Dealing with Disaster:

A Godly Perspective of the September 11 Attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon

Introduction:

1. On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, four planes, bound for the West Coast with full loads of fuel, were hijacked by Arab/Muslim suicide squads on the East Coast, and aimed at important symbols of American financial, military, and political power, to show militant Moslem hatred for the USA's support of Israel and Middle East policies, with a death count about 5000 and the cost about $25 billion.
2. Media coverage in our day is exhaustive, instantaneous, detailed, continual, philosophical, opinionated, and varied; yet there is no mention of God, judgment, sin, repentance, self-examination, national pride, moral decay, religious differences, etc. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are isolated, rejected, and ridiculed for their spiritual perspective, which forcefully included God's judgment on America for sin.
3. Though this was a small event in the world's 6000-year history of violence, loss of life, and destruction, yet many Americans are responding as if it were a catastrophic event of overwhelming magnitude. That so few were able to do so much damage is a function of our technical age rather than greater degrees of human hatred and violence. Ghengis Khan, Attila the Hun, Stalin, and others did far worse.
4. A national prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral included many false concepts of God, much compromise with Christ-deniers and other heretics, and many examples of rejecting God's Word.
5. We can be thankful for a president who calls for a day of prayer and speaks of God as his and our Creator, yet we must speak out against the compromise of apostolic Christianity with many false ideas.
6. We are in the perilous times of the last days, and we must recognize a form of godliness without any power or authority, for it is now the basic religion of this "Christian" nation (II Timothy 3:1-9).
7. We want God's thoughts on this subject rather than the thoughts of Dan Rather, college students, Senators, school children, victims' family members, Peter Jennings, grieving girlfriends, or anyone else.
8. It should be evident that God is lifting His hand of protection from our nation, for we have enjoyed the greatest combination of peace, prosperity, protection, and a pampered lifestyle ever imagined by man.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD is much more than a theological term for debates (Amos 3:6).

- A. God's sovereignty gives comfort in the face of horrific events and their consequences, so we must know and defend this doctrine for more than our understanding of salvation.
- B. Our text contains two of several rhetorical questions clearly assuming negative answers, consequently we understand our text to teach that evil in a city is from and by the Lord.
- C. We may similarly understand other rhetorical questions (Lam 3:37-38 cp Job 2:10).
- D. In the providence of God, there are times when He creates evil in a city (Isaiah 45:7).
- E. Both prosperity and adversity come from the Lord, to teach us differently (Eccl 7:14).
- F. There are no random events; there is not chaos in the earth; there are no coincidences; no natural laws are outside His determining counsel; all things are under His control.
- G. We understand all events to be by the plan, providence, permission, and purpose of God, so that whatever occurs we know to be His will (II Samuel 12:22-23; Act 21:14).
- H. We do not speculate about the future or His hidden wisdom in past events, but we know what we can see, we respond accordingly, and we do what He has revealed (Deu 29:29).
- I. This fact of God's government of all events is to be trusted in all endeavors (Jas 4:15).
- J. Not a single sparrow ever falls without the plan, permission, and purpose of God; and this includes sparrows at the twin towers; and we are of more value (Matt 10:29-31).
- K. So much is this the fact of the case at hand, we understand God to have selected the targets; and we should therefore reflect soberly on our nation's condition before God.
- L. With this knowledge, we are always at peace, for we know our infinitely benevolent Father is in total control of all events for His glory and our profit, without exception.

II. GOD RESTRAINS EVIL that is not according to His will, wisdom, and glory (Psalm 76:10).

A. The certainty and clarity of this verse is not to be modified, for it is comfort from God.

B. We start with this revealed law of Scripture; we add to it all the specific cases; and we gather very conclusive and powerful knowledge of God's mysterious providence.

C. Three times God restrained kings from touching prophets' wives (Psalm 105:14-15).

D. Joseph's brethren thought evil against him, but God used it for good (Ge 45:5-8; 50:20).

E. Three times a year no man would desire Israel when the men would worship (Ex 34:24).

F. The Lord sent Abigail and prospered her way to keep David from wrath (I Sam 25:34).

G. The wrath of wicked men at Nazareth was restrained from touching Jesus (Lu 4:28-30).

H. Roman soldiers ordinarily broke bones, but they rather pierced Him (John 19:36-37).

I. The nations of Europe willingly submitted to Rome until God's time came (Rev 17:17).

J. Even Satan can do no more than God willingly allows him to do, much less Osama Bin Laden and the other Bedouin nomads of Afghanistan (Job 1:10-12; 2:3-6).

