

Biblical Perspectives on the Twin Towers

by Albert N. Martin

Edited transcript of [message](#) preached September 16, 2001

[More Transcripts](#)

For most of us, the images will be forever etched upon the walls of our minds. It's not everyday that we see airplanes slamming into massive structures of steel and glass, huge fireballs leaping upward to the sky, majestic buildings collapsing like castles built in the sand when dashed by an incoming wave, streaming masses of humanity running for safety amidst billows of choking smoke and clouds of pulverized debris. Such scenes witnessed by many before Tuesday were only as a result of Hollywood's special effects of film technology. But now the scenes are all horrifying realities played out in real time with real people and with real, present and eternal consequences. In the midst of the shock, rubble, and human carnage, the incalculable devastation, many are asking, "Where was God in all these things?" Perhaps many of us have ask ourselves and one another, "Is there any word from God as we seek to find some solid ground on which to stand as we are buffeted by the brutality of that which was vented on our nation this past Tuesday morning?" And if I could not answer that question in the affirmative, I wouldn't stand before you this morning. Yes, there is solid ground for our feet, for the psalmist said, "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway." So I want to speak to you this morning and again, God willing, next Lord's Day morning on the theme, some Biblical perspectives on the tragedy of the Twin Towers.

Before we turn to the subject itself, let me take just a few moments to explain why I've chosen the words I've chosen for the overarching theme of our study. I am speaking to you this morning and, God willing, next Lord's Day morning on the theme, some Biblical perspectives on the tragedy of the Twin Towers. Since the devastation of the Twin Towers in Manhattan was the primary and continues to be the primary focus of the majority of the information being fed to us hour after hour, I am using the words "Twin Towers" as verbal shorthand for all the acts of terrorism, or perhaps more accurately stated, the acts of war. And in so doing, I am not ignoring or minimizing the tragedy or the present grief connected with the simultaneous events at the Pentagon and in Western Pennsylvania. And furthermore, I am speaking on some Biblical perspectives. It would be sheer nonsense to claim that I am able or any human being is able at this point in time to comprehend all of the Biblical perspectives. Only God can understand the full significance of any one event in human history, because in a real sense, there is an organic unity between any given even in all that went before, leading into it, and all that flows out of it until the consummation. And therefore, only the infinite mind of God can see the true significance of any one event. Only God knows the full implication of the movement of my hand when I touch that microphone. He sees all that is led into it and every detail in the entirety of this universe that flows out of it. And so for any human being to take to himself an assumed posture in which he could infallibly and comprehensively speak on Biblical perspectives relative to the tragedy of the Twin

Towers would be off the charts in terms of sanity. And furthermore, I want to speak to you on what I'm calling some Biblical perspectives. And when we use perspectives that way, what do we mean? Well, the dictionary defines the word perspective as a specific point of view in understanding or judging events, especially a point of view that shows the events in their true relationship. If I were to ask you now how many fingers do I have held up before you, you might guess that I have ten. On the other hand, one of them might be folded behind one, and you can't see it. You need the perspective of this side, or better yet, the separation of my hands. And so I'm going to speak to you on some Biblical perspectives concerning the tragedy of the Twin Towers. But I'm only addressing some of them both this morning and, God willing, next Lord's Day morning. And what I'm attempting to do is view them in their proper relationship, that is, their relationship to the Word of God. And so with no claim to any inside track to the mind of God other than that which is revealed in the Scriptures, we come to our subject, some Biblical perspectives concerning the tragedy of the Twin Towers.

The first is the most fundamental of them all. I opened it up as the second Wednesday night, and I'm sure you can appreciate me seeking to gather my thoughts on such a relatively short notice. But the more I've reflected upon these things, I believe first things in order of importance should be stated in the first place. And so I am prepared to assert the tragedy of the Twin Towers is a manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God. The Twin Towers and all that occurred and continues to occur in conjunction with that tragedy, that act of war, is a manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God. And when we use the term "the sovereignty of God," we mean the reign and rule of God in His universe. And when we qualify it with the word absolute, we mean that God reigns as an absolute monarch who is not answerable to parliament; He is not answerable to the suffrage or consensus of those over whom He reigns. An absolute monarch is a king who occupies the totality of his throne. And what I am asserting is that the tragedy of the Twin Towers is a manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God. The question which is raised by many voices, and perhaps many of us have raised it at least in the secret chambers of our hearts, though not expressed by our lips, "Where was God when the airplanes smashed into those massive structures? Where was God when He gave breath and sanity and physical capacity for those men to sit on those planes, to commandeer those planes, and to use them as guided missiles loaded with volatile jet fuel, and do what they did? Where was God in all of these things?" Well, if we know our Bibles, without being simplistic or cavalier, the answer of the Word of God to this question is clear, unmistakably clear, universally clear from Genesis to Revelation. And the answer to that question is this: God was on His throne. He was on His throne of absolute and unrivaled sovereignty. Now the opening words of the Bible are known to all of us: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." And this God, the uncaused cause of all causes, the uncreated creator of all that is created, this one true and living God is celebrated in heavenly praise in this language:

"And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sits on the throne, to Him that lives for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before Him that sits on the throne, and shall worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for You did create all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created" (Revelation 4:9-10).

When God is being worshipped as creator, He is identified in this heavenly praise as the creator who created what He did and how He did it because He willed to do it. "Because of Your will they are, and were created." And there are few who accept the Biblical teaching of God as creator who would want to dispute that when God created, He sat upon the throne of absolute sovereignty. He consulted with nothing that He created as to what its form would be, what its substance would be, what its shape and function in His world would be. All of this was determined and executed by God.

And the same Bible that teaches that truth teaches us that, though in the next chapter of Genesis (chapter 3) on to the end of Genesis through the book of Revelation with its graphic pictures of this cosmic conflict between the powers of darkness and Christ and His army eventuating in the casting of the devil and his angels and all his lackeys into eternal fire and the glorification of the saints in the new heavens and the new earth, there's not one verse in the Bible that God assumes a different posture with reference to what He made than that which He had when He made it. The God who created because He willed to create what He created in a posture of absolute sovereignty is the God who sits upon that throne in absolute sovereignty in the unfolding of the great drama of redemption.

And the Bible does not overlook the tragic inclusion of sin, the heartache, the bloodshed, the grievous things that man the creature does and that the devil and his host do. The Bible is not pollyannaish. It offends some people by its blunt description of bloodshed and a flood that inundates a whole world and sweeps perhaps millions into a Christless, Godless eternity while sparing one man and his family. The Bible does not hold back the description of the angel of the Lord slaying in one night 180,000 Syrians. And yet in all of this, the Bible never suggests that somehow God had to take some R & R from this very tasking labor of maintaining His rule and His government in the world that He made. So when the question is asked, "Where was God in all of this?", the answer of the Bible is, God was firmly unruffled, seated upon His throne of absolute sovereignty.

And if that is true, it should not surprise us when we pick up our Bibles from Genesis to Revelation to find explicit statements, to find grand and sweeping poetry, to find striking historical examples which together all say with one voice, "God is on His throne." Psalm 93:1, Psalm 97:1, Psalm 99:1 begin with that simple affirmation of two words, "Jehovah reigns." Not Jehovah reigned in creation, Jehovah occasionally reigned when good things happen to good people, Jehovah will reign in the ultimate banishment of the devil and his angles and all evil men, but Jehovah reigns at any point in human history. With reference to any event in human history, it can be said in reference to that event at any time what's going on, "This I know, Jehovah reigns." And there is no parenthesis after that affirmation (Psalm 93:1, 97:1, 99:1) that says, "Jehovah reigns (except when devilish men concoct fiendish schemes to hijack planes and ram them into skyscrapers, planes filled with volatile jet fuel, skyscrapers filled with defenseless men and women)." There is no parenthesis that says, "Jehovah reigns except...." There is no asterisk and a footnote that says, "Jehovah reigns, but this affirmation of God's absolute sovereignty must of course be qualified in such a way as to raise no question concerning man's total autonomy and self-governing choices, which we proudly call his free will." No parenthesis, no asterisk-- Jehovah reigns! I say in those two words, God has distilled into the most condensed form this affirmation of the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God.

