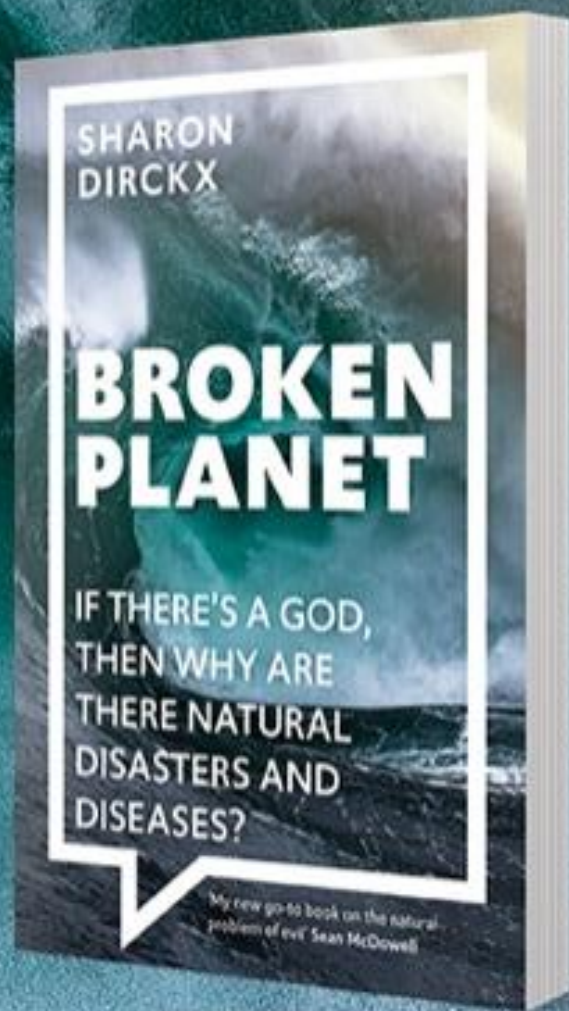


Broken Planet: *If there's a God then why are there Natural Disasters and Diseases?*

Dr Sharon Dirckx

@sharondirckx

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NOW**

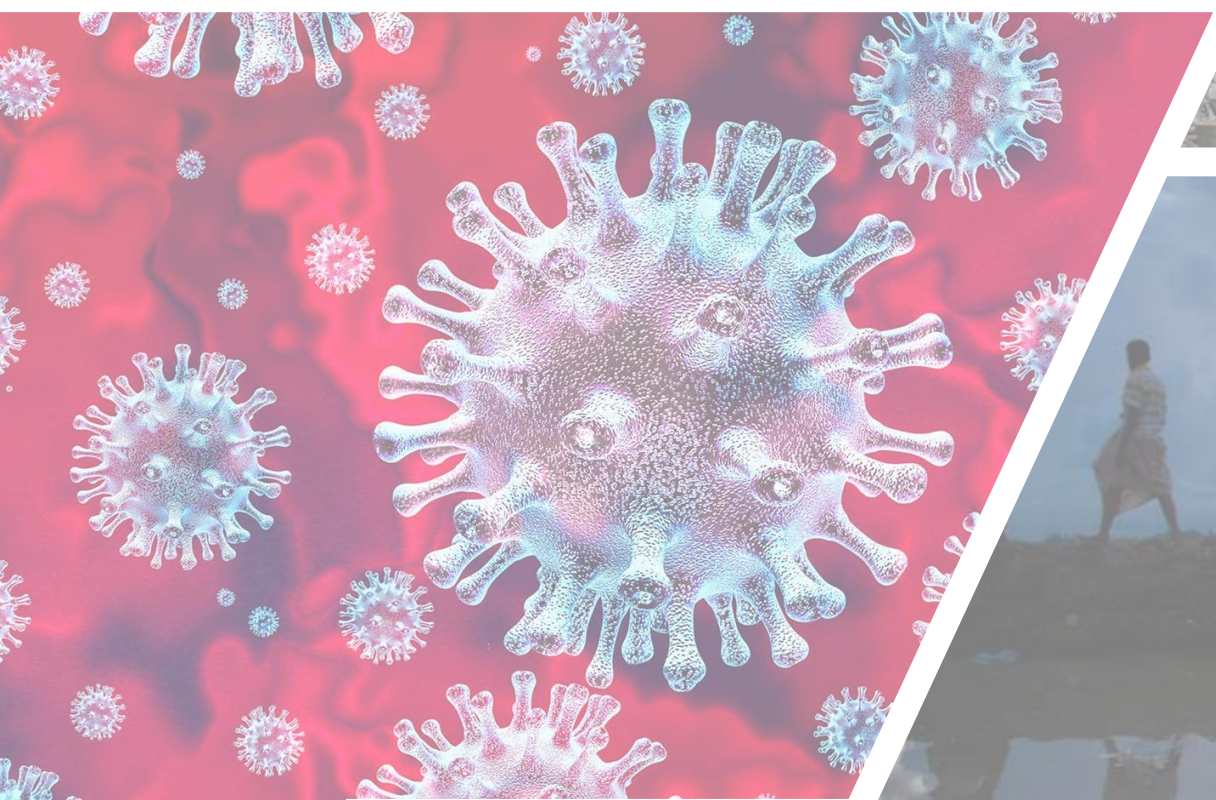


"It's known as Theodicy I think. I'll say, "Bone cancer in children? What's that about? How dare you! How dare you create a world where there is such misery that is not our fault! It's not right. It is utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid god who creates a world that is so full of injustice and pain. That's what I'd say..... Yes, the world is very splendid, but it also has in it insects whose whole life-cycle is to burrow into the eyes of children and make them blind. They eat outwards from the eyes. Why did you do that? Why? Why did you do that to us? You could easily have made a creation where that didn't exist. It is simply not acceptable."

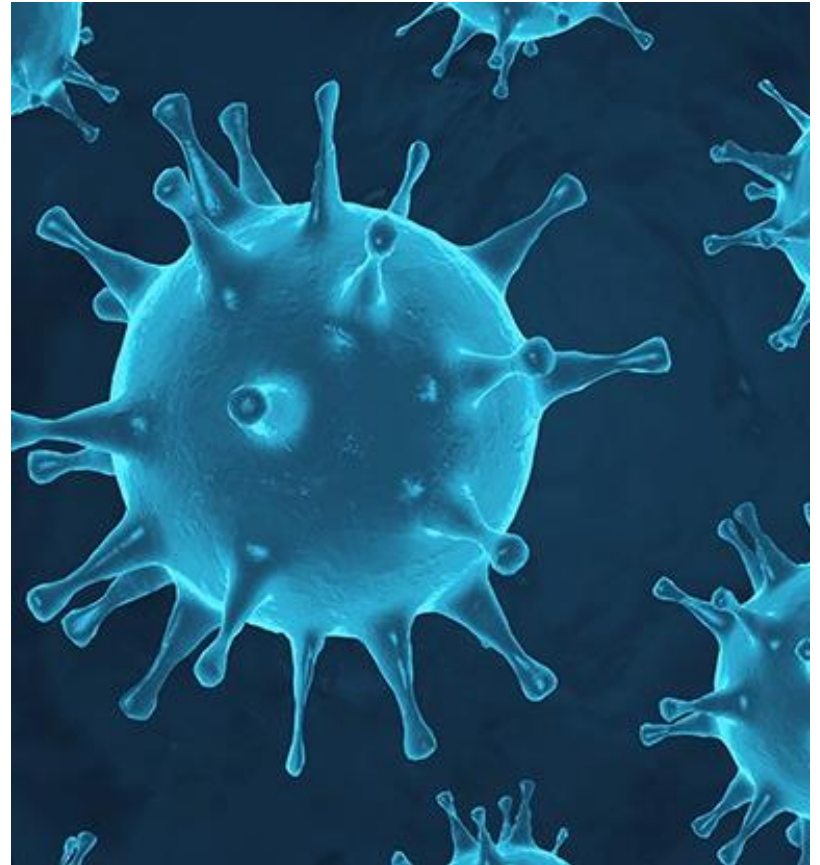
Stephen Fry 2015, RTE



Natural Evil



Moral Evil



If God does not exist what kind of explanations are available?

Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011)

'You can't avoid the question, however stoic you are. You can only bat it away as a silly one. Millions of people die every day. Everyone's got to go sometime.'

CNN, 2011



Scientifically speaking, these are geophysical and biological events

99% of viruses are not harmful. The pathogenic ones have a role in controlling population sizes.

This process, called “kill the winner”, is common in many other species as well, including our own – as evidenced by pandemics. “When populations become very abundant, viruses tend to replicate very rapidly and knock that population down, creating space for everything else to live,”

Rachel Nunn - **What if all viruses disappeared? BBC 2020**



Non-Theistic Moral Realists

Objective values of right and wrong exist but don't come from God – they 'just exist'

“To ask of such facts, “where do they come from?” or “on what foundation do they rest?” is misguided in much the same way that, according to many theists, it is misguided to ask of God, “where does He come from?” or “on what foundation does He rest”? The answer is the same in both cases: They come from nowhere, and nothing external to themselves grounds their existence; rather, they are fundamental features of the universe that ground other truths.”

E.J. Wielenberg, In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism. *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 26 (1) 2009

Where do the best explanations for objective morality come from?

From a godless universe of non-moral physical forces?

From a universe whose foundation is a moral being – God?

The raw emotion we experience in response to natural disasters is not a pointer away from God but *towards Him*



It is a wonder life
exists at all

- *Cover America with coins in a column reaching to the moon (380,000 km or 236,000 miles away), then do the same for a billion other continents of the same size. Paint one coin red and put it somewhere in one of the billion piles. Blindfold a friend and ask her to pick it out. The odds are about 1 in 10^{40} that she will.*
- Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (1995)



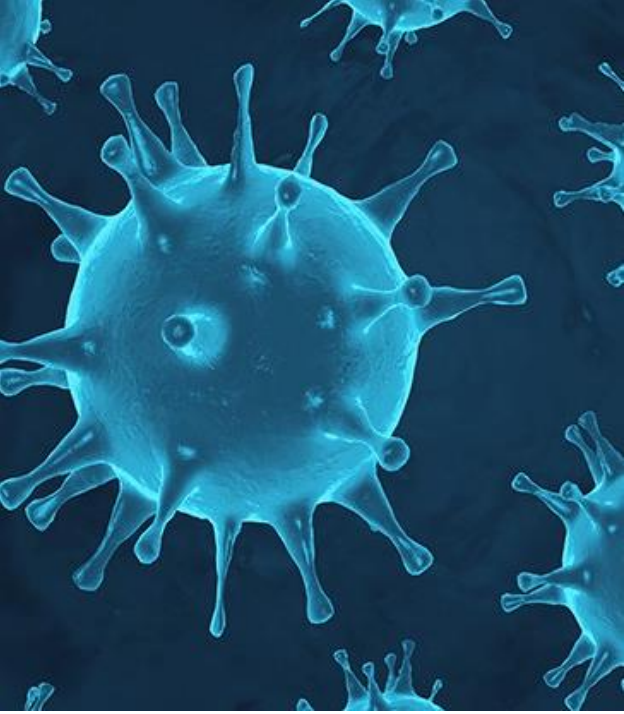
Natural events create beauty and sustain life

What if all viruses disappeared?

“If all viruses suddenly disappeared, the world would be a wonderful place for about a day and a half, and then we’d all die – that’s the bottom line,” says Tony Goldberg, an epidemiologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “All the essential things they do in the world far outweigh the bad things.”

Rachel Nuwer, 2020





1) Natural and Human Factors

Natural Disasters are not inherently wrong. They only become a 'disaster' when people are hurt or die

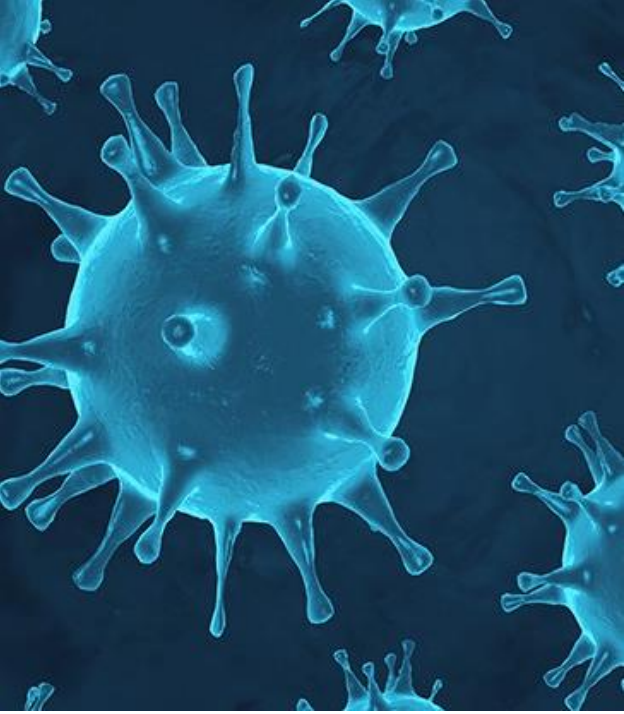
A photograph of a volcano erupting, with a large plume of dark smoke rising from the peak and bright orange and red lava flows cascading down the slopes. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

*...he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.*

Psalm 104:32

*The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.*

Psalm 97:5



The 'Natural Law View'

Eg. Professor Richard Swinburne

- Stable natural laws are needed for free will to be exercised
- In the use of free will people become vulnerable to natural events



The Impact of Poverty



Haiti 2010



California 1989

Hurricane Katrina 2005

“...they were disproportionately the elderly, the infirm and the poor who had no cars and could not leave the city as the storm approached. The evacuation plans called for people to use their own cars to drive away from the coastal areas at risk of flooding. That worked well for 80-90 per cent of the residents of New Orleans. But 112,000 people without access to personal vehicles were stranded.”

Robert White, Who is to Blame? 2014



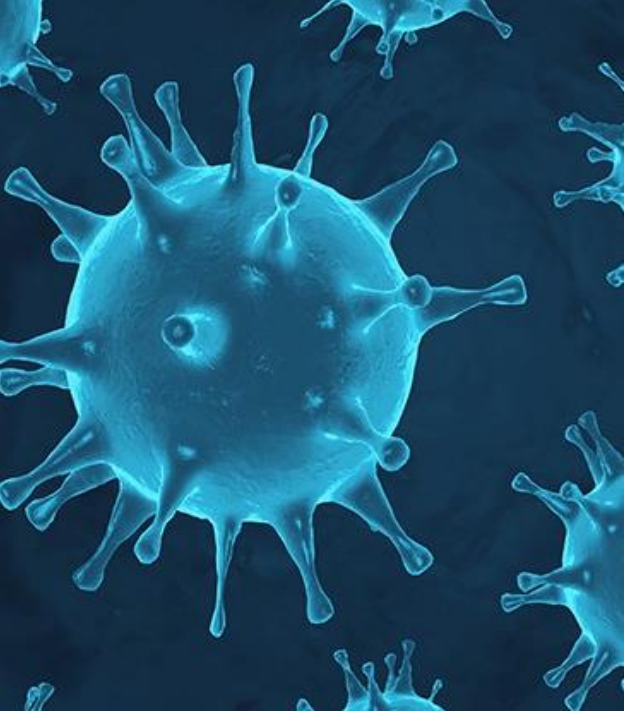
Climate Change



Sometimes we are vulnerable to disease through structural inequality

One researcher at [a] dinner told us about the huge number of children in poor countries who were dying from diarrhea and how oral rehydration salts could save their lives. Sometime after that, a colleague suggested we read World Development Report 1993. It showed that a huge number of deaths could be prevented with low-cost interventions, but the interventions weren't getting to people. Nobody felt it was their assignment. Then Bill and I read a heart-breaking article by Nicholas Kristof in The New York Times about Diarrhea causing millions of childhood deaths in developing countries. Everything we heard and read had the same theme: Children in poor countries were dying from conditions that no kids died from in the United States.'

Melinda Gates - The Moment of Lift, 2019



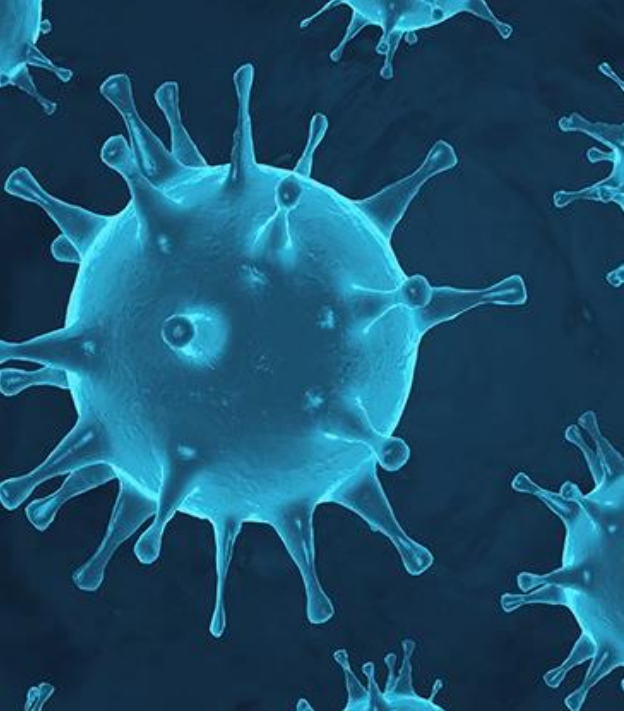
2) Spiritual Factors

Spiritual brokenness has led to brokenness in nature and biology

But how & when?

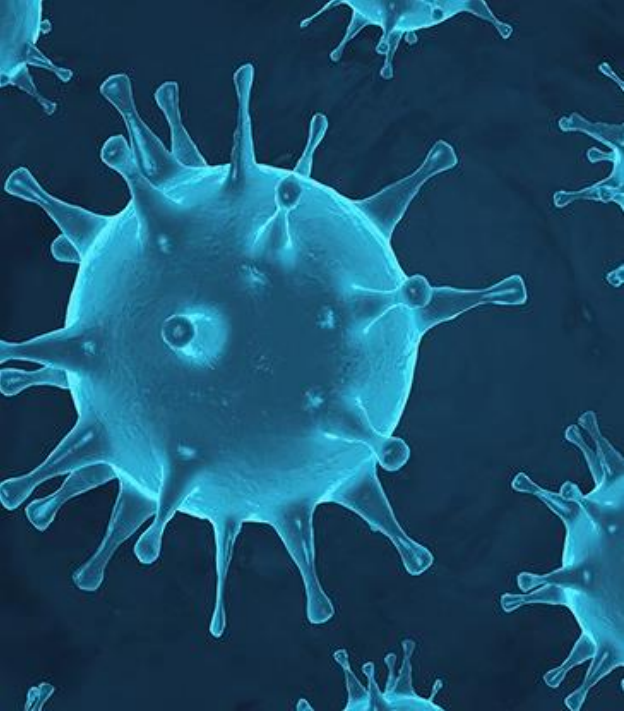
“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