K. Therefore, we are always at peace, for we know our infinitely wise Father has planned to allow any given wrath for His glory and our profit, without exception.

III. NATURAL DISASTERS are no more acts of God than human evil and terrorism (Is 10:15).

A. Our text compares using great monarchs like simple inanimate objects, which are less in complexity, importance, and power than blizzards, hurricanes, volcanoes, or droughts.

B. Natural disasters we more easily understand as "acts of God," for we know they are out of our control and originate from some other Source; yet human disasters are just as much "acts of God," for God controls the actions of all men as much as any waves.

C. God controls the waves of the sea and sets very definite boundaries for them (Jer 5:22).

D. God controls and manipulates men like a potter manipulates clay (Jeremiah 18:1-12).

E. When God purposes international events, there is none to hinder Him (Isaiah 14:24-27).

F. The crucifixion of Jesus, the most horrific event in the history of mankind, was by the determinate counsel of God, though He used wicked men to do it (Acts 2:23; 4:28).

G. Since they are acts of God, our response must be primarily spiritual rather than carnal.

IV. BLAMING OR QUESTIONING GOD is totally, profanely, and foolishly wrong (Job 2:9-10).

A. Job rebuked his wife for blaming God foolishly for a personal and horrible act of God.

B. Blaming God is anything like, "How could God do this?" or "Where was God in New York?" or "God wouldn't do anything like this!" or "Oh, my God!" or much worse.

C. Paul answers questions against God's sovereignty with "God forbid!" and forbids even the questioning of God (Romans 3:3-8; 9:17-21), and so did Isaiah (Isaiah 45:9-10).

D. Billy Graham, as the "pastor of the nation," at Friday's national prayer service in Washington, admitting his confusion about evil was horrible. Evil originated with the devil, is the same as sin, was planned by God for entrance into the world, was destroyed by Jesus Christ, is used by God for His glory, and is what America chooses everyday.

E. Billy Graham, at Friday's national prayer service in Washington, saying that God understands our anger against Him is ridiculously foolish and profane.

F. God does not understand our anger against him. Read Job chapters 32-42. Both Elihu and God rebuked Job angrily for justifying himself and accusing God wrongfully.

V. THE TOWER IN SILOAM teaches us several valuable lessons about disasters (Luke 13:1-5).

A. Great adversity and obvious acts of God do not prove the degree of the sinfulness of men, for such reasoning is but the unmerciful "comfort" of Job's three "friends."

B. A falling tower is an act of God and death at the time of sacrificing is an act of God, yet such acts of God do not necessarily indicate the character of those suffering.

C. Good and evil are mingled in this life, and they do not prove God's love or hatred, so we must not quickly judge those directly under adversity (Eccl 9:1).
D. We are all great sinners by nature without any difference, so we must humbly inquire.
E. In eternity good will be rewarded and evil punished with perfect justice and equity.
F. Rather than speed to judge others, let us be quick to question our own hearts and lives.
G. We must repent or come to the same end, for self-examination is the requirement of all.
H. We must repent, both His goodness and punishment should lead to repentance; for the judgment of sin is coming that will dwarf all falling towers.
I. Knowing the terror of the Lord, Paul persuaded rather than enticed men (II Cor 5:11).

VI. CHILDREN DO NOT NEED TO BE PROTECTED from truth about life (Ephesians 6:4).
A. There is much being said to keep the disaster from children, which is foolish women leading the men, for children need to be exposed to reality along with faith in God.
B. They need to hear His mighty works in judgment and blessing (Ps 78:1-8; Joel 1:1-3), and with the foundation of a Creator God and Faithful Father they can learn everything.
C. Children are far more resilient than psychologists and parents will admit or accept, for God has limited their mental and emotional capacity to understand and feel only a little.
D. God and His Word and will to Israel exposed them to very much violence, evil, and perversity. He expected His laws to be taught loudly to all the people (Deut 27:14-26), and His prophets spoke and wrote graphically in their denunciation of sin (Ezek 16,23).
E. Our sanitized, civilized, protected, and urban nation keeps children from seeing the sobriety and brevity of life, for they don't have a clue of sin, death, and true violence.
F. Yet these same social do-gooders allow movies and music to promote profane violence, and they promote "classic" novels of all sort of perversity in the name of literature.