And so when we turn to many other passages, we find that reality expanded and set before us. Psalm 115:1-3:

"Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your loving kindness [Your covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness], and for Your truth's sake. Wherefore should the nations say, Where is now their God? [Something has happened in the life of the covenant nation that has left them vulnerable to the question of others, 'In the light of what's happening to you now, in the light of these circumstances, where is your God? You profess to worship the one and true living God; you confess that this God made all things out of nothing by the word of His mouth in the space of six days, and that He governs and rules everything He created. And even the intrusion of evil and sin has not in any way budged Him one iota from His throne. Where is now your God?' And notice the answer. It is just a repetition of the affirmation of those other Psalms.] But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatsoever He pleased."

Even when God does things that leave men and women and even the people of God vulnerable to the question of the possibility of an absent God, "Where is now Your God?", we must as men and women of faith take our stand as say with the psalmist, "Our God is in the heavens, not as a distant spectator, not as one who has taken His hands off for a period of a few hours when devilish, fiendish men are able to accomplish their devilish, fiendish plans. Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He pleased." And then Psalm 115 goes on to contrast that which is done with dead idols. But now Psalm 135. Again, the psalmist summons us to praise God, to praise Him for His free, sovereign choice of His people. Verses 5 and 6: "For I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that has He done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps."

There you have it. Children, you don't need to know big theological terminology. You don't need to perplex your mind with what God does and doesn't do. You with your parents and we together as a confessing body of those who are submissive to the Scriptures and to the God of Scripture, we can say with the psalmist, "I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleased, that has He done in the heavens, in the earth, in the seas, and in all deeps." Many of you will remember the incident recorded in the book of Daniel, when the proud King Nebuchadnezzar who from the human standpoint had a lot to be proud about. Sometimes I have people come to me and say, "Pastor Martin, I'm really struggling with pride. I'm wondering if you could help me." I'm tempted to ask, "What in the world are you proud about?" They aren't particularly good looking. They aren't particularly brilliant. They aren't particularly gifted. And yet they say, "I struggle with pride." And I've been tempted to say, "I would think that would be the least of your temptations." There's very little that we can see to be proud about. But this man Nebuchadnezzar "had a lot to be proud about." He had the world's kingdoms in his hand. He's the monarch of all monarchs, as the Babylonian empire was the world power at this point in history. And God said, "I'm going to teach this dude a few lessons. I'm going to teach him the real truth of who's in control. He thinks He's in control." Look at chapter 4 of the book of Daniel. Verses 29 to :

"At the end of twelve months he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar,

to you it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from you: and you shall be driven from men; and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over you...."

At the end of those days (perhaps he hadn't even yet cut his nails. It says they were like birds' claws), Nebuchadnezzar makes this confession:

"And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives for ever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are you doing?" (vv. 34-35).

What a confession of reality. "My kingdom that my might and my power has built for my glory." Sounds like the tour guides for Manhattan. "Look at our twin sentinels over the financial markets of the world. Look what our hands have built and our might has produced--the twin sentinels guarding the nerve centers of the financial capital of the world." And in a space of hours, they're just a pile of tangled rubble. And I do not hear anyone in high places saying, "My understanding returned to me." The Most High does according to His will, but it doesn't change the fact that He does. And not one piece of steel or glass could have fallen from those buildings had not a sovereign said, "It's time to fall." And you see, God's not at all fastidious about the means He uses to demonstrate to any individual or any nation that He is God. Here we are with our million dollar military hardware, and we arm our smart bombs and try to take out a specific target, and we miss and get into international hot water. And some guys with a couple of plastic knives and box cutters with a pilot's experience pinpoint bomb these two massive sentinels, and they are now dust. And God says, "I did it." He rules among the armies of the heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. The 19 that were involved in the many dozens and hundreds no doubt behind them in descending and widening ranks of support, not one thought and one action of anyone in that whole nefarious network was out of God's almighty hand. Jehovah reigns! Jehovah reigns! We find Isaiah celebrating this reality with his soaring poetic language. Listen to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 46 when he's contrasting Jehovah with the gods of the nation. Verses 9 and 10:

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure; [and even when I move armies into conquests amidst bloodshed and battle smoke] calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of My counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it."

