

The Bible and Covid-19

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As I write this article, we still have a 'shelter-in-place' order here in Spokane due to the global pandemic. It has been nearly a month since we had our last church gathering. (Although we are very grateful for our ability to hold services over the internet still)

People all over the world are asking questions about this new virus, and many Christians have rightly wondered what the Bible has to say about all of this. Is this new virus a punishment from God? Is it a sign of the End Times? How afraid of this disease should we be?

Christians may disagree on the answers to some of those questions, and that's ok... it doesn't mean that someone doesn't love God or doesn't believe in the Bible if they disagree in a few areas! However, as we look carefully at the Scriptures, I believe there are a few very important points about this global pandemic that are helpful to understand.

I'd like to do my best to answer some of these questions from the Bible. I believe that God's Word has some very powerful truths that can help all of us to follow Christ and be a blessing to the people around us during this pandemic.

#1) God is still in control

Of course, God has allowed people to have a free will, make decisions, and then face the consequences of those decisions – and it's also true that the Devil rules over much of this current world (**Luke 4:5-6**) – but this doesn't mean that God is no longer in control of things! Nothing ever takes God by surprise, and He is all powerful and He is able to intervene to change things whenever He chooses.

Specifically, we know that God has control even over plagues and diseases. God showed His ability to control these when He sent plagues into Egypt (**Exodus 9**), but saved Israel from suffering from them (**Exodus 15:26**). God even used diseases as a punishment for rebellion against Moses – we see an example of this in **Numbers 16**. God sent the plague, and then removed it in answer to Moses' prayer for the people.

But does this mean that *every* disease and plague is a judgement from God?

No! Because the Bible also clearly teaches us that...

#2) Disease is a part of the fallen world

In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, there was no disease and no death. But because of man's sin – the world was plunged into corruption and brokenness. Sin, disease, and death were set loose in the world, and now EVERYTHING in creation suffers. It is clear that much of the suffering in the world isn't a result of personal sin – it's a result of the cursed nature of the whole creation. The world has been broken by sin, and everyone and everything suffers.

Animals don't commit sin – but they suffer from disease and death! The ground doesn't sin – but it's cursed with weeds (**Genesis 3:17**). The stars and planets don't sin – but they are wearing out (**Isaiah 51:6**)! Because of Adam's sin, the whole creation groans and suffers under the weight of sin and the curse.

Romans 8:22 – "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

God has allowed all this suffering as a part of His plan to make us aware of how terrible sin is and to drive us to seek to be restored to Him by Faith. This is why Jesus – the perfect and sinless one – had to suffer and die on a cross! Not for His own sins, but to bear the curse of sin for the entire world.

Galatians 3:13 – “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”

Not everyone who suffers in the world is suffering because of *personal* sin – much of the world’s suffering is simply a result of the curse. Jesus addressed this directly – and we’ll look at that in point #4. But first, we must remember a critical Bible teaching about the character of God...

#3) God is gracious, kind, and fair.

God allows *people* to be unjust and unfair – and therefore there is much in the world that is unfair and unjust! But God Himself is never unkind or unfair or unjust. All the actions that He takes are perfectly right and perfectly just. When God sent plagues to Egypt, He spared His people. When God destroyed the world in the flood, he spared righteous Noah and His family. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, He spared righteous Lot and those that would go with Lot. God doesn’t punish the innocent along with the guilty.

This is a tremendously important Bible doctrine – here are a few Bible verses that clearly teach the fairness and Goodness of God:

Genesis 18:23-25 – “And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?... That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Psalms 25:8-10 – “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way... All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

John 3:16-17 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Romans 2:4-11 – “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds... For there is no respect of persons with God.”

When someone behaves wickedly, we can be sure that God will judge their sin. Sometimes that judgement comes in this life according to the law of reaping and sowing (**Galatians 6:7**). Sometimes that judgement doesn’t come until after death (**Hebrews 9:27**). No matter what, we can be certain that God will judge and punish every sin. The great Joy of being a Christian is that Jesus Christ took our punishment and suffered for every one of our sins on the cross – that way God could be fair in punishing all sin, but merciful in letting us escape perishing for our own sins (**Romans 3:23-26**).

