

What Does the Bible Say About the Coronavirus?

Genesis 3:17-18

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We're all facing a viral villain we can't see, an invisible and insidious enemy that is silently stalking us.

My pastor friend Cisco Cotto, who was scheduled to preach at Edgewood during my Sabbatical, posted something early Wednesday morning you might relate to...

“The age of coronavirus involves waking up in the middle of the night in a panic because you think you have a fever. You rush to the medicine cabinet. Pop the thermometer in your mouth. In the 30 seconds it takes to get a temperature reading, the real panic sets in... You plan where you will quarantine. There are no good options. You remember to tell someone you trust where your will is. You plan to remind your wife where the insurance papers are, even though she knows. Will you be quarantined, or worse, for your child's upcoming birthday? Will you stay strong emotionally during an illness, like so many, or will you crumble? Will you have to go through the ritual of an uncertain wave to your family from a car on the way to the hospital? And then...you hear beeps. Then a loud silence. You don't have a fever. Yet, that doesn't mean you're not infected, or won't be tomorrow. So many are. So many more to come. You can't get back to sleep. You barricade yourself in a room and start to pray, “I believe, Lord Jesus, help my unbelief.” And then, in the darkness with birds chirping outside your window, you just sit there. Wondering if you are losing your mind. Wondering when it will happen again. Wondering if next time you will have a fever. Wondering if your infection will come without a fever...or already has. There are so many. So many more to come.”

I'm reminded of how Psalm 91:6 describes disease: “...***the pestilence that stalks in the darkness...the destruction that wastes at noonday.***” The term “***pestilence***” is what the prophets referred to when predicting coming judgment and destruction. The word “***stalks***” was used of the slithering of snakes and of beasts crouching near the ground before pouncing on their prey.

For many, the coronavirus has created a “pandemic pandemonium.” Actually, there's so much pandemonium about the pandemic that the pandemonium itself has become pandemic.

Images of empty shelves and empty streets almost seem apocalyptic. Since this can all be unnerving and unsettling, we want to ask and answer this question, “*What does the Bible say about the coronavirus?*”

A couple thoughts...

- This is a very **relevant** question. I’ve been asked this several times and according to Google, this question has been one of its trending searches.
- This is always the **right** question. Whenever we’re faced with issues, struggles or questions, we should always ask, “*What does the Bible say about this topic?*”

It’s always relevant and right to ask, ‘What does the Bible Say’ and repent today!

Let me be totally upfront and say the Bible doesn’t specifically mention the coronavirus. Now, that’s a short sermon isn’t it? Well, you know better than to expect brevity from me, so let’s dig into God’s Word and see what we find. You might want to buckle up because it could be a bumpy ride.

I was tremendously assisted in my preparation from a paper by Joel Rosenberg called, “*What does the Bible say about pestilence, plagues and global pandemics?*” Some of what I’ll share reflects his insight.

According to Merriam-Webster, a “pestilence” is, “*a contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is virulent and devastating.*” The definition of a “plague” is, “*an epidemic disease causing a high rate of mortality.*”

While the terms *coronavirus* or *pandemic* are not found in Scripture, the Bible does use Hebrew and Greek words for *pestilence* and *plagues* some 127 times.

As we survey the Scriptures, we’ll discover four truths for today.

1. Viruses and pestilences are part of living in a fallen world. Before Adam and Eve made their voluntary choice to rebel against God, there were no earthquakes, hurricanes, natural disasters, coronaviruses or diseases but when they sinned, creation was cursed, and the earth became an environment of disease and death. Genetic disorders and multiple diseases have been unleashed to do their work of destruction. Pain and death are now part and parcel of the human experience.

Listen to God's description of the consequences of their decision in Genesis 3:17-18: ***“Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...”*** Adam and Eve's sin resulted in personal guilt and shame, alienation from God and others, *and* the disruption of nature itself. This sin was so contagious it was passed on to each of us according to Romans 5:12: ***“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”***

If we don't fully understand what happened in Genesis 3, we won't be able to make sense of sin or suffering. Adam and Eve are ground zero for the contagious spread of plagues, pestilence and pandemics. They are the epicenter for the sin virus which has infected each of us.

Romans 8:22 describes the present state of our planet: ***“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”*** This global groaning was set in motion the moment Adam and Eve defied God's parameters. Because of their sin, every person, along with the whole planet, now faces disease, destruction and death.