Romans 8:20-22



The Human Fall View

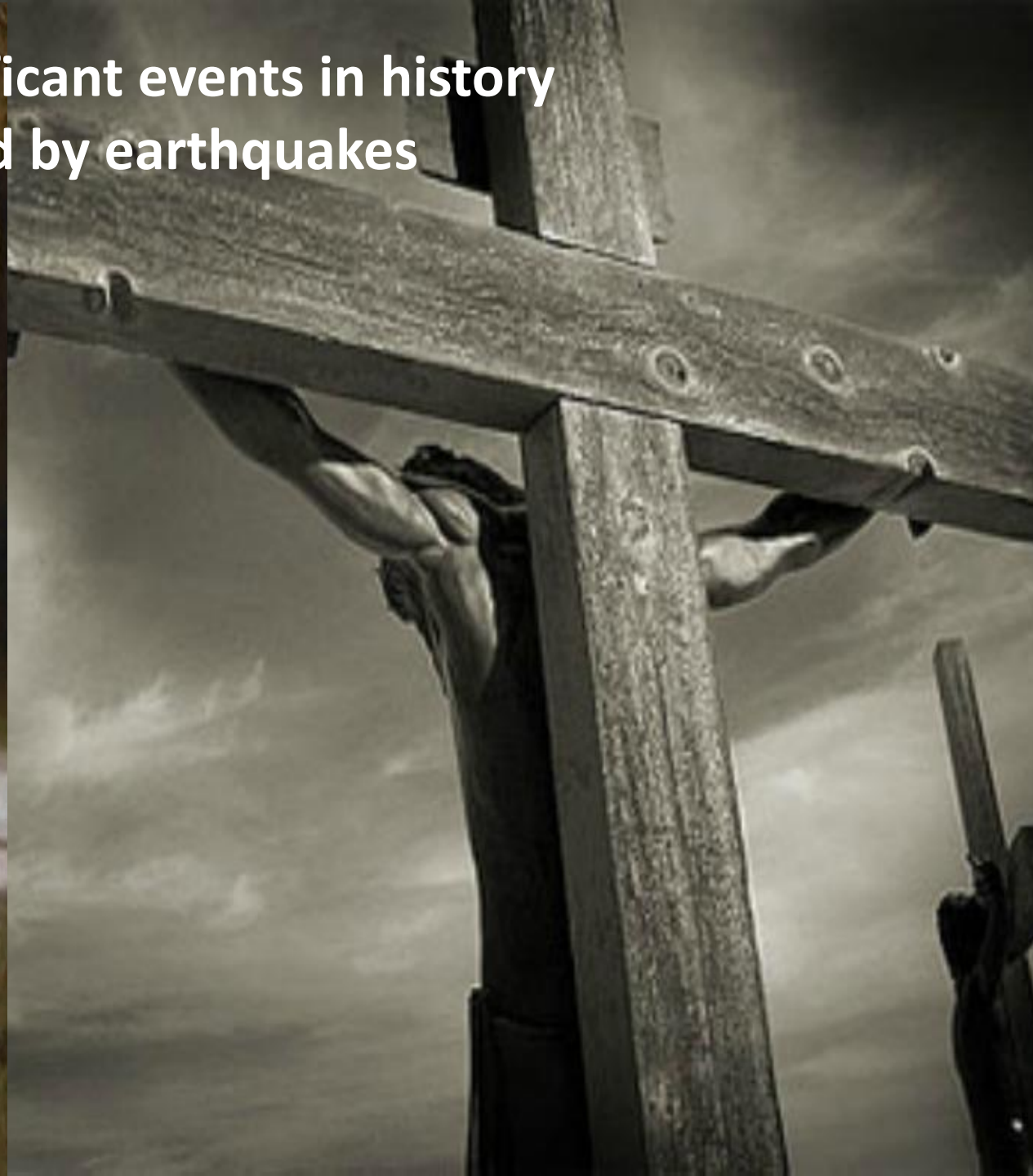
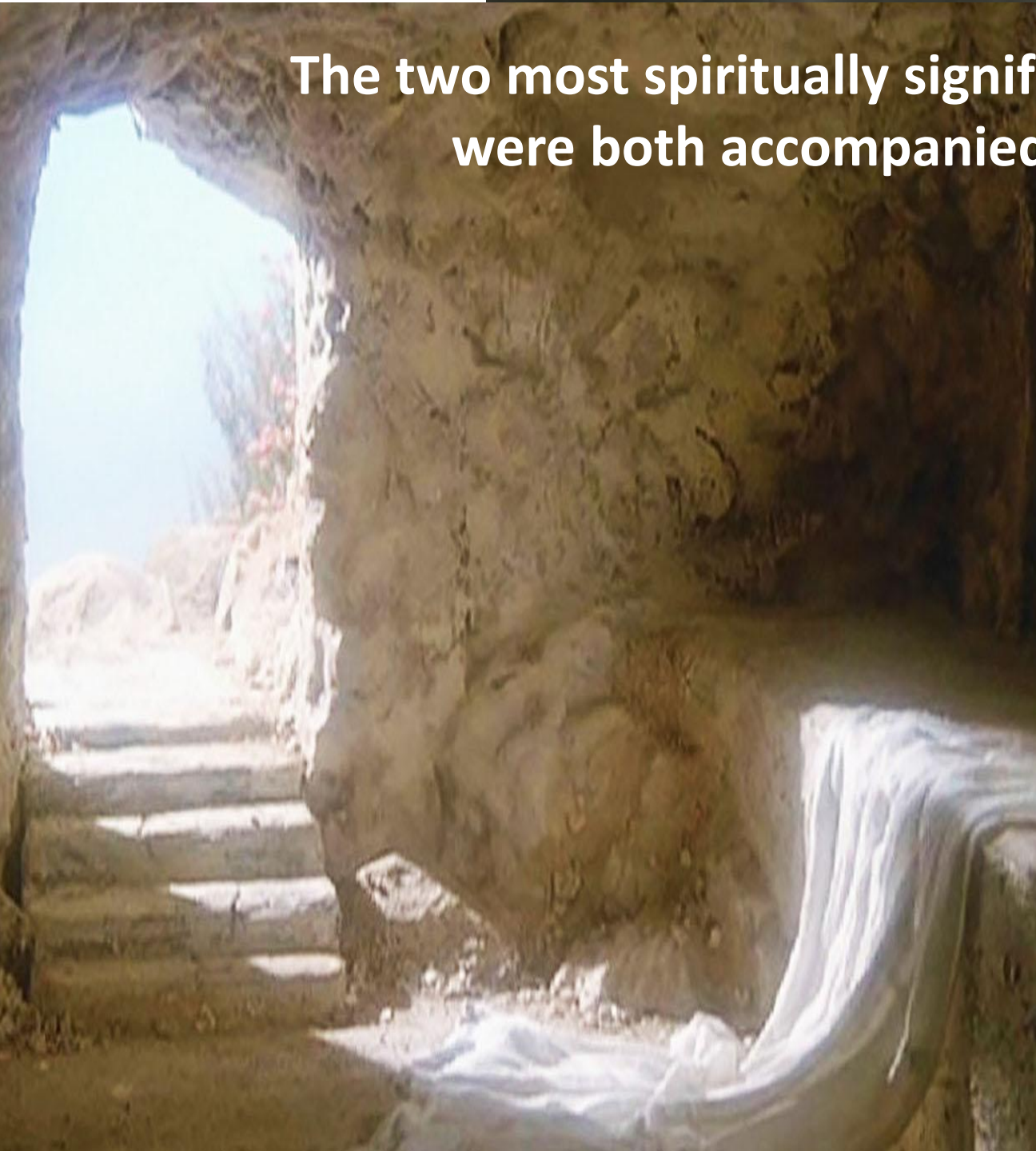
- S. Webb – The Dome of Eden 2010
- W. A. Dembski, The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World – Broadman and Holman 2009