We can be certain that God will NOT punish people for sins they haven't even committed! As Abraham pointed out in Genesis 18, God will not treat the wicked the same way He treats the righteous. We have one final bit of Bible teaching on this topic that will help us greatly to understand. It comes directly from the mouth of our Lord, Jesus Christ...

#4) Jesus clearly taught us that death and trouble will come to all – so we must focus on being ready for it!

There are two passages in the Bible where Jesus directly addressed the topic of suffering in the world, and how it related to *personal* sin. The first one is in Luke 13 – there had been two terrible disasters: the first was when wicked King Pilate killed some Jews and desecrated their bodies by mingling their blood with pagan sacrifices. The second disaster was the collapse of a large tower that killed a lot of people. The people came to Jesus asking Him what those people had done to deserve such a harsh punishment from God.

The answer that Jesus gives is powerful...

Luke 13:1-5 – “There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Jesus is clearly teaching us that when terrible tragedies happen, it's **not** because the people who suffered in those tragedies were somehow worse sinners than the people who escaped the tragedy! Our Lord emphatically says that those people were NOT worse sinners than the rest of us! So why did they suffer? Jesus turns the question around and points out that we are all going to suffer and die – in the end it doesn't matter if we die in a 'tragedy' or if we die of old age... **all death is a tragedy** if we die without being saved from our sins! Jesus wants us to worry less about *how* we die – and instead focus on being *ready* to meet God by repenting of our sins and trusting in Him for salvation.

Jesus gives us a similar teaching in John 9, when the people ask Him about a man who was born blind.

John 9:1-3 – “And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

The people again mistakenly assume that suffering (blindness) must be a result of some personal sin. But Jesus corrects this notion. The man was NOT suffering because of his own sin, or because of his parents' sin... he was suffering because the world is broken – and we all need God to work in our lives to redeem us!

So what about Covid-19?

So as we consider the current global pandemic – in light of what the Bible teaches – is this disease a judgement from God or simply a consequence of the curse and our fallen world?

I believe that this disease is NOT a direct judgement of God – it is simply normal for a sin-cursed world. Covid-19 is not directly targeting a group of rebellious sinners (like in Numbers 16). It is not directly

aimed at one nation (like Egypt in Exodus 9). God hasn't rescued His people from this judgement (like He did for Noah, or Lot, or Israel). Instead, we see that many wicked people escape death from the coronavirus, while many innocent children and God-fearing elderly people die. When God directly serves justice - this is *not at all* how God gives His judgement. However, this *is* exactly how the curse works – where everyone suffers, and while it seems random to us, it is God's purpose that this suffering would drive us to seek Him.

Final Thoughts:

As you may know, I am the father of a special-needs daughter. My daughter Evangeline was born missing a chromosome, and has seizures, a weak heart, and many other problems. It is a great comfort to me to know that my daughter's suffering isn't a result of her personal sin (after all, she was an infant when we discovered her medical problems) and to also know that God wasn't punishing my daughter because of some sin of mine. I am very far from perfect, and without Jesus I would have no hope of going to heaven, but it would be very unusual indeed if God had chosen to punish a Christian who was genuinely trying to follow Him and serving faithfully in church by cursing his daughter – while many children born to drunken adulterers, thieves, and even murderers are all born perfectly healthy!

I am so glad that Jesus addressed these questions in Luke 13 and John 9 – so that we could understand that *everyone* suffers and *everyone* eventually dies. It's usually not a direct judgement from God, it's what happens to everyone when you live in a fallen and sin-cursed world. Our focus shouldn't be on the suffering, but rather on building a right relationship with the God who saves us from sin and saves us from death and saves us from hell... and who will make a new perfect world where there will be no more disease or sin or death!

As Christians, let us continue to trust and serve God through all situations, no matter how scary, and to always be looking forward to our eternal home with God where the curse will finally be no more and everything will be set right!

Revelation 21:4-5 – “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

And, of course, if you're not sure that you're saved – I'd plead with you to take seriously the words of Jesus Christ – “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 3:5). Jesus came so that you wouldn't have to perish! He died in your place so that you could trade your sin for His righteousness and have the gift of eternal life. If you'd like to learn more about what the Bible says on this, please contact us. We'd love to show you the Bible verses that clearly explain how you can be saved from sin and death.

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