That's the God of the Bible. We see it again in many of the chapters in Isaiah, but this is the affirmation of the New Testament. After Paul has opened up that marvelous systematic exposition of the Gospel of the grace of God, a Gospel that sets forth a righteousness from God in Jesus Christ, a righteousness provided for hell-deserving, guilty sinners; a way of forgiveness in which God can still be righteous and forgive, just and yet pardon. And in the outworking of that marvelous salvation, God says through the Apostle, "I control the flow of nations in terms of Gospel privilege." In

chapters 9 to 11, as Paul wrestles with this great question of the unbelief of his fellow Jews, and after giving us this marvelous, sweeping panorama of God's saving purpose as it works its way out in nations, at the end of it all, the Apostle exclaims in the lovely words of Romans 11:33-36,

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been His counsellor? [When did God ever call up one of His archangels and say, 'Can I have an appointment? I need some counsel. I see something that I need to do here and something I ought to do there, but I can't figure out how I can do it consistent with all of the intricate network of human responsibility, of human culpability, of innocence of some and culpability of others, the manifestation of all My attributes: My love, My justice, My uprightness. Would you give me some counsel, Gabriel?' Where is the being in heaven or in earth that can say, 'Yes, God called me up and ask me for some counsel.' Paul throws out that rhetorical question.] or who has first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? [Ah, ha, I've got a voucher. I gave God this. God owes me something.' No, He says, 'No one.'] For of Him [that is, out of His own sovereign, inscrutable will and wisdom], and through Him [by an active, imminent, detailed providential government of all men and all their actions in every circumstance; of Him in purpose and decree; through Him in an imminent, detailed, meticulous, providential control, and unto Him in praise and honor and glory and adoration], are all things. [Was it a thing that split through the sky and rammed that building? Yes, the building is a thing; the plane is a thing. And such a God like that, what is He worthy of?] To Him be the glory for ever. Amen."

This is the God of whom Paul speaks in Ephesians 1:11, where he's opening up the marvel of salvation in union with Christ, and he says, "[This God who chose us in Christ, this God who redeemed us in the person and work of Christ, this God whom he's going to say has given us His Holy Spirit as a down payment of all that is ours in the salvation of Christ, is working] all things after the counsel of His will." Now in spite of these many text which are but a sampling to the Biblical witness to the truth that Jehovah reigns, reigns in absolute sovereignty over the entire universe of men and angels and things, the haunting question persists. Is He reigning as much and governing as thoroughly when wicked men plot and execute things that are in direct contradiction to God's will of precept, that is, God's will expressed in the "thou shalt" and the "thou shalt not" of His Word? Is God ruling in the same way when evil men with evil intentions, plan and scheme evil things and execute them? Is He in control in the same way when by His Spirit working in us to will and to work of His good pleasure? A righteous man regenerated by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, out of love to Christ and in the power of the Spirit does that which is in accordance with God's revealed will. He gives the cup of cold water in Christ's name. He refuses to speak evil of a brother. He is kindhearted, tenderhearted; forgives his brother. "Pastor, you mean to say God is in control in the same way here as there?" Notice the question: "in control?" I did not say "active in the same way?" Don't make me say something I didn't. I'm careful with the words. Is He in control? Or is somehow His control here thorough and extensive and meticulous, and there is it sort of secondary control? And some things can slip through the cracks. Well, there are many ways we could approach that question, but I find the most compelling for me is what I want to preach to you to you now.

I asked the kids in the Trinity Christian School chapel a few days ago the question, "What was the most cruel, heartless, unjustifiable brutality ending in murder every perpetrated on the face of God's earth?" One of the kids answered rightly, the murder of the Son of God. The only perfectly innocent human being, except Adam before he fell, Jesus of Nazareth. The only one who never sinned, the only one of whom it could be said with absolute certainty, what ever dark providence comes upon Him, it can in no way be the result of some chastisement from His Father for deviation from His Father's will, because He said, "I do always the things that please My Father." He could look His bitterest enemies in the eye and say, "Which of you can convince Me of sin? [Which one of you can bring forward hard evidence to demonstrate that I have sinned in word, in act, in look?]" None could. Yet He is apprehended, treated like a criminal, dragged off to the high priest's courtyard, on to Pilate, up to Herod, back to Pilate, spat upon, buffeted with fists, clubbed with rods. A crown of thorns is placed on His head. His arms are tied around a post, and He is whipped until His back becomes one mass of torn and bleeding flesh. And then He is hung upon a cross. When did men ever do anything more wicked than that? What was more diabolical than one of his inner circle going to the high priest and saying, "Let's make a deal." 30 pieces of silver. Where was God? You want to know where He was? Turn to Acts 4. We see exactly what the apostles understood of where God was in all of this illegal, unjust, unconscionable brutality ending in murder of the only innocent man barring pre-fall Adam that ever was on the face of the earth. But this was no mere man. This was man and God. And yet when these apostles are opposed, and they are concerned that God would give them courage and grace and power to go on preaching the Gospel, notice how they prayed. We pick up their prayer at verse 27:

"For of a truth [this we are certain of] in this city against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever [the devil was able to make them do while You looked on idly. No, they were gathered together, to do whatsoever] Your hand and Your council foreordained to come to pass."

Language could not be more clear, could it? When they think of what happened, and they were eyewitnesses to much of it, but they said,

"God, it was Your hand and Your counsel behind the ropes with which they bound Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, behind the puppet court, the high priest and then the Sanhedrin; behind the heartless, cruel military treatment at the hands of the Romans soldiers when they took Him aside and played with Him awhile like a cat plays with a crippled mouse and tosses it in the air to have a little fun in the cold wee-morning hours of that fateful day."

But they understood that every event in conjunction with what they saw and knew was but the unfolding not only of the sovereign purpose of God but the present controlling hand of God. So what to us is an untimely and cruel death of probably close to 5,000 people--and any who hear my voice sitting here this morning for whom that is not just a bunch of numbers (there's a loved-one, there's a cousin, there's an aunt, there's a grandfather)--may I remind you what Scripture says. Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed unto men once to die." God has a master appointment book. And unlike your appointment book and your position and your dentist appointment books, the names are inserted and the dates and the times unilaterally. We don't get on the phone with God and say "Let's settle on a convenient time to die. And by the way, Lord, I want to settle on a very benign, nonviolent, non-shocking way in which I die."

No, the God who appoints the time appoints the means. And without being heartless and unfeeling, not one person died or will yet to die as a result of those acts of war, but that God had their names, the time, and the means in His appointment book.

The book of Revelation says there's a time coming when God's judgment will be poured out--and these are fascinating words. I don't understand them, but it says they shall seek death and shall not be able to find it. I had a sampling of that with my on father-in-law. He made a bonafide attempt to take his life. He had his shoes and his suit for his funeral laid out and swallowed a whole bottle of pills. And by a strange providence, which I won't go in to, he woke up in a hospital bed cursing that he had failed. He sought death and he couldn't find it.

Dear people, think Biblically. What Biblical principle stands out on the surface of the tragedy of the Twin Towers? Surely it is this: the manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God. Now when some people first here that, their immediate reaction is, "That's a cruel and a hard doctrine to assert that the God who made the world should in spite of the intrusion of sin...I can't swallow that." Well, let me ask you to think with me. What is a cruel doctrine? That a loving God who wisely and powerfully made a world, continues to govern it even though sin has intruded and with it suffering and death and horrible things that men do. God is governing and ruling all of this bringing it, as you heard in the previous hour, to an end point in time that will consummate in the new heavens and the new earth. Is that cruel? Or is it a cruel and hard doctrine to assert that we're just so much cosmic dust; that through time and random mutation became what we are, only ultimately to return to cosmic dust, while what happens in our world is at the mercy of a mindless, heartless, irrational, and blind fate? Worse yet, a setting in which evil men and evil deeds operate in a no-man's land outside the control of any intelligent, loving, wise, and just power? That's a cruel doctrine. It is indescribably cruel. How can a believer sit down before Romans 8:28 with one eye looking at the rubble that has become the grave of a loved-one and with the other eye reading: "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose."?

"O God, I do love You, and I love You because I've been called. Natively, I hated You, but in grace, You showed me my sin; You showed me the Savior through the Gospel. You subdued me, You won me, You wooed me, and I love you, God. And O God, You said that all things--those buildings were things; the airplanes were things. And all these things are working together for my good, the good of others. O God, thank you that in the midst of blinding tears, the shattered dreams, and the dashed hopes, O God, I thank you You're on Your throne."

