teaching time that started in Luke 12:1, which uses the word "innumerable" *muridon*, which comes into English as myriads.

Many times the Gospels say there were multitudes following Him. Sometimes they say that great multitudes followed Him; but only here does it say that the multitude was uncountable.

Tens of thousands were crowding to hear Him. What does Jesus say to the largest group He ever got to address? Repent.

Please stand as we listen to Christ's voice, the written Word of God, which we have and hold in our hands this morning:

Luke 13:1-5 (NKJV) There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans **were worse sinners than all other Galileans**, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, **do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?** 5 I tell you, no; but **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish."

Pray

Jesus here confronts questions about two recent disasters by warning of a greater disaster.

First, in v. 1-2 the people wondered about the “Temple mass murder”. Innocent, moral, upright, religious people were slaughtered in a horrible manner, while doing what they were supposed to be doing.

Second in v. 4 there was discussion about the “Tower tragedy”. Unsuspecting people going about their lives were crushed to death. They had done nothing wrong, nothing deserving of death.

We could even, justifiably compare Christ's two situations to similar ones that we have thought about in our lives.

The mass murder at the Temple in Luke 13:1 was like a similar one at Sandy Hook Elementary School last month (and I might add 17 other mass murders in America in 2012). Innocent, moral, upright, religious people were slaughtered in a horrible manner, while doing what they were supposed to be doing. But why, Jesus, did God allow this to happen? That is the question on everyone’s mind in this passage.

The disaster of the Tower collapsing in Luke 13:4 was like the similar collapse of two towers on September 11, 2001. Unsuspecting people going about their lives were crushed to death. They were not doing anything morally wrong, nothing deserving of death. But why, Jesus, did God allow this to happen? That is the question on everyone’s mind in this passage.

These kinds of questions are what have gnawed at people for thousands of years. We all know that everybody dies. We're not talking about that. Everybody dies. We're talking about calamities that come unexpectedly, horribly, and inexplicably.

How Does Jesus Answer?

Amazingly Jesus gives two responses. First, through a repeated question, He says that all of us are sinners. Note the repeated phrase in v. 2 and v. 4.

2 And Jesus answered and said to them, **“Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?”**

4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, **do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?**

God doesn’t usually sit in Heaven looking for specific sinners to drop building on, or get them massacred. Disasters are very rarely the result of specific sins.

But it's Christ's second response, that has the very sobering element. Look what Jesus says in responding to both disasters. He repeats His warning in v. 3 and v. 5: I tell you, no; but **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish.

One word frames Christ's answer to disasters: Repent. Jesus said that for facing the unexpected calamities, disasters, massacres, and inexplicable woes of life, get ready ahead of time by repenting.

There have been disasters all through human history. Jesus says that when God allows a cataclysmic calamity, it only punctuates His normal, merciful patience.

Disasters are allowed by God as reminders that death is around the corner for all of us; and we don't know when. That was Christ's only answer.

Jesus told them: you don't know when you're going to die, but you are going to die. Since you can't predict it and you can't plan it, you just need to be ready.

So we can see that Jesus explains to us:

How God's Word Guides us to Understand Disasters, Massacres & Bad Things That Keep Happening all Around Us

Each of us this morning live in a world unlike anything human history has ever known. The advent of electronic media has ushered in the relentless barrage of visual images that cause the average person to vicariously experience the equivalent of what would have been a lifetime of disasters for the average 18th Century individual about every month.

Mass, global, instantaneous, on demand communication means we see everything, and it means that we see and hear it constantly. Media has catapulted most Westerners onto the observation deck of human misery and evil. Almost without realizing it we sit and get numbed by over exposure to more and more disasters, each day.

No other generation before ours of the past ten years has ever seen anything like what we now can and do see constantly. We see or hear about every major disaster, catastrophe, and tragedy sooner or later, delivered to us in full color.

As we watch and listen we vicariously experience the sorrow, pain, loss, anguish, and death that fellow humans have gone through.

We are each Experiencing Lifetimes of Tragedies

Whether it is a stampede after an athletic event where weak and unsuspecting people are trampled, or the family barely escapes or is burned alive in a house fire. Earthquakes in Japan, genocide in Sudan, another truck bombing with pools of blood in Iraq. Nothing escapes the relentless assault of the media reverberating every pain, sorrow, tragedy and death across our screens, and into our minds.

Generations past lived in a small world. They knew everything close to them, some things that were not close but touched them, and almost nothing about most of the rest of world.

No one in the past ever had to bear the weight of all the troubles in the entire world, all the time.

Inescapable Sufferings Surround Us

There is almost no escape for the emotional weight that gets piled on our backs. We may not watch or listen to all the news, but someone at work, or school, or a friend or relative does. Then they start to share another numbing tragedy, and our hearts get another poke. Most often our initial reaction to evil things is outrage, but soon we end up numb.

But the truth is, the calamities of the world aren't any worse or any more frequent. There have always been wars, rapes, murders, thefts, suicides, and disasters. There've always been calamities in the world catapulting unexpected people into eternity.

Every day in America an average of 40 people are murdered..But those deaths are actually very slight compared to the scope of what is happening in the rest of the world.

Horrible But Tiny Compared to the Rest of the World

For example, take the events in Syria. For the past 21 months people have been slaughtered at the rate of over 100 every day, for over 600 days in a row. There have been 60,000 Syrian civilians murdered in just 21 months. The ways that Syrians are being killed are unspeakably gruesome even for the newscasters to recount.

Add to that the constant echoes of car bombs in Iraq that have claimed an average of 1,000 civilians each month for the past ten years, or a total of 121,227 as of New Year's Eve.¹

¹ <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2012/>

Three hundred thousand people are dying around the globe each year because of civil wars, plus another two hundred thousand are murdered. How does God want us to understand that?

What is Christ's message for All Calamities?

Jesus explains in Luke 13 what is clearly taught cover-to-cover in God's Word: that we don't live because we deserve to live.

We live because, though we deserve to die as guilty sinners, God is merciful.

Why does God let anybody live? God is holy and righteous, the wages of sin is death, and we all deserve to die. The soul that sins, it shall die.

The only reason we can take another breath is because God is merciful, and His patience and forbearance are leading us to repentance.

We all deserve to die, but instead, God lets us live. Most humans in history have actually lived, loved, laughed, and enjoyed many of the blessings of life.

That is the patience and forbearance of God. That any of us have had even a moment of enjoyment in life is the kindness of God.

This compassion of God is intended to lead us to repentance. Jesus said, "It's time to repent, God is giving you the opportunity".

What did Jesus mean by repent in Luke 13:5?

Unless You Repent

Jesus affirms the two vital truths we must understand about repenting:

Truth one, we must change our mind about our sinfulness.

Most people think they're pretty good. But, that is a damning attitude. Change your mind. Acknowledge that if you've ever broken one of God's Laws one time, you're headed for hell. Accept personal responsibility for the judgment by God as a guilty sinner.

Truth two, we must acknowledge Jesus Christ as our only Savior.

Repentance in the New Testament always includes faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior.

Acts 16:31 (NKJV) So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

John 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Every Disaster & Calamity Should Remind us

Jesus teaches that the real disaster was not being slaughtered by a mass murderer at the Temple, or unexpectedly being swept away in a calamity by a Tower's collapse; the real disaster is perishing forever (apollumi: to be destroyed, lost).

Jesus said the real disaster is facing eternal judgment. Feeling the wrath of God forever is the unspeakably horrible disaster for people who die without repenting.

That should make communion so sweet today.

Communion is a reminder to each of us of our repentant affirmation that we were hopelessly lost, under God's wrath, but we have by faith embraced Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer.