

# GOD IS IN CONTROL NO MATTER WHAT

*By John Gagliardi*



It will come as no big surprise to Bible-believing Christians if I state that no matter what we see or hear, God remains sovereign, and God is in control of every aspect of the workings of our world, large or small.

He moves mountains and He counts the hairs on our head – as the Scripture so aptly puts it, “...the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness (everything it contains) thereof” (1 Corinthians 10:26 and Psalm 50:12).

My reason for stating what might seem to be such a self-evident truth is that I am writing this in the midst of many perplexing and seemingly threatening world events, and I have had many questions to me recently from a plethora of well-meaning non or semi-believers along the lines of the classic conundrum: “If God is good, then he can’t be all-powerful in the face of a world of grief and disaster; if God is all-powerful, then by the same ‘logic’ he cannot be good”. I am sure we have all heard this or a version of it at one time or another.

The truth is that God is good, God is omnipotent, and God is omniscient and God is omnipresent. He is God – Creator of all. He spoke the world into existence at the beginning, and all things were made by Him (John 1:3).

As I write, Australia has just had its most devastating floods in history, Cyclone Yasi (the biggest cyclone in the nation’s living history and bigger than Katrina in the US) barreled into the North Queensland Coast last night, Egypt is in disarray and turmoil, the US economy is teetering with massive debt, Iran is threatening to go nuclear and wipe Israel off the map, North Korea continues to be a major threat to world peace, Russia is ambiguous in its ambitions and China – owning a large part of US debt – remains as inscrutable as ever.

Has the world ever seemed more threatening? I hear daily prognostications that the “end is near” (and of course it may well be, except Jesus says we will not know the day or the hour of His return) and Armageddon is upon us on the authority of every so-called expert from Dan Brown to Nostradamus. Yet if you go back in time, there were just as many predictions of the same kind around the time of both world wars – with arguably even greater validity. World War I was the war to end all wars, and the carnage was unprecedented in all of human history up to that point.

In World War II, Hitler was unquestionably the anti-Christ, and that generation was the end-time generation. Just spend some time googling in these areas and it is most illuminating.

And I am equally sure that we can find just as many proofs that the world is about to end right now – famines, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, wars, pestilences and so on and so forth. But I come back to what Jesus himself says:

*“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come...” (Matthew 24: 36-51).*

I have been working closely with my church’s disaster aid arm, Global Care, during the time of the Queensland flood crisis, and among other things, writing articles for the local media and our own website. In the midst of the deaths (more than 30) and absolute human devastation and grief, my brief was to try to find some “good news” stories to help people cope with their loss and personal devastation (we have a saying in Global care that I think is very telling: “The emergency will end but for many the disaster never ends”).

I wrote a story and sent it out to primarily Christian media about a pastor’s wife in a small flood-ravaged town who had her own personal miracle.

Three days before the floods hit her town, she heard God tell her to remove all the stock from the popular art and gift store she ran in her spare time in the main street of the town. So she did – and being just before Christmas, she missed out on the lucrative Christmas trading, and she became an object of ridicule among the other traders in town.

In her own mind she battled – had she really heard God? And then – three days later – the floods came into her town, and inundated the entire main street. She was the only one with her goods untouched by the unstoppable flood waters that rose to the level of the rooftops of the shops.

The floods remained high for eight days and then receded – and the owner of her premises came and said he could have it cleaned up and repaired, and she could be back in business inside a week – which sounded like great news to her!

But again – that “still small voice” of God came and told her not to replace the stock – in fact, not to go back to the shop at all. Again – several days of uncertainty, but this time she was all the more confident she had heard God, and that she would obey him no matter what.

And sure enough – within a few days, the floods came back a second time, even higher than the first, and the entire main street went under again! Yet this lady had all her precious stock high and dry in her home, and safe from the floodwater that had devastated virtually every other business in town.

From being an object of ridicule (the story of Noah occurs to me as I relate this), people were now calling her “the smartest lady in town”.

A great story for people of faith – indeed a miracle, and proof that God can indeed speak to His people – His sheep hear His voice, as He promises us (John 10:27).

So I wrote the story and sent it out to a wide range of Christian media – only to receive a very sharp response from an editor of one of the mainstream religious media outlets. She described my story as damaging and narrow-minded. She said the implication was that God was interested in such trivial things as to save this lady’s stock, while letting more than 30 people perish in the floods.

She said my article was cruel and hurtful to the families of the dead, because it was implying that God would save this Christian lady’s possessions, while allowing other people to die – if He could speak to her why couldn’t He speak to them, and tell them to get out of the way of the flood and spare their lives? And on the face of it, it is an absolutely valid point, and a question worth considering. Her implication was that God was “playing favorites”.

I was stunned (not that my writing is never questioned – it often is) – But I believe absolutely that God can and does speak to His people, and I believed the story about the lady and her gift store was nothing but good news. But the attack left me speechless, and for days, I debated whether to ignore it, or respond – in turn I wavered between an angry response (yes, I have to admit that) and a loving response based on faith and the Word. I am glad to say – in case anyone is wondering – I chose the latter.

The truth is that God is – as I said at the outset – in complete control of our world. I do not know why the righteous, believing Christian is not healed of cancer, while some worldly reprobate is spared. I do not know why babies are murdered and children sold into sexual slavery, while Christian missionaries are butchered and faithful pastors fall into financial ruin. All I know is that we live in a fallen world, and that until the return of Christ, we are destined to live in a world that is both perplexing and riven by sin and rebellion.

My answer to the editor who attacked me was to quote Jesus in the story of the Tower of Siloam (Luke 13:1-9) – the tower fell, killing 18 people, and Jesus asked His hearers whether the people killed were worse offenders than the rest of the people in Jerusalem. Jesus also asked about Pontius Pilate, who had just murdered several people with the same question – were those he murdered worse sinners than other people in Galilee.

“Christ's words are still pertinent today and indeed more so than ever. We can indeed ask the same questions today as to whether those who die in natural disasters are worse people than those who do not or whether those who live under some sort of oppression are worse sinners than those who live in

"free" societies," according to an article I came across on the internet entitled *In The Light of Truth: The Grail Message*.

God is not an "equal opportunity employer", no matter how much we modern people think this is the way things should be. For Him the first can be last and the last can be first! He chose Israel to be His special people out of all the nations on earth, and He chose 12 very ordinary men to be His disciples. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33)

If we think we know better – even if you happen to be the editor of a prestigious religious journal – then we had better just go back to basics, back to the Bible, and say with righteous Job when finally confronted by the immutable and everwhelming presence of God in Job 42:2-5 ...

***"I know that you can do all things;  
no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me to know.***

***["You said,] 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you,  
and you shall answer me.'***

***My ears had heard of you  
but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself  
and repent in dust and ashes."***

I rest my case.