Romans 8:28 can give no comfort that all things are working together period, not to say working together for good unless God is in control of all things, everything pertaining to the events of the past days. If we're going to be able to say with Joseph who's been the object of the envy of his brothers that had the spirit of murder in it. [And all envy has the spirit of murder in it.] They heartlessly throw him into a pit and cause years of distress; he ends up in a position of influence and down into a prison. At the end of all this, when his brothers are scared witless now that their pappy's dead and they're all together, they fear Joseph's going to say, "Payback time now boys." And Joseph says, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). What was the it? All of the scheming, all of the heartless, brutal treatment of their brother. "You had an evil intention in your evil deeds. God intended and controlled your evil deeds to bring good to save many alive as we are this day."

That's bringing this whole complex of events into the perspective of the Bible. And the tragedy of the Twin Towers is a manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God.

In our devotions last night, in reading through Henry Law's lovely little volumes of devotional commentary of the Psalms, he said this: "Every event flies to us on the wings of eternal decree." I said, "Honey, I've got to write that down and put that in the sermon tomorrow. Before I leave this point, I want to say one more thing. When God's decrees are announced in the Scripture, that's what a prophecy is. God is taking the book of His secret purposes and He's giving us some knowledge of that. Whenever He prophesies something, that's a transcription of His decree that we can read. And we can say with certainty that thing will come to pass because the God who cannot lie has told us. However, most of what God does in this world, He doesn't give us a hint beforehand, so that we live day by day in the exegesis of His decrees in the details of providence. Did you know God decreed that you would be here this morning? Did you know that God decreed that from all eternity? You say, "How do I know that?" Because you're here. Your sitting here is an exegesis of something that was in the book of God's decree from all eternity. You're still sane and breathing. You haven't dropped dead in the pew. Why? God decreed that you should live to this moment, for the Scripture says He gives by an imminent, present, sovereign control to all life, breath, and all things. How could we live in a world that's at the mercy of all kinds of forces seen and unseen and do anything than dig a hole in the back yard and hide. If it's brute force and irrational powers and the devil and demons and wicked men in control, and God's folded His hands saying, "Naughty creatures, but I dare not infringe upon your free will; I'll have to leave you to do your nasty work.", that's a vicious and a cruel doctrine, and I hope you hate it with all your being.

The second perspective is this: the tragedy of the Twin Towers is not only a manifestation of the absolute sovereignty of God, but it is a prefiguration of the coming of the Day of the Lord. The tragedy of the Twin Towers is a prefiguration. The word I used Wednesday night is a bit more accurate. It is an adumbration. That which is an adumbration is a shadowy outline of a greater reality. And I'm here to assert that when we take up our Bibles, and with the light of our Bibles ask, "O God, what are You saying in this tragedy of the Twin Towers?" And from our Bibles comes an answer: this is a prefiguration of the coming of the Day of the Lord. As we have seen in our recent studies on the return of Christ, when Christ comes in glory and in power, He is going to do some wonderful things for those who are in Him, both dead and alive. He's going to do some frightening things to those who are not in Him, both dead and alive. And we've seen what He's going to do with old mother earth, this creaking, growing planet. He's going to renovate it in a context of purifying fires and cosmic disruptions in heaven and earth that will usher in the new heavens and the new earth. Then we have seen in specific passages that in that coming of Christ as He deals with those who are not in Him, these are the things He will do. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:

"And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might."

2 Peter 3:10: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat,

and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Verse 7: "The heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." I'm persuaded in my own mind and heart that the God who in His Word takes various acts of judgmental providence and in prophets and in our Lord Jesus uses them as springboards to point to greater judgments yet to come, that God is speaking to us in this tragedy that's impacted our retinas and registered on our brains and in our psyches and our emotions. Through the tragedy of the Twin Towers, God is mercifully saying, "I'm going to give you a prefiguration, an adumbration of that which I have told you is surely to come.