VII. FEAR IS NOT PART OF A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE even though we see it often (Psalm 46:1-3).
A. Knowing God is a very present help in trouble, we should not fear the worst disasters.
B. Consider the truly righteous - I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep (Psalm 4:8).
C. The lake of fire will have in it those who are the fearful and unbelieving (Rev 21:8).
D. The total absence of fear is known only by those desiring to know the Lord (Ps 27:1-5).
E. Though pastoral in direct application, we have not received a spirit of fear (II Tim 1:7).
F. Our trust and confidence in God should be such that we do not fear anything at all.
G. The sensational rumors that always circulate should not find any home with Christians.
H. Therefore, we must consciously reject fear from the devil and trust always in the Lord.

VIII. FAITH IN FAITH AND FAITH IN GOD are two very different and contrary things (He 11:6).
A. It is now politically correct and socially acceptable to talk about "faith" by itself, as if mere belief in anything has some mysterious and therapeutic power. It is proper to speak of "faith," but don't you ever dare speak of faith in the one true and living God.
B. The paganism of our nation, reflected by the media coverage, did not mention God, prayer, Providence, sovereignty, self-examination, guilt, repentance, heaven, hell, sin, pride, thankfulness, fear, confession, etc. But it will speak of "faith" as an entity itself.
C. Faith is confidence in God regardless of the circumstances around you (Hebrews 11:6).
D. Faith keeps us from fainting by having an optimistic look to the future (Psalm 27:13).

IX. BAD THEOLOGY SHOWS ITSELF during times of disaster and fear (Psalm 11:3).
A. We heard "Oh, my God," many times, but it was spoken by God-haters, who have no respect for Him or His Word, do not know Him, are not known by Him, had never called on Him before, and were foolishly blaspheming. What theology did they have?

B. God ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:6-9).
C. What is Robert Schuller's explanation at a time like this? Osama has poor self-esteem.
D. What is James Dobson's explanation at a time like this? Not enough nursery rhymes.
M. The lack of sound doctrine leaves people with a false concept of God, which comes back to haunt them at times of crises, for they do have a foundation based on truth; they simply cannot understand God allowing anything like this to happen. And if it did come from another source, then this life is chaotic, uncertain, dangerous, and hopeless.
E. Billy Graham said on Friday, "You may be angry against God, but He understands such feelings toward Himself." Right, sure He does. Does he think anger an act of worship?
F. Billy Graham said on Friday, "I don't understand evil, for it is a mystery"; and then he proceeded to quote II Thess 2:7 about the "mystery of iniquity." Are you kidding me? The "mystery of iniquity" is the great antichristian whore of Rome (Rev 17:5-6), known by all believers, but discreetly disguised by Paul, and causing wonder by her perversity.
G. It is not apostolic or Christian to say "God has His loving arms wrapped around us," when you are speaking to a mixt multitude of pagans, antichrists, and carnal Christians.
H. Billy Graham said Friday, "The nation's spirit will rise and save us in this hour of grief." What in the world was he saying? The nation's spirit is proud wickedness.
I. He spoke of God as the God of all comfort, which He is to His people; but He is also the terrible and jealous God of all judgment upon sinners who wickedly reject Him.
J. Calling for repentance is great . . . but only shows hypocrisy while following Muslims, Unitarians, Catholics, female "pastors," Jewish rabbis, and others to the pulpit, etc.
K. This event has united our nation, not because we are coming to God in unified repentance and truth, but rather because we have a common enemy to hate and destroy, to further increase our pride. Even with military superiority, we can only trust in God.
L. The nation does not have a "spirit" of any value, and it will not save this nation.
M. How could our president speak of God as the Creator of all men, when it is a crime in our nation to teach creationism in our public schools? Does God hear such hypocrisy?

X. UNITY IS NEITHER GODLY NOR POSSIBLE for the protection of any nation (Is 8:9-15).
A. The unity we condemn is compromise with false doctrine and error (II Cor 6:14-18).
B. Jehoshaphat, a good king, was rebuked by God for unity with Ahab (II Chron 19:1-2).
C. The wisdom from above (God's wisdom) is first pure, then peaceable (James 3:17).

