



# Is the Coronavirus a Judgment from God?

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TO Victory



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### *Is the coronavirus a judgment from God?*

Asking that question elicits some pretty strong responses from people. If you don't believe that, just look at my Twitter feed. I couldn't believe some of the things people wrote on there. I jotted down some of the nicer things. One person said, "Do you live in the Dark Ages? Scientists have known for over one hundred years that pandemics aren't caused by God." Another person wrote, "This is how cavemen think." (Actually, that was my wife, Amy!) Somebody else commented, "What a moronic statement." Regardless of the feedback on social media, it is important when answering this key question about the coronavirus that we first look at what a plague is, as indicated in Scripture.

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### In Revelation 15, we **see** plague theology revealed.

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A plague is a natural disaster that is supernaturally timed as a manifestation of God's judgment. There are all kinds of natural disasters in the Bible—including earthquakes, volcanoes, sicknesses, and pestilence. Think of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which very well may have been a volcanic eruption that resulted in fire and brimstone coming down on the cities. The point is not that it occurred, but that it occurred at the precise timing God was sending a judgment. A plague is a natural disaster that is supernaturally timed.

Sometimes a plague is quick, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sometimes a plague is extended, like the flood in Genesis 7, in which rained for forty days, and the earth felt the effects of that flood for a year. And in Revelation 8 and 9, we see that the future trumpet judgments will occur over a period of months. But whether a plague is extended or short, the question we are addressing is: Is the coronavirus one of the plagues that are talked about in the Bible? Is it God's judgment against the earth?

### PLAGUE THEOLOGY

I'd like to submit to you four truths about God's judgment that might help you evaluate this and other events in the world or in your life as well.

1. **All natural disasters can be ultimately traced to sin.**

Whether it be earthquakes, volcanoes, cancer, or influenza, all natural disasters can be ultimately traced to sin. What do I mean by that? The world we live in right now is not the world God designed. God did not design the world to include floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, cancer, influenza, or coronavirus. These things were never part of God's original plan. God created this world perfectly. But when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, this world was corrupted and became the world in which we now live.

The apostle Paul explained that in Romans 8:19. He said, "The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." Somebody has translated that first part, "Creation itself is on tiptoe with expectation." Paul continued,

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“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it” (v. 20). God is the one who pronounced a judgment against the earth. But there is hope! Paul went on to say, “In hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (vv. 20–21). One day Christ is coming back, and the world that we live in now will be changed and will be forever rid of this judgment against it. But until then, verse 22 says, “The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” This whole world is groaning, awaiting that time when Christ will come and deliver the new heaven and the new earth.

This world is not the world God created, and thank God this world is not the world we will always live in. All sickness can ultimately be traced to sin, not necessarily specific sins of individuals but to the original sin.

### 2. Some disasters are related to specific sins.

Sometimes God does use a natural disaster or sickness as a specific judgment for a specific sin. People often say, “I just don’t believe that. The God I serve would never send sickness as a judgment.” Have you ever heard people say that? Or maybe you have heard, “The God I serve would never send anybody to hell.”

I love David Jeremiah’s response to that. Whenever people say that to him, he replies something like this: “You know, you’re right. The god you serve wouldn’t do that, because the god you serve doesn’t exist. The god you serve is an imaginary god instead

of the God of the Bible. If you believe the God of the Bible, you believe that God does use judgment against sin. And sometimes those judgments include natural disasters.”

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In Genesis 7, God sent a flood because of the world’s wickedness. In Genesis 19, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the sin of homosexuality. God sent judgments against Egypt and Israel for their disobedience. God sent leprosy to Miriam, the sister of Moses. In Deuteronomy 28:27, Moses told the Israelites, “The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed.” So we know that in the past—if we believe the Bible—God used sickness as judgment.

We also know that in the future God is going to use sickness as a judgment from Him. In Revelation 6:8, the apostle John said, “I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword [war] and with famine [a natural result of war] and with pestilence [sickness].” Part of that sickness will be the result of one-fourth of the world’s population

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being slaughtered. People won't be able to bury all the bodies from the warfare of this time, and when you have decomposing bodies and don't dispose of them properly, it results in all kinds of sicknesses, like bubonic plague, dysentery, and hepatitis. At the end of verse 8, notice that John added, ". . . and by the wild beasts of the earth." These may be animals that actually devour people. Some people believe this refers to animal-borne plagues like swine flu, or possibly it may be something like the coronavirus that may be animal-borne as well.

Here's my point: In the past, God used sickness and natural disasters as His specific judgments. In the future, He is going to do the same. So it is not unreasonable to ask if the coronavirus that we are experiencing right now is a judgment from God.

### 3. We dare not speak what God has not spoken.

Anytime we speak what God has already revealed in His Word, we are being obedient. Anytime we speak something that God has not already said in His Word, we are being presumptuous. And the Bible warns against trying to speak for God when God Himself hasn't spoken. In Deuteronomy 18:20, we see a strong warning from God: "The prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." There is a strong judgment against anyone who claims to speak for God when God hasn't spoken.

Let me give you an illustration of that. I can say with full confidence that God hates abortion. The reason I can say that is what God's Word already says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13 KJV).

