

Ashes

Eyjafjallajökull means Eyjafjalla volcano, which is still difficult to write and pronounce for anyone unfamiliar with Icelandic. Yet it's in the mouth of hundreds of millions of people around the globe. Since last week's eruption untold tons of volcano ashes are continuously catapulted into Europe's skies. Though difficult to see with the naked eye once up there, this ash cloud apparently poses such grave danger to planes that governments precautionarily closed down air traffic either completely or at least curbed it drastically in large parts of Europe.

We are inundated by media coverage about the ramifications this natural phenomenon has on Europe and in fact the whole world. Without a single casualty, it led to more stringent conditions for air travel and its effects are a multiple costlier than the aftermath of the alleged terror attacks known as 9/11. The life of millions has been directly heavily altered over night, while hundreds of millions are indirectly affected. In a way it's fascinating how something completely out of man's control can throw man's controlled, usually fast paced, completely structured, canalized, well oiled machinery of life and work downright into chaos. Amazing how a volcano eruption on a far away and economically rather unimportant island in the North Atlantic Ocean has the power to cause financial ruin and economic mayhem on international levels and render man's plans, logic and logistics void, just like that. Due to this increasing financial and economic pressure, some countries plan to allow normal air traffic as from tonight (day 6), yet no one really knows if flying will be safe or not. It looks like, once again, man's safety only plays a secondary role to monetary issues.

The first decade of this millennium has been filled with natural disasters (Tsunami, earthquakes, hurricanes) and man-made destruction of immense proportions that has not only cost multitudes their lives but altered daily life for the world population significantly. E.g. due to the so-called fight on terror we are subtly forced to put up with increasing control of and intrusion into our privacy, and international travel can easily turn into an ordeal due to increased and dainty personal security checks. The driving force is always fear. Fear and the resultant attempt to control the financial crisis of the past three years has thrown large parts of the world into untold and uncontrollable debts, no matter how much we try to gloss it over. And now this - ashes from an uncontrollable volcano take control of man's life.

Surely, those able to reading the signs of time, as Jesus calls it, will use this opportunity to mull over what's really important in life and hopefully begin to realign and make changes where necessary. Because no matter how good, intelligent and comprehensive our plans are, the Lord still has the last word in everything (Proverbs 16:1) as everything holds together in Him (Colossians 1:17) and not in us!

Having worked for decades on international level in a fast paced corporate world, I know the pressures exerted on individuals first-hand. Nervous break downs, physical and mental exhaustion, and what have you, have caused a few to slow down and take time out to protect their health and sanity. Yet hardly anyone is prepared to take just a couple of days off from a busy work schedule to reassess life, its purpose, and work in Kingdom context. What many were unwilling to do voluntarily for a good reason, this unpronounceable volcano accomplished over night just like that: bringing life as they knew it to an involuntary abrupt halt.

Jesus left no room for interpretation when He said, "[...] apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing." (John 15:5, Amplified Bible) As the signs of the end of this age, which the Lord spoke about (e.g. Matthew 24), are increasing significantly, may we become alert and take appropriate action for ourselves and those we have influence on so that our lives don't end up in "ashes", i.e. in hell, the smoking section of eternity.