

The Towers Have Fallen but We Have Missed the Message

by Denis Lyle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance in the face of disaster and the urgency of turning to God before it's too late.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:26

Topics: "Repentance", "Judgment Of God"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the tragic events of September 11, 2001, emphasizing the need for repentance and readiness for death. He discusses different perspectives on the event, whether as a judgment of God, the work of Satan, or a sign of the Lord's return. Lyle urges listeners to learn from the disaster, emphasizing the importance of repentance, a change of heart, and readiness to face eternal consequences.

Transcript

It was an American Dream kind of day: blue sky, warm autumnal sunshine, and thousands of New Yorkers making for their jobs in Manhattan's thriving financial district. Then, abruptly the American dream was shattered. At 8.45am, the silhouette of a Boeing 767 airliner grew alarmingly large over the island. Just as around 20,000 of an estimated 50,000 workers had reached their desks in the World Trade Centre's twin towers... it homed in on the North Tower and dived straight into the upper half.

The impact left a gaping hole in the 110 storey building, which burst into flames. Outside the tower, horrified observers believed they had just witnessed a freak accident. Inside people were running for their lives. "It was like something from a disaster movie" said survivor Joseph Gomez. "I looked up and saw a ball of fire coming towards me. I thought the whole world was going to end as the whole building shuddered. Everyone made for the fire exits. There was screaming and panic.

People were shoving and pushing. It took 30 minutes to get out." Those working out above Joseph were not so fortunate. "I saw bodies flying from the windows", said computer analyst John Brown. Eighteen minutes later as TV crews took up position to film the scene of devastation, a second plane winged into view from the west. Bystanders watched in horror as it rammed straight into the as-yet unharmed and unevacuated South Tower, at a point much lower than the North Tower's strike.

The awful thought that the first hit had been an accident was now wiped out... along with countless lives. Screaming faces appeared at the tower's windows. Fire blocked many of the escape routes and, in desperation, people began to jump out of the windows, some from as high as 80 storeys up. A couple held hands as they plunged to their death. According to one FBI agent, "People screamed out every time another person leapt out". Almost an hour after the twin towers were shown to be vulnerable, a third plane struck the Pentagon, the heart of the US defence establishment, destroying one of its five sides.

The building was immediately evacuated, but hundreds were trapped in the flames. President George Bush named the attacks "acts of war". The immediate response was one of maximum alert. The White House was evacuated, all airports across the country were shut down for the first time ever and incoming flights diverted to Canada or ordered to do U-turns. All state government offices were closed, as were the American Stock Exchange, Nasdaq, and the New York Stock Exchange. And, in light of the fact there was still one rogue plane unaccounted for, George Bush was persuaded to move to a refuge in Nebraska.

At five minutes past ten, the South Tower of the World Trade Centre collapsed. Almost half an hour later, the North Tower suffered the same fate. At 11.26am, the last hijacked plane thought to be destined for Camp David, the presidential retreat, crashed in Pennsylvania, south east of Pittsburgh, after passengers tried to wrestle the hijackers into submission. Everyone on the plane was killed. The death toll of those flying aboard the four doomed aircraft totalled 266. The toll of those targeted by the aircraft remains in question.

"How many were dead" was the question asked time and again. The Mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani, said "whatever the final toll it will be more than any of us can bear". Already 7000 FBI agents are employed in the biggest manhunt in history. War has been declared on Osama Bin Laden and Afghanistan's ruling Taliban. President George Bush said, "Freedom itself was attacked... and I assure you freedom will be defended." September 11, 2001 the day the world will never forget.

For in just hours a great and glittering city was reduced to a ghost town. A Christian policeman helping out at ground zero was constantly asked, "What's this all about What's happening" The whole USA nation has been asking, "Where is God in all this" Some see this event as the Judgement of God: There is one thing I can assure of, God wasn't taken by surprise. He knows the thoughts of all human beings, including every ruler, despot and terrorist. God knows when we sit down or stand up. (Ps 139:1) Nothing on the face of the earth without His knowledge of it, His permission for it, and at times His doing behind it.

Some see this event as the Work of Satan: Certainly the Bible tells us that unconverted men are in "the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim 2:26) Moreover, there is coming a day, if it has not already come, when Satan's Superman, the Antichrist himself will delude, deceive and destroy. Some see this event as a Sign of the Lord's Return: Scripture does tell us that "in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim 3:1) The Lord Jesus said, "For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt 24:7) My... whatever way we want to look at this apocalyptic disaster, the Lord Jesus wants us to learn from it.