The Bible equates an unborn child with a born child. God sees the unborn and the born exactly the same. And God hates the murder of anyone, including children who are born and unborn. I can say that.

Second, I can say with all the confidence in the world that God will judge a nation that kills its own children. I can say that because God did that with Israel. In Jeremiah 32:35–36, when God saw that the Israelites were offering their children as burnt sacrifices, He said, in essence, "It never entered My mind you would do such a detestable thing. But because you have, I will send the Babylonians to take you captive."

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God is **love**. Make no mistake about it: God loves mankind. He is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). That doesn't mean none will perish, but He doesn't want that.

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I can say God hates abortion. I can say God judges a nation that permits and celebrates the killing of children. But what I cannot say is that the coronavirus is God's judgment against America for the sin of abortion. I just can't do that. That is being presumptuous. And that is what we have got to be careful of when we get to something like the coronavirus.

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I recently heard a preacher say, “If you want to be protected from the coronavirus, pay your tithes to your church and you will be protected.” How I wish I could say that! But I would be in danger of being struck dead by God for saying that, because God hasn’t said that. We dare not speak anything that God has not already spoken.

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We are to **pray**. Pray for yourself. Pray for your family. Pray for your country.

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#### 4. We can say that the coronavirus is not one of the plagues of Revelation.

How can I say with confidence that coronavirus is not one of the plagues of Revelation? That’s easy. Because we are not yet in the tribulation. There is no Antichrist ruling over the world. There is no ten-nation confederacy. There is no temple in Jerusalem that the Antichrist is going to defile. And most importantly, there has been no rapture of the church yet. We are still here. So the coronavirus, whatever it is, is not one of the plagues mentioned in the book of Revelation.

We know the coronavirus is not one of these judgments listed in Revelation because we are not in that time yet. Revelation 15:1 refers to seven plagues “which are the last.” That word is *eskatos*, from which we get our word *eschatology*, the study of the last things. These plagues are “the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished” (v. 1). These final seven plagues are God’s final expression of His wrath, His anger against the earth.

God is love. Make no mistake about it: God loves mankind. He is “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). That doesn’t mean none will perish, but He doesn’t want that. The Bible says that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). But God is also a God of wrath. The Bible says God cannot allow the guilty to go unpunished (Exodus 34:7). His holy nature demands that there be a payment for sin. Either you can pay for your sins yourself for all eternity, or you can allow Christ to have paid for your sin when He died on the cross for you.

That’s the foundation of the Christian message. As the songwriter said, “On that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.” The most important thing you can do today is to protect yourself from the judgment of God by trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

### How Should We Respond to Coronavirus?

How should we respond to this plague? How do we avoid what I call the pandemic panic? In 2 Timothy 1:7, the apostle Paul said, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (NKJV). If you have panic in your life over the coronavirus or something else that is paralyzing you with fear—if you are scared to death, and it is all you can think about—then that doesn’t come from God. God doesn’t do that.

#### 1. Prayer

The Bible gives us two ways to handle a crisis like this. The first way is through prayer. Paul wrote, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about

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everything” (Philippians 4:6 TLB). Christians are not to worry. We are to pray. Pray for yourself. Pray for your family. Pray for your country.

I know to unbelievers that sounds like foolishness. Have you seen in the media all of the ridicule leveled against Vice President Pence because he opened the first meeting of the coronavirus taskforce with a prayer? Unbelievers absolutely ridiculed that idea. In an interview on Fox News, Gregg Jarrett asked me, “Pastor, do you think the people who are criticizing the vice president for praying, are they just anti-religion?” I said, “No. They are anti-God. They are atheist, every one of them.” You can’t be a believer in the true God and ridicule somebody who prays, regardless of their political affiliation. You just can’t do it.

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Pray as if your safety **completely depends upon God**, and take precaution as if your safety completely depends upon you.

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The Bible says that we are to pray, not just about some things but about everything. One of the greatest honors of my life was when I was invited to preach the inauguration sermon for the president and the vice president, for their families, and for the cabinet officers. I talked about our need as a nation for God. And I quoted Ronald Reagan,

who said, “America needs God more than God needs America.” If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, we will truly be a nation gone under. And I thank God we have a vice president like Mike Pence who understands the need we all have for God. We ought to be praying.

### 2. Precaution

But prayer is not the only thing we should do. The second thing I would add is precaution. Again, 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that God has not given us fear, but He has given us a “sound mind.” And He expects us to use that sound mind. You don’t check your brain at the door when you become a Christian. You need to think and act sensibly. Take common-sense precautions. That’s not a lack of faith. That is just right thinking.

Pray as if your safety completely depends upon God, and take precaution as if your safety completely depends upon you. And if you’ll do those two things, you will likely make it through this just fine. But the overriding truth is we are not to be overcome with worry and panic. Instead, we are to think so as to have a sound mind.

Right now, you may not understand what is happening—whether with coronavirus or other difficult situations in your life—but here’s something you can always remember. Even when you can’t see God’s hand, you can always trust God’s heart. If you are a child of God, you can claim the promise that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).