XI. SAFETY IS NOT FROM GREATER EFFORT but the Lord's righteous blessing (Ps 127:1).
A. Safety measures are only part of protection, for the Lord must keep the city (Ps 127:1).
B. Unreasonable efforts (rising early, staying up late, and worrying) are all vain, for He gives His beloved sleep in the security that God is in control (Ps 127:2).
C. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord (Prov 21:31).
D. Our "Christian" nation is responding to this tragedy by increasing safety precautions at airports and gearing up the military, but only God's blessing will preserve our country.
E. It is frightening to think of going into battle without the Lord's blessing (I Sam 4:1-22), even if you have the form of godliness of the ark of the covenant with you.

XII. CALLING ON GOD IN DISASTERS is often too little and too late for the Lord (Pr 1:24-32).
A. God is not a mere "fire escape," and He is plenty wise enough to discern this hypocrisy.
B. There can be sincere repentance in a "fire," but such true contrition is rare (Luke 23:42).
C. Repentance and reformation is necessary for God's acceptance of worship (Is 1:10-20).
D. Sin shuts the ears of God and shortens his arm from delivering men (Isaiah 59:1-8).

E. We're hearing a nation singing and saying "God bless America," but what do they mean by the words? "God be merciful to me a sinner," would be much better (Luke 18:13).

XIII. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE ONLY CURE for any nation seeking peace and safety (Pr 14:34).
- A. God promised wonderful blessings upon Israel, if they would obey Him (Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14), but horrible curses if they disobeyed (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68).
- B. Consider how the Lord describes in one verse the great reversal of fortune (Hosea 13:1).

XIV. SELF-EXAMINATION AND REPENTANCE are the godly responses to disasters (Rev 2:5).
- A. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish, when he is just a little angry (Ps 2:10-12).
- B. Such events should cause us to reflect on our conduct (Leviticus 26:40-42; II Chron 33:12-13; Psalm 50:14-15; 119:71; Jeremiah 31:18-20; Hosea 5:15; Haggai 1:5-7).
- C. Consider the response of Joshua and Israel's Congress at losing 36 men (Joshua 7:6-9).
- D. Consider the response of Mordecai and the Jews at new legislation (Esther 4:1-4).
- E. Consider the response of even wicked Ahab at news of his judgment (I Kgs 21:20-29).
- F. Instead of having a prayer service for the victims, their families, and the rescue workers in a temple made with hands, our leaders should have rent their clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and fasted and prayed for the Lord to forgive and heal our land; then they should have changed about 50 laws and restored the Word of God to its place.

XV. THE FUTURE FOR AMERICA IS DARK unless there is a great spiritual revival (Ps 9:17).
- A. God will tear in pieces those who speak his words but continue in sin (Ps 50:16-22).
- B. There is no sign of revival, for this horrific event has not caused any visible repentance.
- C. Instead of proudly talking of our military might and ability to punish the perpetrators, we ought to be fasting, praying, and repenting like Nineveh long ago (Jonah 3:5-10).
- D. Because we have been given so much spiritually and carnally as a nation, the responsibility we must bear for our pride and wickedness is very great (Luke 12:47-48).
- E. Pride cometh before a fall (Prov 16:18), just as it did in Sodom Judah (Ezek 16:48-50).
- F. Why no commentary on abortion, divorce, sodomy, child rebellion, bankruptcy, covetousness, greed, profane music, insane comedies, adultery, pornography, paganism, evolution, laws against prayer, laws against Ten Commandments, sports excesses, fornication, drunkenness, etc.?
- G. The great God of the Bible has been replaced with the horoscope (Jeremiah 10:1-16).
- H. We are in the perilous times of the last days, and hardly a voice is raised (II Tim 3:1-5).
- I. Americanism is not Christianity, nor is Christianity Americanism. They are not equals, cousins, friends, or partners. The swelling feelings of nationalism are not Spirit led, but they are very powerful and very deceptive. Let every child of God beware!
- J. We have no true allegiance on earth, for we are strangers and pilgrims here; America is not our home – heaven is our home and inheritance (Heb 11:8-16; I Pet 2:11).
- K. Do not let the fervor of nationalism ever deceive you into believing spiritual revival.

Conclusion:
1. Jesus Christ is LORD, with a rod of iron ruling the nations; let us serve Him with holiness and zeal.
2. The LORD is our rock, our God, our deliverer, our fortress, our strength, and a "high tower" (Ps 18:2).
3. Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (II Timothy 2:19), or we are fools.
4. Our lives in holiness must equal or surpass our rhetoric, or we are of all men the greatest hypocrites.
5. Let this event drive us to the mercy seat, where we can find grace to help in time of need. Lord, help us!