

What's Your Decision?

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One of the most interesting photographs of the 9/11 tragedy in New York seven years ago this week showed the shape of a strange looking face in the smoke pouring out of the World Trade Center Towers. Many people said it looked like the devil, but some claimed it was the face of God. Personally, I think it was caused by natural phenomena and only resembled whoever or whatever the viewer wanted it to be.

But the discussion over the face raised an interesting question: could God have been behind this disaster? Did God plan all this in an effort to wake up America and move us back toward him?

There is no doubt that America needs a spiritual wake-up call. Even in our communities here in rural Ohio there are many more people at home on Sunday mornings than in church. God has been pushed out of our schools, away from our government, and out of the mainstream of the media. But long before prayer and the Bible were removed from our institutions, they were kicked out of many of our homes.

Divorce, violence, sexual addictions, abuse, premarital sex, live-in situations and homosexuality all work toward undermining the traditional nuclear family that is the mainstay of society. Just as the towers of the World Trade Center fell when the key supports melted in the intense heat and gave way, so a nation can fall when the traditional pillars of biblical morality give way.

But I do not believe God is anxious for those pillars to give way. Jesus once said concerning his Father, *"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."* (Matthew 12:20). In other words, instead of trying to destroy those who break his moral laws, God tries to fan the flames of goodness, healing and restoration.

On the other hand, God has not promised to protect anyone – not even his most committed followers – from all disasters here on earth. Jesus came to take us to a better place, not to create a utopia on earth.

Since eternal things matter to God more than temporary things, he tries to use all events of this life to bring us into an eternal relationship with him. The Bible says that *"in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28) The greatest good God can work in our lives is not freedom from pain and suffering but instead a right relationship with him and an eternal home in his perfect heaven.

Satan has been trying to destroy the human race ever since creation. One of his tactics is to cause disasters and then blame them on God. But Jesus did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.

Jesus once said concerning those who died when a tower fell in his day, *"Do you think they were more guilty than the others...I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."* (Luke 13:4-5). The solution to terrorism is repentance and a return to God – not because God caused the disaster but because he is our only refuge in the face of Satan's attacks.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land." (2nd Chronicles 7:14).

Past generations have turned to God in their trying moments and God has kept his word. The real issue of the World Trade Center disaster is not deciding what God or Satan did, but deciding what we will do as a country. If we turn to God, we have his promise of healing and strength. If we do not turn to God, we are on our own, which in this world is not a very good place to be.

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