

NOTES ON TODAY'S TOPIC.

Psalm 148.

If you could ask God one question... Why did Haiti happen when the people are so poor, and have such trust in You?

Dr. Alister McGrath writes: 'The existence of carbon-based life on Earth depends upon a delicate balance of physical and cosmological forces and parameters, which are such that were any one of these quantities to be slightly altered, the balance would be destroyed and life would not exist.'

1. Praise from the heavens

2. Praise Him from the earth

3. Praise Him from the heart

Notes for discussion this week

1. Psalm 148 gets its perspective on reality with God in the centre. Discuss how the explanation of this psalm has helped you gain the practice of praising Him.

Stephen Hawking: 'It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just such a way, except as the act of a God who intended to create human beings.'

2. What does the intentional nature of the universe tell us about God?

Ted Turnau: 'Take, for example, a hurricane... Cultural discourse responds by putting up sea walls to prevent beach erosion (that consequently erode the beach further down shore). Or it responds by producing movies such as 'The Perfect Storm,' which provides a quasi-existentialist counter-interpretation where heroic men and women struggle against a faceless, pitiless Nature and where somehow "love conquers all." The cultural discourse reinterprets the revelation of God's wrath into a blank fate that can be dealt with through the tenacity of romantic relationship; thus obviating the need for repentance to a personal God.'

3. Read Luke 13:1-5. Jesus says disasters don't point to individual sin but do warn of the reality of death, judgment and our need to repent. Discuss the implications.

4. What does it mean that God subjected the earth to frustration (Romans 8:20)? How does the rest of verse 20 and verse 21 explain why God did that?

How do verses 18-27 help us live with the suffering of 'natural' disasters in this life and give us hope of the new creation pictured in Revelation 21:1-4?

"As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (2 Peter 3:12-13)

5. Discuss how these words encourage us to look forward and encourage us to tell others about the hope that is in Christ Jesus alone.

How practically can we be doing that this week?

Further thinking: Tim Keller, The Reason For God (available from Amazon).