

GLOBAL LIFE CAMPAIGN™

Coronavirus & Plagues: God's Redemptive Purposes & How Should We Respond?

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The gift of life is precious! As I am writing this, I received news that the wife of my oldest nephew gave birth to their seventh child. What a precious gift from God!

This month's *Country Report* (GLC Series) will focus on the worldwide threat of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which national, state and local governments are responding to in wise and unprecedented ways to protect the lives of their people. Dr. Michael D. Jacobson, DO, MPH, my brother, is the Medical Director for Christian Healthcare Ministries. Last week he did a radio interview covering factual evidence of the source, nature and magnitude of this threat, Biblical insights, and wise guidance for how we should respond. Here is the link to the radio interview: <https://vimeo.com/397701539>. Also attached is his PowerPoint slides for a presentation he gave at CHM (with current data as of last week).

The co-author of the *Abortion Worldwide Report*, Dr. Wm. Robert Johnston, has been tracking the Coronavirus, and has several tables and graphs tracking confirmed cases and fatalities worldwide (<http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/coronavirus2020.html>). Also, at the top of the page are links to the Johns Hopkins CSSE Coronavirus dashboard and World Health Organization situation reports.

Now we will examine three aspects of this threat: (1) What is the source of plagues? (2) How does God work His redemptive purposes in the midst of plagues? (3) How should we respond? These are my thoughts, but I'm providing Scripture references and links to encourage you to take time to study these matters yourself and further develop your understanding.

1. Sources of Plagues

Natural & Practical:

- (a) **Unclean animals** – including wild rats, bats, birds, and snakes – can transmit diseases directly or indirectly to mankind, and are usually the source of life-threatening viruses and plagues, such as the Coronavirus, or COVID-19. Plagues can also come through clean animals (e.g., anthrax).
- (b) **Failure to keep unclean and clean separate.** More than 3,000 years before bacteria was discovered and disease transmission was understood, God graciously gave His Law and statutes with specific commandments to protect His people and anyone that would heed His instruction. These included cleanliness and sanitary practices; quarantine for anyone with an infection; making “a distinction . . . between the unclean and clean”; identifying which animals were clean and which were unclean, and not eating unclean animals; cleansing anything that touched something or someone that was dead, etc. (Leviticus 7:19; 10:10, 14; 11:32, 47; 13:1-59). During

the Black Death plague of the 1300s, the Jews were the least affected people group because of their sanitary practices (<https://www.jewishhistory.org/the-black-death/>).

Spiritual:

- (c) **Sin.** God created a perfect world full of life and no death. But then “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin” (Romans 5:12). When Adam and Eve sinned, corruption, death, and vulnerability to sickness and disease entered the human race and have been transmitted from generation to generation ever since (Genesis 2:15-17; Psalm 51:1-5).
- (d) **Satan** always “comes to steal and kill and destroy” and to use any means to turn us against God (Genesis 3:1-7; John 10:10), such as when he “smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” (Job 2:7).
- (e) **God** sometimes brings plagues, but whether He brings them directly or they are the natural effect of living in this fallen world, He is always seeking to bring about His good purposes such as those described next.

2. God’s Redemptive Purpose in Plagues

The LORD God has at least three redemptive purposes that He labors objectively and diligently, whether visible or invisible, to bring about in the lives of individual people, families, communities and nations in the midst of any plague or disaster affecting them.

The first is to reveal Himself to the people and their nation. When hearing about the Coronavirus plague, I thought of the plagues that God brought against ancient Egypt to deliver His people out of slavery, and so I read Exodus chapters 1 to 12. Therein I could see God’s compassion for the Egyptians. Through the plagues, He sought to reveal Himself to them as the true God, calling the plagues, “My miracles . . . My signs and My wonders . . . My hand” (Exodus 3:20; 7:3-4). “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD . . . By this you shall know that I am the LORD . . . that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God . . . in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land . . . so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth” (Exodus 7:5, 17; 8:10, 19, 22; 9:14).

Second is to bring His righteous judgment for sin, idolatry, and innocent bloodshed. At the time of the exodus of the Hebrews, ancient Egypt was the most powerful nation on the earth. Egyptians were a prideful, sinful, pagan people with their own idols. Pharaoh and the government of Egypt had put the Hebrews to forced labor and were murdering their male children after birth as a national security measure (Exodus 1). Thus when God brought the 10 plagues against Egypt, at the same time that He was doing what was necessary to set His people free, He was also rendering righteous judgment upon the Egyptians.