The towers have fallen but have you missed the message For this awful disaster, and these sudden deaths is a reminder to you of the urgency of repentance. My... the important thing is not how you die but are you ready to die Hoping to embroil the Lord Jesus in a political argument, some people asked Him to comment on a recent tragedy in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus begins with: (1) A WORD OF EXPLANATION Christ did not deny the fact that disasters do come to people. They come to Religious People: the atrocity

mentioned in (Lk 13:1) may have taken place when Pilate "appropriated" money from the temple treasury to help finance an aqueduct.

A large crowd of angry Jews gathered in protest, so Pilate had soldiers in civilian clothes mingle with the mob. Using concealed weapons, the soldiers killed a number of innocent and unarmed Jews, and this only added to the Jew's hatred for their governor. Disasters do come to Ordinary Workman: "how would you explain the deaths of the people on whom the tower of Siloam fell" Christ asked. "That was not the fault of Pilate. Was it God's fault? Shall we blame Him? The 18 people who were killed were just doing their job.

They were not protesting or creating trouble. My... no matter what the cause or the circumstance, these disastrous events produced grieving widows, sorrowing parents and crying children. And from Christ's interpretation of these events, we can discover some things that we need to take on board, whenever a disaster occurs today. To begin with: (a) We must be Careful not to Judge the Victims: Do you hear what Christ says (13:2) Human tragedies are not always divine punishments. (Gen 3:17 Prov 24:16) and it is wrong for us to "play God", and pass judgement.

Its so easy to conclude, "Well, somebody must have sinned, and this was God's punishment". Is this not the mistake that Job's friends made One of them was named Eliphaz and if he had been at "ground zero", he would have said, "Consider now, Who being innocent, has ever perished" (Job 4:7) The disciples might have asked, "Who sinned, these passengers or their parents, that they died in this crash" (Jn 9:1) My... you and I are not to pass judgement on the victims of disasters.

Only God knows their hearts. For that matter, godly people are also involved in these tragedies! How do we explain their death (a) (b) We must be Careful not to Judge the Lord: Can God prevent soldiers from murdering worshippers Can the Lord prevent towers from falling on stonemasons Sure He can! He can prevent school buses from getting involved in fatal accidents, He can stop airplanes from crashing. To be fair, you and I must confess that nobody knows how many times God has done these things.

All we know about are the times God did not. You see, God respects human freedom and human freedom leads to error, and buses collide and planes crash, but God is certainly not to blame. Can you imagine a violent mutiny on a cargo vessel in the English Channel The crew murder the officers and throw the Captain into the sea. But they are incapable of navigation and within twenty fours hours, they have fought among themselves, set light to the ship, and hit the rocks off Lands End.

Would you expect them to blame the owners of the vessel Would you expect them to conclude that because they were in this mess the owners, captain, and officers had never existed. My... man has brought about all his own problems, and far from proving that there is no God... wars, disasters, tragedy... these serve to prove the words of the Bible, that man is a fallen being, rebellious and sinful. (a) (b) (c) We must be Careful to Judge Ourselves: The men who died in the Temple, and under the Fallen Tower were not greater sinners than we are... yet we're still alive.

So the major question is not, "Why did they die" but rather "why are you and I still alive" Undoubtedly the events of September 11th will haunt people for a long time. Rescue worker Angelo Otchy, a member of one of the 18 rescue teams employed in Manhattan said, "I must have come across body parts by the thousand". Firefighter Rudy Weindler said, "I lost count of all the dead people I saw". Scenes of horror unfolded before our eyes in our very living rooms! But tell me, were you so upset that you missed a meal Where you so effected that you lost a nights sleep Did you not talk about the disaster and the football in the same breath My... have you judged yourself in the light of this awful disaster Have you asked your

question, "why have I been spared Why am I still alive (1) (2) A WORD OF EXHORTATION "Except or unless ye repent" (13:3) When we see politicians on the T.V. singing "God bless America", is this repentance When we see sporting events observe a minutes silence, is this repentance Its encouraging to see people sobering up and beginning to rethink their lifestyles, but is that all that's going to come up of this recent disaster Have you stood in silence as a mark of respect for those who died, and then you've gone back to your sinful lifestyle Will, Christ says, "Except ye repent" (13:3) All are born in sin, and all must repent and be converted if they would be saved.

What then is repentance The word (metaneo) signifies "a change of mind". My, to repent is to turn from sin and this involves a An Intellectual Experience, a Change of Mind, An Emotional Experience, a Change of Heart, A Volitional Experience, a Change of will. Do you recall the Prodigal The boy who left home, lived it up had wine, women, and song, had a real ball and blast in this old world. But there came a time when the bubble burst. Do you see him now. There he sits in that pigpen with his head in his hands and visions of a father's house and a table spread before his eyes.