The Pre-Human Fall View

- Michael Lloyd and Greg Boyd. Michael Lloyd, *The Cosmic Fall and the Free Will Defense*, D.Phil Thesis (University of Oxford, 1997).
- Greg Boyd, *Satan and The Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*, *Inter Varsity* 2001.

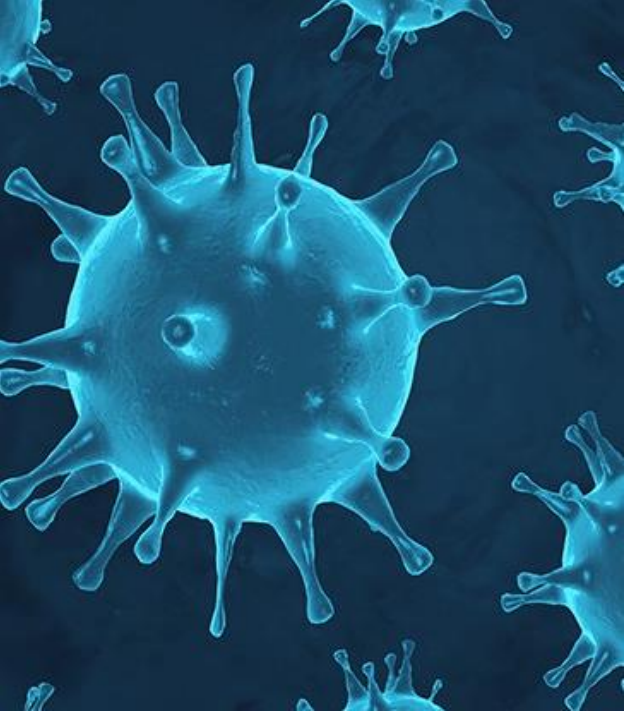
The two most spiritually significant events in history were both accompanied by earthquakes



