

In the World . . .

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world . . .” (John 17:11).

Use this news story from recent days to help your students see the relevance of this week’s Sunday school lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®/Standard Lesson Quarterly.

SEASON OF DEATH

The midwestern and southern United States have been pounded with disasters this spring. Floods and tornadoes have taken a massive toll in lives and property damage. The twister that just hit Joplin, Missouri was the deadliest in the U.S. since 1947. As the swollen waters of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers threatened population centers, the Army Corps of Engineers blew up levees and opened spillways. These actions have flooded thousands of square miles of cropland as a result. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that “floods are the deadliest weather phenomena—claiming an average of 100 lives annually.”

WATER OF LIFE

In the wrong measure and circumstances, water is a terrifying and powerfully destructive force. How different is the description of water in Revelation 22: no more muddy, turbulent, out-of-control streams! Instead, the river of life that emanates from the throne of God is crystal clear and flows gently through the heavenly city. This river nourishes the trees of life, which bear fruit throughout the year. All who reside in the city will enjoy healing and everlasting life, the source of which is God himself.

1. What Scriptures would you use to support or dispute the idea that natural disasters are divine judgment for sin?
2. How do you respond to someone who asks, “How could a loving God let this happen?” in reaction to a natural disaster?
3. Should Christians offer monetary and/or material assistance in disasters only through Christian relief agencies? Why, or why not?
4. How can we offer the imagery of Revelation 22 as a source of comfort during a time of natural disaster?
5. What role might natural disasters play in helping us and the world prepare for and hope for the coming of the heavenly city described in Revelation?

—Charles R. Boatman

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