The Bible he says, "And when he came to himself... " Do you know what that is That's repentance! It involves: (a) A CHANGE OF MIND: The prodigal said, "Father I have sinned" (Lk 15:18) My... you must admit your sin before you can ever be forgiven, you must accept that you are wrong before you can ever be put right. And that is a Change of Mind. This young man came to himself and he began to think, "I don't belong here. I wasn't made for this, I'm made for something better. He said, I'm tired of this place.

I'm tired of the slop: the sin: the slavery I want to go home". And then he thinks of all he has done and he says, "I don't deserve to go home after all I've done, after all the sins I have committed, I'll go back and say, Father I have sinned". My... what a change! He went away saying, "Give me". He's going's back home saying, "Make me". Have you ever admitted that you are a sinner Have you had a change of mind towards God, Christ, towards sin, towards yourself (b) A CHANGE OF HEART: For the prodigal cried, "Father I have sinned against heaven" (Lk 15:18) He really meant against God. (Matt 21:25) You see, repentance involves sorrow for sin, which comes from realising not only one's personal uncleanness, but also the holiness of God.

My... this young man realised how loathsome his sin was in the sight of a Holy God Have you had that change of heart. Do you see anything of the awfulness of your sin in the sight of a Holy God (a) (b) (c) A CHANGE OF WILL: For "he arose and came to his father". (Lk 15:20) There was a true willingness not only for the past to be forgiven but for the future to be changed. Now let me ask you, have you repented Has there been a change of mind, heart, and will Have you made a clean break with sin A Sunday School teacher once asked a class what was meant by the word repentance A little boy put up his hand and said, "It is being sorry for your sins".

A little girl also raised her hand and said, "Please, it is being sorry enough to quit." Repentance is to leave the sins I loved before And show that I in earnest grieve by doing so no more. (3) A WORD OF EXCOMMUNICATION Do you see what Christ says "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (13:3) Perish in body... perish in soul... perish miserably at last in Hell Without doubt there is implied in this word: (a) THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL DEATH: For all people are dead without Christ. (Eph 2:1) Perhaps you're saying, "Well, how can this be".

Their bodies are virile and robust, they have quick, active intellects, they are brimming with personality. But my... in the area which matters most, the soul, they have no life. They are blind to the reality, demands

and glory of Christ. They are as deaf to the Holy Spirit as a corpse. My... what can a blind man do to restore his sight Nothing What can a dead man do to bring life flowing into his corpse Nothing! Do you realise that no amount of self-effort will ever enable you to enter God's kingdom Your problem is too deep-rooted for you to do anything about it!

But God has the answer to your problem! "Ye must be born again". My... the new birth is a "must", for you. Its the only way that you can be brought from death to life! (b) THE CERTAINTY OF PHYSICAL DEATH: "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish". For these words prophetically warned of the approaching judgement of Israel, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 when thousands were killed by the Romans. (b) Do you know something What happened on 11th September in the U.S.A has been the talking point in offices, factories, hospitals, homes.

You see, its easier to talk about other people's deaths than it is to face our own sin and certain death! The American publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst would not permit anyone to mention death in his presence... yet he died. Do you know something? One out of one die! People are dying who never died before! Has the 11th September caused you to think? What if you had been there Are you ready Are your sins forgiven Are you at peace with God? Is it well with your soul? (a) (b) (c) THE TRAGEDY OF ETERNAL DEATH: Perish!

Perish! Perish! The Lord Jesus spoke about a rich man who died and "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments" (16:23) Hell is a place of never-ending torment and ever-burning fire! I read about the heat and the temperature in those twin towers. The North Tower like the South was unable to stand the 800 degree's Celsius, and thats why it collapsed! Would you think for a moment of what it must be like to have the body and soul in the flames of hell forever Will this be your destiny Perhaps you're saying, "If God is a God of love, how could He possibly send people to such a place as hell" One day when Vice President Calvin Coolidge was presiding over the Senate, one senator angrily told another to go "straight to hell".

The offended senator complained to Coolidge as presiding officer. The vice president looked up from a book he had been leafing through while listening to the debate. "I've been looking through the rule book" he said. "You don't have to go". My... I've been looking through the Good Book and you don't have to go to hell. You see, the Lord Jesus here was on His way to Jerusalem and when He got to Jerusalem, "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18) When Christ was on the Cross, God took the sin of all time and laid on Him.

He took the punishment for it, so that you might be forgiven. Christ was buried but three days later He rose from the dead and He is now alive to be your Saviour! Has God been speaking to you through world events Has He been challenging you, concerning the life you're living My... the 11th September is God's wake up call to you! What will happen to you if you miss the message You'll perish... eternally in hell! I urge with every bit of strength in my body. Repent, believe this very hour Trust in the Saviours grace and power Then shall your joyous answer be Saved through a long eternity

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