

Lessons From a Lightning-Struck Statue of Jesus

National news was made this week when lightning struck a 62 foot statue of Jesus, causing it to erupt in flames. The statue was the property of the *Solid Rock Church*, located just north of Cincinnati, Ohio. The incident has invited the comments of tens of thousands of bloggers and others over the past couple of days. As is typical with blog feedback, most of the comments that I read were sophomoric and shallow. However, some were quite revealing and reflective. I found most interesting the comments of avowed atheists, who found great irony in the scene of a huge statue of Jesus being struck by lightning, then going up in flames. They made great sport of the implications of this being some kind of “sign” from heaven. They used the incident as fodder to insult the intelligence of believers.

The atheists are wrong for rejecting the *true* evidences of a divine Creator: “*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Psalm 14:1). “*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims the work of His hands*” (Psalm 19:1). However, the atheists are not the ones to be blamed for advancing false concepts of divine providence. They are not the ones who arbitrarily attribute all kinds of functions and activities to God when they have no basis upon which to do so. The ones doing this are professed “Christians” who view acts of nature as special signs from God and interpret these alleged “signs” in whatever way accommodates their preconceptions. Their actions make truth purely relative. Jesus, however, said that truth is expressed *absolutely* in God’s word (John 17:17).

I propose another interpretation of the recent lightning event: The 62-foot statue of Jesus was constructed from plastic foam and fiberglass over a *steel* frame. In other words, it was a big ignitable lightning rod! The only “providence” in this story is that God has *provided* that lightning is drawn to tall steel structures and that oil by-products are combustible by nature. (One doesn’t have to be a theologian to figure this one out.) The fire was not a direct act of God, but simply the consequence of a random weather event combined with certain materials and structures.

The real lesson here is that we do not help unbelievers by assigning divine cause to random acts of nature. If God wants us to believe that He directly causes a flood, He will tell us so (Genesis 6-9). The same is true of hurricanes, tornados, and yes, even lightning! Christians will speak where the Bible speaks if they wish to accurately represent God and His activities. They will not arbitrarily assign meanings to things about which they have no knowledge. We walk by faith, not by sight, and faith comes by hearing the word of God (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17), not from our own speculations (Prov. 3:5).

Please join us for worship and Bible study at our building located at 125 Hilltopper Ave, Bowling Green, KY 42101. We meet each Sunday at 10:00AM and 6:00PM for worship, and Sundays at 9:00AM and Wednesdays at 7:00PM for Bible study. Our radio program is aired each Sunday morning at 8:00AM on the WKCT 930AM band. Phone: (270) 842-2049 – Visit: www.parkwaychurchofchrist.com for more info.

Tim Haile, for the Parkway Church of Christ