

Is God involved in terrorist attacks?

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Do you believe in the sovereignty of God? So do I.

In Deuteronomy 32:39 Moses wrote that God kills and makes alive and that God wounds and heals.

In Isaiah 45:7-9 Isaiah quoted God as saying that He forms the light and creates darkness and that He makes peace and creates evil. This phrase "create evil" in the King James Version is often described in other sources as meaning "to bring about calamity."

So I ask: How involved is the sovereign God in the terrorist attacks that keep occurring around the world?

As I share three theories with you, you will probably recognize your interpretation among the three.

Although other people may not believe your particular theory, they at least believe in the sovereignty of God.

Surely other people can acknowledge that you—even if you do not accept their theories—believe in the sovereignty of God as much as they do.

God plans and kills

Some people believe that God planned the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and He killed those people.

How does anyone come to such a conclusion?

- God planned the Flood and killed most of humanity (Genesis 6:7, 13, 17).
- God planned the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and killed the residents of those cities (Genesis 19:24).
- God planned a plague to wipe out the firstborn in Egypt and killed the firstborn at midnight (Exodus 12:29).
- God planned to send the Egyptians through the midst of the sea, killing them in the water (Exodus 14:8, 26-28).

A specific purpose

Other people believe that God allowed Satan and men to plan the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 and to kill those people—for God’s specific purpose.

How do these people come to such a conclusion?

- God allowed (watched) the subtle serpent beguile Eve (Genesis 3:1-5) for God’s specific purpose.
- God heard a spirit volunteer to persuade Ahab and allowed the lying spirit to influence Ahab (1 Kings 22:19-23) for God’s specific purpose.
- God told Satan: Do what you want with anything that belongs to Job, but don’t harm him (Job 1:6-12). This was done for God’s specific purpose.
- God told Satan: Make Job suffer as much as you want, but don’t kill him (Job 2:1-6). This was done for God’s specific purpose.
- God will allow spirits (devils) to gather the kings of the earth for a tremendous battle (Revelation 16:14) for God’s specific purpose.

Not a specific purpose

Yet other people believe that God allowed Satan and men to plan the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 and to kill those people, even though God had no specific reason in mind for those specific incidents at those specific times.

In other words, they believe the basis of the second theory—with one major difference.

The second theory concludes that God used Satan and men to fulfill a specific purpose for the people involved.

This third theory concludes that God used Satan and men to fulfill a general purpose, but not a specific purpose for the people involved.

How do these people form such conclusions?

- Jesus asked: Were these Galileans sinners above all the Galileans? (Luke 13:1-3).
- Jesus asked: Were 18 people who died in the toppling of the tower of Siloam sinners above all other people in Jerusalem? (Luke 13:4-5).
- God encouraged people to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19). People can make choices.
- God allows people to do evil works (Ecclesiastes 8:11). God also allows people to be the victims of evil works.
- At times God allows (watches) random events to happen. In other words, time and chance happen to all (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

■ At times God watches, without interfering, as the sun rises on the evil and the good and watches, without interfering, while rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

Common foundation

For the record, I hope people will be compassionate toward other people who believe an interpretation different from their own.

No matter which personal theory you believe, remember that God is sovereign.

■ He placed a hedge around Job (Job 1:10). Thank God every day for the hedge He has placed around you.

■ God knows when a bird falls to the ground (Matthew 10:29), and He knows the number of hairs on your head (verse 30).

■ God will shorten the days before Jesus' return (Matthew 24:22). Otherwise no flesh would be saved.

■ Give honor and glory unto the King, who is eternal, immortal, invisible and the only wise God (1 Timothy 1:17).

Give honor and glory to our sovereign God.