It's important to realize this is not the first time the world has faced a pandemic. The Bubonic Plague led to 200 million deaths, with some historians suggesting it wiped out over half of Europe's population. In 1916, polio caused 6,000 deaths in the U.S. and in 1918, 500 million were infected with the Spanish flu, with up to 50 million casualties.

2. God has judged people and nations using pestilence in the past. The Bible gives many examples of God using disease and disaster to accomplish His divine and sovereign purposes. I think of Miriam, the sister of Moses, who was inflicted with a terrible, infectious disease because of her unrepentant heart and rejection of God's leader (Numbers 12:1-15). For the sake of time, I've selected just some of the passages that speak of pestilence or plague.

- In **Exodus 9:1-3**, God uses powerful plagues to execute judgment against Egypt, and to draw the Israelites closer to Himself: ***“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the***

*horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.’” In verse 14, we see God did this to demonstrate His power: **“So that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.”***

- In **Leviticus**, the nation of Israel is given commands concerning how to deal with plagues and pestilence. The most important directive from God is for His people to repent. Interestingly, God also gives instruction about personal hygiene and social distancing in combatting infectious diseases. In Leviticus 13:3-6, the infected person is to be isolated for seven days and if the disease has not gotten worse, he is to be quarantined an additional seven days. Where have we heard the importance of isolating for 14 days? In verse 46, we read, **“He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.”**
- In Leviticus 26:14-16, God clearly describes the consequences of disobedience: **“But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache...”**
- In **Deuteronomy 28:58-60**, we read, **“If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. And He will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.”** My friend and EBC member Cajun Pauley, who served as a pastor for many years, points out *“that abandoning God would result in pestilence clinging to the people.”*
- In the Book of **Numbers**, God sent a plague of disease to execute judgment upon unrepentant Israelites. According to Numbers 16:49, **“...those who died in the plague were 14,700.”** In Numbers 25:9, after the Israelites committed immorality and idol worship, **“those who died by the plague were 24,000.”**

- In **2 Samuel 24:15**, because of King David’s sin we read, ***“So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men.”***
- In **Ezekiel 5:12**, the nation of Judah is warned: ***“A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst.”***
- In **Amos 4:10**, God warns the nation of Israel they would be struck with terrible diseases as divine judgment for their refusal to repent: ***“I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt...”***
- In **Habakkuk 3:5**, we read: ***“Before Him went pestilence, and plague followed at His heels.”***

Let me be quick to say I don’t presume to know if COVID-19 is God’s judgment on mankind but as Erwin Lutzer said in a message this week, *“Sin does have some immediate judgment and consequences.”* He said, *“sin boomerangs”* and quoted **Genesis 4:10** where God said to Cain: ***“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.”*** One example Lutzer gave is the blood of over 61 million preborn babies that cry out against America today.

Let’s summarize. *It’s always relevant and right to ask, ‘What does the Bible Say’ and repent today!*

- 1. Viruses and pestilences are part of living in a fallen world.**
- 2. God has judged people and nations using pestilence in the past.**
- 3. God will unleash a pandemic of disease and destruction in the future.** In **Luke 21:11**, Jesus described pestilence as one of the signs of the “last days” of human history: ***“There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences.”***

On one particular day last week multiple reports of the crisis caused by the coronavirus flashed across my newsfeed. On that same day, these headlines appeared that gave me cause for pause...

- *Awakening Volcanic Region in Iceland ‘Could Cause Disruption for Centuries’*
- *Magnitude 4.1 Earthquake Hits Outside Fresno*

- *New, Larger Wave of Locusts Threatens Millions in Africa*

Interestingly, the article about locusts referenced the Bible: *“While much of the world focuses on the coronavirus pandemic...East Africa is battling the worst invasion of desert locusts in decades — a months-long ‘scourge of biblical proportions.’”*

I’m sure you’ve noticed despite our wonderful technology and many scientific advances, we have been powerless to stop volcanoes, earthquakes, locusts and pestilences, right?

Now, let’s go to the Book of Revelation, where we read of twelve references to plagues and pestilence as part of the Great Tribulation period. Here are six of them.