Now I want you to use your imagination with me as I try to demonstrate in what way this is true. I doubt there is anyone here except perhaps the most young amongst us who has not seen that particular clip again and again. When as you looked at your television screen, you saw high on the screen and in the background the billowing cloud of dense smoke, pulverized debris, as though some giant were behind it blowing a balloon. It got larger and larger and began to come in the direction, mid and lower screen; hundreds of men and women running for their lives and occasionally glancing back behind them, running in the direction of the cameras. Have you seen the picture? Why were they running? A horrible destruction was behind them, not a figment of someone's imagination, not a huge screen, and Spielberg and company having projected some horrific image upon the screen. They knew that that was indeed a tidal wave of choking smoke and overwhelming pulverized debris that would bury them and kill them unless they fled for their lives. Now I want you to imagine with me that you're sitting there glued to your television. You're watching the scene live, and suddenly that whole mass of humanity stops as though frozen, turns around 180 degrees, and they start, not walking and gingerly mincing, but running in the direction of the tidal wave of destruction. If you were to sit and see such a scene, you would come to one of two conclusions. There are only one of two reasons why anyone would do that. Number one: they've all in an instant snapped mentally. They've all gone mad, so mad that they run to their certain destruction. But there's another possibility. It could be that they all saw at the same time in the direction into which they were running a terror, a horror, an impending doom worse than that which was behind them. My friend, that's exactly what will happen in the Day of Christ. I want you to turn for our final passage this morning to Revelation 6. If you think these are the exaggerations of a preacher with an imagination let loose, no, I've only faintly described the reality which I'm seeking to illustrate. Verse 12 takes us right down to the end as John does again and again as Jesus gives a revelation of Himself to John:

"And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casts her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman [that is, every slave] and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

You mean people will literally beg mountains before which they stood in awe prior to this day, admired their massive strength and their marvelous display of the awesomeness and immensity and power of God, that they will fall on their knees and pray to be crushed by a mighty mountain? Yes, because there's a terror in front of them of greater magnitude. It is the unleashed fury of the Lamb, the gentle Lamb of God who went to the cross. As a lamb before her shearers dumb, He opens not His mouth, the Lamb who submitted Himself to all of the horrific treatment that led to His crucifixion, the Lamb who in tender love and mercy pleads with you even today, "Come to me; I will give you rest." That Lamb is going to become an incensed sovereign sharing the throne with His Father. And when you see the fury of an incensed God and the fury of an incensed Lamb tracking you down, you'll be begging for rock and mountains to crush you in the folly and in the stupid notion that if your person physically can be destroyed and obliterated and buried in mountain dust, you'll escape the wrath of the Lamb. But the question is asked, "The great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" Do you really want to take on an angry God and an incensed Lamb? Do you really? I ask you with all of my heart. In God's name, what kind of madness has possessed your soul? Your conscience tells you your sin is wrath deserving. God's Word affirms the witness of your conscience and explains in detail why conscience will not shut her mouth telling you, "Sin--wrath, sin--death, sin--an angry God and an angry Lamb!" What madness has possessed you? God could have engineered it that you were there. And now, as one engineer said, most likely because the implosion of that building held up by its internal weight-bearing structure with no weight-bearing structure in between--picture it--each floor falling upon the other until 110 stories have ground people into dust along with sheetrock, pipes, and computer wires. You want to meet a God in whose presence that looks like child's play? For in the Day of Christ, it won't be a few dozen acres in one spot of an island on the east coast called Manhattan. Peter says the entire universe as we now know it will experience the convulsions of that disruption that a returning Christ will effect. And He will purge out of that universe all evil, all those who know not God and obey not the Gospel. My unconverted friend, what a mercy, what a mercy that God has given you this prefiguration, this adumbration, this shadowy outline of the reality to come. Some of you have become so besotted in your unbelief. God lets you go on with good health and strength, and you're accomplishing your life's goals, but my friend, you're ripening for judgment. In God's name, don't let another pointer of God be lost on you. But run to Jesus who is yet the exalted, almighty Savior. And we know that God has not decreed that you be in hell yet, because His decree exegeted by His providence has brought you one more time within this place; another sound of a voice that is telling you what the Bible says. You could be in one of those many places where so-called reverends, male and female will stand up and grind out pious mush and poisonous, sweet-smelling religious garbage. But God's put you in a place where His Word is faithfully preached with parents and a church family that want to see you in Christ. May God grant that this purpose may not be lost upon you. And dear people of God, if anything should loose our tongues and break through our carnal diffidence and silence with neighbors and love-ones, surely God's given us a marvelous springboard to open up conversation with people: "What do you think of what you saw? Do you know that the Bible describes something far more horrific than that? And may we pray that God will make us unashamed to confess our Lord Jesus and to seek to see others brought to the knowledge of Christ.