

What Would God Say To America?

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. This has been an extraordinary week

1. We don't normally have a sense that history is in the making, but history had a new chapter written on Tuesday, September 11
2. In less that a complete morning, two planes crashed into the World Trade Center, ending in a total collapse of both towers, another crashed into the Pentagon
 - a. the death toll is still unknown, but it is estimated in the thousands
 - b. collateral damage to nearby buildings has resulted in one of the worst attacks on America since Pearl Harbor
 - c. hundreds of policemen, firemen and emergency medical technicians were buried in the collapsing buildings
 - d. in terms of every measurement possible, this event ranks as one of the greatest human tragedies to ever happen

B. America has been numbed, shocked, angered, dismayed

1. Things like this don't happen in America – at least they didn't until Tuesday
2. It is difficult to understand the act of terrorists, who could cold-bloodedly target and kill so many innocent people
3. We are left with all sorts of questions that are hard to answer
 - a. Why? – I suspect that's a question that has rolled through the mind of many
 - b. "How can people be so filled with hate that they would do such a thing."
 - c. "What next?"
 - d. "What should we do?"
4. I will leave the political, military, and other official response up to those in charge, but I think there are some things we must say today
 - a. we obviously need to look to God
 - b. we need encouragement and comfort that reaches beyond our physical world
 - c. we must focus on what God would say to America so that in the coming days, we might find the kind of emotional, psychological and spiritual strength needed to deal with such events

C. I believe that God would say a couple of important things to us Americans

1. You might add to this list, but in one way or another, these few would be at the heart of any message from the Lord
2. Our challenge is before us, we do not know exactly what our nation is in store for in the near future
 - a. it will likely involve more scenes of horror before it gets much better
 - b. we probably need to get ready for great changes to lifestyle, freedoms, etc.
 - c. but, in all of that, God would speak of some other kinds of things.

I. "GET YOUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER, AMERICA"

A. Note these verses:

1. Luke 12:16-21 -- And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."¹
2. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 -- Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.²
3. James 4:13-17 -- Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.³

B. There was much talk in news reports this week about the symbolism of the targets in Tuesday's terrorist attacks

1. At the center of the attacks were the twin towers of the World Trade Center, believed to be a target because they represented the seat of American greed, and the only thing that would sufficiently damage the American psyche
 - a. that seems to have been grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted by the attackers, because the destruction doesn't seem to have brought defeat at all
 - b. but on another plane, they were right on target, for the single most impressive target they could choose was a symbol of money, commerce, business
 - c. perhaps they understand something about us that even we can't see
 - d. remember, we are the people who will put up with about anything as long as "the economy is good"
2. The other attack targeted the Pentagon, the center of American military power
 - a. next to wealth, military power and might is at the top of our priority list
 - b. we pride ourselves on being the most potent force on earth
3. It stuns us to realize that the most powerful nation on earth could not prevent this great tragedy from happening.

¹*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

C. Perhaps it's time for us to hear God's message: put Me first!

1. Mark 12:28-31 -- One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."⁴
2. Matthew 6:25-33 -- For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.⁵
3. I wonder if anyone really thinks that modern-day America is a nation whose citizens seek God first, who love God most, and who desire for everything else to come next?
4. I believe God would say, "Get your priorities straight, America!"

II. "IT'S TIME TO TRUST ME, AMERICA"

A. Here are some more-than-appropriate verses

1. Psalm 4:2-5 -- O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? *How long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him. Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.⁶
2. Psalm 40:1-5 -- I WAITED patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD. How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.⁷

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

3. Jeremiah 17:7-8 -- “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. “For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit.⁸
4. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 -- For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.⁹

B. For a long time, America has suffered a spiritual dryness, a malaise of the soul

1. It has caused rampant sin, the ignoring of God and his word and will, and a spiritual ignorance that has drained us of the kind of life that made us a great nation
2. In recent years, there has been much talk about “values,” all while denigrating spiritual values, ridiculing that which is godly, even silencing the occasional voice that urged a return to God
3. This week, however, public displays of religion, prayer, and open talk of God has suddenly returned
 - a. why?
 - b. the only thing that happened was that in a few short minutes, that which appeared to be strong, invincible, and most important, fell in a pile of dust and ashes
 - c. suddenly, people had an immediate sense that we needed something beyond our earthly resources

C. But, it cannot be short-lived; we must return to a deep, abiding, sincere, and meaningful Trust in God

1. God is the only legitimate source for values
2. God is the only legitimate foundation upon which to build a life
3. God is the only legitimate guide for a productive, worthwhile, meaningful life
4. God must be brought to the forefront of our concerns, or goals, our purposes in life

D. In particular, we need to trust in Jesus Christ to the point we are willing to follow him

1. Jesus taught how to eliminate all conflict, animosity, and hostility
2. Jesus gave us a mission in the world – to preach the gospel to every creature
3. Ultimately, judgment is in the hands of the returning Christ

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

- A. This morning, I urge you to reconsider all the emotions, painful and disturbing thoughts, and Uneasiness about the future – but reconsider them in light of God
- B. As a nation it appears that we will soon be called upon to make great sacrifices for it appears That we are, indeed, in the midst of a clash of cultures, and perhaps more importantly, a clash Of religions
- C. I can tell you that those who perpetrated the horror on New York City and Washington D.C., Are not just extremists, they are fanatical, religion-based zealots
 1. We are going to face times in which terrible evil will be displayed as the will of God
 2. We must be ready with a faith that transcends politics and military power
 3. We must be ready with lives that are shaped and molded by the word of God
- D. Invitation