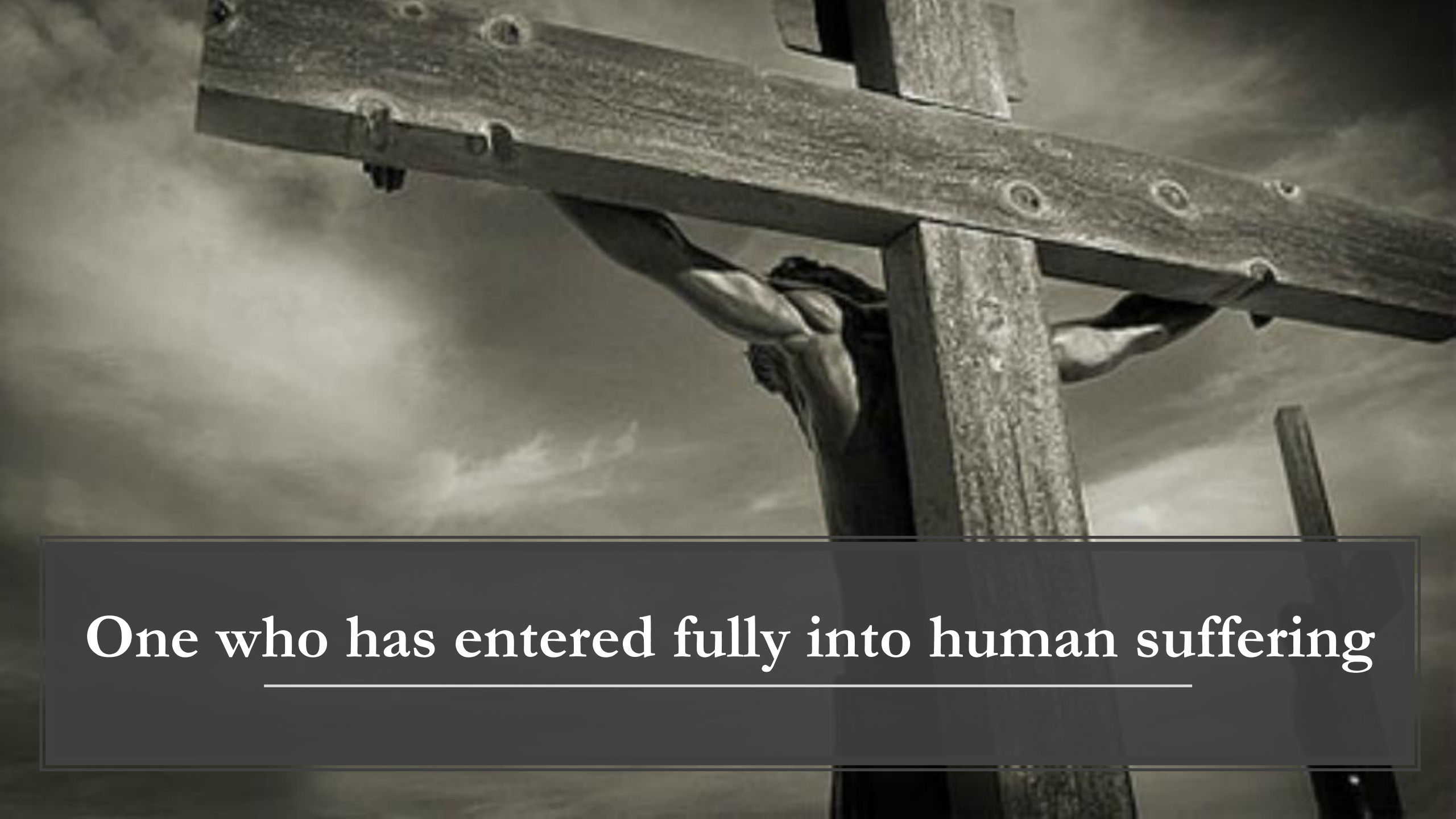
Are Natural Disasters God's Judgement?

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.'

Luke 13:1-5



What kind of God would allow natural disasters and diseases?