- **6:8:** *“And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”*
- **9:18:** *“By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths.”*
- **9:20-21:** *“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”*
- **15:1:** *“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.”*
- **16:9:** *“They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give Him glory.”*
- **18:8:** *“For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.”*

This leads to another question. Does this mean we are living in the last days? Here’s one more short answer, *“Yes, we are.”* Biblically speaking, the end times or “last days” began with the Ascension of Christ and will last until the Second

Coming. The Bible uses terms like, “*last days,*” “*later times,*” or “*the last hour*” to refer to events surrounding the return of Christ.

Perhaps you’ve wondered, “*Is the Coronavirus in Bible Prophecy?*” Both Ray Pritchard and David Jeremiah tackled this topic recently. Some of what I’ll share reflects their keen insights.

Doesn’t it feel like this pandemic is something we read about in the Bible? Or to say it another way, this is the most apocalyptic thing that has ever happened to us. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 24:3-8: “***As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.’”***

I like how David Jeremiah defines a biblical sign: “*An event, or symbol, or object, or place, or a person, whose existence indicates something important in God’s plan for the future.*”

I recognize there are different views of future events among Christians, but I agree with Dr. Jeremiah when he says these signs will take place during the Tribulation period. The Bible tells us we are living in the church age now and this will come to a conclusion when Jesus Christ raptures born again believers to go to Heaven with Him.

After the Rapture, a time of terrible Tribulation will be unleashed on earth that will last for seven years. This is vividly described in horrifying detail in Revelation chapters 4-19 – and it will be exponentially worse than anything we are experiencing right now. You don’t want to be here for that! At the end of the Tribulation will be the Battle of Armageddon at which point Jesus will return to set up His kingdom.

The next date on God’s calendar is the rapture of His church and this could happen at any time. There will be no additional announcement and there are no other signs needing to be fulfilled before this glorious event. Without any warning, Jesus will

return to take born again Christians to Heaven. Those who don't know Christ will be left behind to go through the Tribulation.

David Jeremiah believes that while the Coronavirus may not be a sign we are in the Tribulation, *it is a sign for today*. What is happening in the present is a precursor to what will happen in the future. He concludes by giving us six things the pandemic teaches us.

- The vulnerability of everyone
- The credibility of the Bible
- The uncertainty of life
- The scarcity of hope
- The sufficiency of Jesus
- The urgency of salvation

It's always relevant and right to ask, 'What does the Bible Say' and repent today!

- 1. Viruses and pestilences are part of living in a fallen world.**
- 2. God has judged people and nations using pestilence in the past.**
- 3. God will unleash a pandemic of punishment in the future.**

There's one more truth the Bible is crystal clear on.

4. Repentance is always the right response. To repent means, "*to turn back from sin and return to what is right.*" The idea is to change your mind about the direction you are heading and turn to go the right way. Another way to say it is this: to change your beliefs so your behavior changes.

In our deacon meeting Tuesday night via Zoom, Terry Hartley said something that stuck with me: "*God has put the whole world in a time-out!*" Whenever my parents put me in a time-out, which was fairly often, it was because they wanted me to change my beliefs and my behavior.

In his new book called, *Coronavirus and Christ*, John Piper writes...

"The coronavirus is a merciful wake-up call to be ready for Christ's return...[it] is God's thunderclap call for all of us to repent and realign our lives with the infinite worth of Christ...Disasters are a gracious summons from God to repent and be saved while there is still time...I think that's

God's message for the world in this coronavirus outbreak. He is calling the world to repentance while there's still time."

I believe God is giving us all a time-out so He can call two groups of people to repent – *lukewarm believers* and *lost unbelievers*.

- **Lukewarm Believers.** Listen to Joel 2:12-13: ***“Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster.”***

When addressing Christians at the church in Ephesus, Jesus says this in Revelation 2:5: ***“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”*** It’s time to repent of sin, secularism, materialism, idolatry, selfishness and anything else that has captured first place in your heart.

Many of us like quoting the promise given to Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14: ***“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*** God has certainly humbled us, hasn’t He? Let’s make sure we are seeking Him and repenting from our wicked ways.

It’s interesting what God says in verse 13, which we don’t usually quote: ***“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people...”*** When drought and locusts and pestilence come, God calls His people to repentance. His punishments always have the goal of repentance, restoration, and realignment.

