

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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End of the Age?

As typically happens whenever there are natural catastrophes of immense destruction, there are those who come out with doomsday pronouncements declaring the world is being judged, or the end of the world is at hand.

As the 24/7 news cycle has so breathlessly attempted to keep us up to date, we have watched as massively destructive hurricanes ravage Texas along its Gulf of Mexico coastline, and now Hurricane Irma is about to pounce on Florida from stem-to-stern. There is a virtual national hysteria over the size and force of Irma as she bears down on Sunshine State, having her way, disrupting all the inhabitants from Key West to Jacksonville and beyond. This hurricane has already left in her wake death and destruction, ripping through the Caribbean Islands. A retired Navy chaplain friend who hails from Saint Thomas, the Virgin Islands, informed me that he finally made contact with his brothers and sister back in St. Thomas. They are all well, but one cousin was killed. And not a single roof survived the fury of the storm.

I find myself getting really annoyed by fools who decide to stay even after a mandatory evacuation has been called for. I'm referring specifically to those who are very capable of leaving the area, but choose not to for whatever foolish reasons they imagine. I heard of one professional surfer who decided he would like to ride the wave produced by Irma. I'm not sure where he did this, but the end result was his death. Others are seen running around like frat boys acting stupidly in the face of certain death. You would think that the horrors of Hurricane Harvey would have been enough to convince folks that these storms are nothing to trifle with.

Mexico has had its own natural disasters over the past couple of days. First, it was an 8.2 seismic reading some 60 miles off the western coast of Mexico now known as the Chiapas Quake. It is listed as the strongest quake anywhere in the world during 2017. Last report listed 61 people died. A day later, a hurricane hit the other side of Mexico wreaking destruction and additional loss of life.

Back home in the western part of the USA, we have experienced devastating forest fires in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. I looked at a map on the Internet that showed where all the fires are. It's frightful to literally see ten of the western states going up in flames. A golfing buddy just returned from Denver where he said they fires had created so much smoke that you couldn't see any blue sky. Another friend said the air quality in Oregon and Washington was horrible, all due to out-of-control fires.

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Add to these assaults by mother nature a crazy man as the leader of North Korea, who seems to think it's okay to "beard the lion." Kim Jung Un is doing his utmost to draw the US into a war. This is lunacy! He threatens to use nuclear weapons against our allies, South Korea and Japan, as well as nuke the US territory of Guam and even mainland USA! What chutzpah! Can this madman actually cause destruction and death? Certainly! Can the US wipe him and his nation out quickly? Yes. But only if we are forced to do so. Let's pray that this nut job will take a hiatus.

One more devastation is the widespread famine that has affected significant portions of Africa. Famine is nothing new on the African continent, but most of the time these famines are caused by sparse rainfall. Two the worst famines in Africa at this writing have been caused by warring factions, each destroying the fields and crops of the other. Literally tens of thousands are dying due to lack of food.

It's at times like this that I'll hear someone intone, almost as a prayer, "Jesus has to be coming back soon! Things can't possibly get any worse." My response is, "Not so fast!" Does the Bible have anything to say about this? Well, yes it does. In the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we read, *"When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains."*

What does all this mean then? The beginning of the End Times will be evident through earthquakes, wars and rumors of wars, and famines, among other things. But this would only be the beginning of that lengthy time period leading up to the triumphant return of Jesus.

You and I have no control over the natural cataclysms that take place, nor do we have the power to prevent war and its aftermath.

But we can decide whose side we're on. Joshua said, *"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!"*