One who has entered fully into human suffering



One who continues to
intervene today

Eg. 4 countries are free of river blindness through treatment & prevention strategies

Between 1974 and 2002, disease caused by [river blindness] onchocerciasis was brought under control in West Africa through the work of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP), using mainly the spraying of insecticides against blackfly larvae (vector control) by helicopters and airplanes. This was later supplemented by large-scale distribution of ivermectin since 1989....The OCP relieved 40 million people from infection, prevented blindness in 600 000 people, and ensured that 18 million children were born free from the threat of the disease and blindness. In addition, 25 million hectares of abandoned arable land were reclaimed for settlement and agricultural production, capable of feeding 17 million people annually.

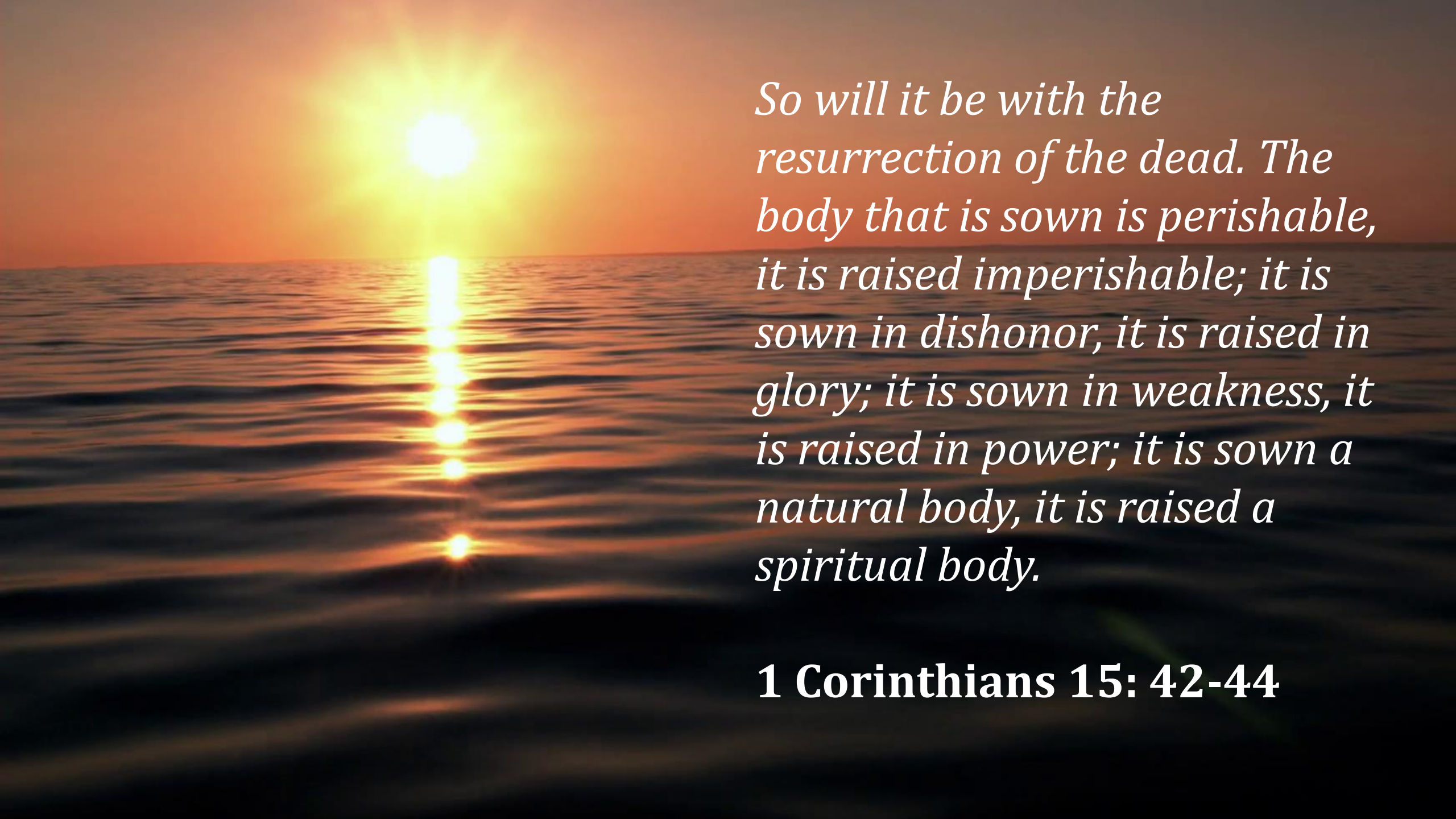
World Health Organisation



IMAGO DEI




One who one day will make everything new



So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15: 42-44



Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.... ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

Revelation 21:1 & 4