Edgewood member Bill Wear recently repented of something and posted about it on Wednesday. I have his permission to share some of what he wrote: *“I want you all to know that six months ago today I finally admitted to myself, to my wife, to my friends and to my family and most importantly, to my God that I was an alcoholic! I repented of my sins and asked Jesus Christ to help me through this to be the person He wanted me to be...I have apologized to everyone that I could possibly think of and have made amends with my wife and my life is so much better! I give God the glory for all of*

this and I just want to say that through this time that we're going through no matter your situation that God can get you through it...I've been a Christian for a long time but had never really turned my life over to God like I have now! I surrendered all and I am so thankful that I did! God bless you all and we will get through this with his help!"

Once we repent and return to Christ, Jesus calls us to do two things as we anticipate His return.

- a) **Look around and witness.** Luke 21:13: ***"This will be your opportunity to bear witness."***
- b) **Look up and worship.** Luke 21:28: ***"Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."***
- **Lost Unbelievers.** I'm encouraged by a recent poll which shows one-in-five non-Christians report the crisis is causing them to read the Bible and listen to sermons online! The YouVersion Bible App reports Bible reading on its app from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday was 54% higher than it was for the same period last year. Easter Sunday was the highest in history! Other polls show that 9 in 10 pastors believe current events reveal we are getting closer to the return of Christ with the majority believing Jesus will return in our lifetime. This reminds me of something Ray Pritchard often says, *"Live as if Jesus may come today. One day you'll be right."*

Many years ago, I gave my sister Beth a book called, "Left Behind." She told me that one day as she was reading it, she got scared and threw the book across the room because she realized if Jesus were to come back then, she would be left behind. This led her to repent and receive Christ.

Haggai 2:7 says God is ***"shaking the nations."*** Hebrews 12:27 says, ***"Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."*** This pandemic is bad; Hell is far worse. I plead with you to repent and receive Christ now, so you don't get left behind and have to face the outpouring of God's righteous wrath through the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments and then spend eternity in the never-ending flames of Hell.

I'm reminded of the time a group of people wondered why some worshippers were murdered and why a tower fell and killed eighteen people. Jesus doesn't answer their "why" question but instead said these jarring

words in Luke 13:3 and in 13:5: ***“No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”***

We’ve all been infected with the sin virus resulting in the disease of depravity. The only way to have our souls healed is through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

We’re all facing a viral villain we can’t see, an invisible and insidious enemy that is silently stalking us. But praise be to God that our enemies of sin and Satan have been defeated by Jesus Christ!

God made human beings to reflect His glory and to have a relationship with Him. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they plunged the whole human race into depravity and death. As a result, we are separated from God and in desperate need of forgiveness. Out of love for us, God the Father sent His Son Jesus to become the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins by dying on the cross in our place. His death was full payment for all our sins and the shedding of His blood satisfied God’s righteous and holy wrath. Jesus took the punishment we deserved and He was raised on the third day for our justification.

The only way to be saved from your sins and rescued from Hell, is by trusting in Christ alone as your Savior. The Bible talks about the importance of repenting of sin before you can receive the Savior. Are you ready right now to turn from your selfishness sinfulness and trust Christ as your Savior and Lord?

Life is short. Hell is hot. And eternity is a long time. See this crisis as God’s loving wake-up call. Michael Youssef writes, *“Don’t waste this crisis...this is an opportunity for us all to turn to God and prepare our hearts to stand before Him – before it’s too late...we must remind the lukewarm and the lost about the shortness of our earthly lives and the endlessness of eternity. If we are not prepared to deal with a virus, what will we do when we face the Day of Judgment?”*

- If you’re a lukewarm believer, *repent and return to Christ.*
- If you’re a lost unbeliever, *repent and receive Christ.*

If you’re ready to repent and receive Jesus Christ, would you close your eyes and pray this prayer?

Jesus, I admit I’m a sinner. I repent by turning from how I’ve been living and trust what You did on the Cross when You died in my place, shedding Your blood to pay

the price for all that I've done. I want to be at peace with You. I believe You died on the Cross and rose again on the third day, showing Your victory over sin, Satan, death and fear. Now I receive You into my life. I open the door to You. Save me from my sins. I want to be born again. Now give me resurrection power to live the rest of my life for You and under Your leadership. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, tell someone about it and then email us at info@edgewoodbaptist.net.

May God be with you until we meet again.