This is not to say that the Coronavirus is God’s judgment upon many nations for their sin (though our sins are many and we deserve His judgment), for most plagues are likely the natural result of living in this fallen world and ignoring God’s instructions mentioned briefly above. Even so, God has the power to stop the spread of the disease, and to protect individual people and communities, including by sometimes making a distinction between

those who are His or who are following His commands, and those who are not. “The LORD said . . . ‘I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, in order that you know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land’” (Exodus 8:22; see also, 9:20, 26; 10:23; 11:7; 12:12-13, 22-23, 27).

Third is to save them from their sin, pride, idolatry, and eternity in hell, and set them free and give them eternal life. While God set His people Israel free from Egypt, He repeatedly gave Pharaoh and the Egyptians opportunities to see, confess, and be set free from their sin, pride and idolatry. Especially since the coming of Jesus Christ, we know God’s love for every person in every nation of the world, and that by believing in Jesus, humbling ourselves before Him, and confessing our sin, pride, and idolatry, we shall be saved and receive eternal life (Matthew 4:17; John 1:12-13; Romans 10:10). God will go to great lengths in His efforts to save us from eternal separation from Him and torment in Hell, and to redeem us for eternal life with Him in heaven. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Even in the midst of a plague, even a global pandemic, God is at work in countless ways to direct our hearts toward Him and save many to eternal life. Even if someone dies from the virus, they are not dead, but fully alive and healthy for eternity if they have experienced the “new birth” through faith in Jesus.

3. How Should We Respond?

Do not fear! Each one of us struggles with fear; it is part of our fallen human, finite condition. The truth is, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love” (1 John 4:18). See the attached selected compilation of Scriptures from the God of love telling us to “not be afraid.”

Seek and trust God, including by humbling ourselves before Him, believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of our personal and national sins, receiving His forgiveness and restoration, and cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He reveals what is in our hearts that needs to change. Choose to consecrate this time to seek the Lord more diligently and be with your family and strengthen bonds of love with each one.

Use wisdom, and quarantine. “He said, ‘If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer’” (Exodus 15:26). The LORD promised to protect His people from disease, and to heal those who were sick, but notice that He made this conditional – “If you will.” The conditions actually reveal His desire for a close relationship with His people, that they would trust Him by earnestly heeding His voice, obey Him by doing “what is right in His sight,” and keep “His commandments” and “His statutes.” Included in those statutes were the commands that if followed would protect them from disease and transmission of disease, including using quarantines for those who are infected to protect the rest of the people. Also, the instructions and measures being taken by our governments and medical experts are wise, and we should respect and follow their commands and warnings.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Jesus Christ commanded us to do this, and lived it out fully during His time here on earth, touching and healing all those who came to Him who were sick, including lepers. Yes we should all establish sanitary and clean practices, and quarantine those who are sick. But those of us who are followers of Christ should be looking for opportunities to give of ourselves, our food and resources to help those in need and minister to those who are sick at such a time as this. Let us live with faith, courage, and joy. Let us face this crisis together in community, especially among believers, but also as believers toward others. What does it mean to believe in Jesus today, in visible, practical ways?

Concluding thoughts: Only in heaven or to the extent that God reveals through His prophets on earth can we know the constant – moment by moment – and innumerable ways that God restrains evil and protects every person and nation from harm and devastation. So what puts us at risk? When does God withdraw, partially or fully, His protection from us? God withdrew His protection substantially from righteous Job for a short period of time to give us insight into the ongoing efforts of Satan in heaven to demoralize and destroy God’s people on earth, and to reveal God’s sovereignty and goodness, and commitment to defend, bless and restore those who keep walking with Him (Job 1, 2, 38-42). But the most common reason God removes protection is for idolatry, stubborn pride, unrepented sin and iniquity, rampant immorality, and innocent bloodshed. “Their protection has been removed from them” (Numbers 14:9). This verse refers to God removing His protection from specific nations with culture-wide idolatry, immorality and child sacrifice (then the world capital of this practice); and God brought His righteous judgment through His people, giving their lands and cities to Israel.

We should ask God how He sees us and our nations, and for discernment if He has withdrawn His protection partially from us because of our personal and national sins. Have we, even those of us who are “Christians,” become like the ancient Egyptians, prideful, idolatrous, immoral, and shedding the innocent blood of our babies? Have we put our trust in government rather in the Living God for protection, provision, and healing? Can you imagine what would happen if we and other peoples all over the world turned to the Living God now in humility and truth?

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SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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“Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin” (Exodus 20:20).