

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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NATIONS, COVID-19, FEAR AND THE BIBLE

As of this writing there are 1.4 million cases of the Covid-19 pandemic world-wide with 430,000 cases in the U.S. resulting in 14,764 deaths and it continues to spread. The News Media has had a ball reporting this, leaving their audience not knowing for certain very much about it. The one thing we noted about their reporting is we seldom if ever hear God mentioned. We recall only two times the Media had God mentioned: after speaking on the subject, Mike Lidell (my pillow) urged people start reading the Bible and trusting God in their lives, and Franklin Graham in answering a ladies question “why did God let this happen?” stated the fault is not God’s but the sin and neglect of God has resulted in His judgment upon the world. The Media downgraded and ridiculed these statements, one even blaming Evangelical Christians for the plague and several blaming the president.

There is not a definitive explanation for this in the Bible, but one thing we can say unquestionably with assurance is that God judges the nations for their sin. Consider these comments from Genesis 6: “The Lord said, ‘My spirit will not always strive with man’” (ver.3), “Then the Lord saw the wickedness was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually” (ver. 5). “Then God said, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence, behold I am about to destroy the earth’” (ver. 12, 13). Further: “the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (I Peter 3:6, 7). How does He Judge them? “For thus says the Lord God, ‘How much more when I send My four severe judgments: sword, famine, wild beasts and *plague!*’” (Ezek. 14:21).

The prophets speak many times of God’s judgment against the nations. Isaiah warns the following nations of the judgment to come after He is finished judging Israel: Assyria (Isaiah 14:25-27), Moab (15, 16), Damascus (17), Egypt (19), Tyre and Tarshish (23). Actually the whole earth will be judged: “Behold the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface, and scatters its inhabitants. And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor. The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken His word. The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left” (Isa 24:1-6) The prophet Obadiah warned Edom of the coming judgment. Nahum warned Nineveh. Zephaniah warned Ammon and Moab (the descendants of Lot’s incest) (2:8-11). He also warned Ethiopia (ver. 12) and Nineveh (ver. 13-15). Jonah also warned Nineveh, and the people believed and repented.

Jeremiah warned pagan nations as well as Judah (46-51). Daniel said; “He removes kings and raises up kings” (Dan. 2:21). In the New Testament the judgment of God upon the nations (Gentiles) is vividly portrayed in Romans 1:18-32. Their sins that brought the wrath of God upon them were: “they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness” (ver. 18), “even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God” (ver. 21), “they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (ver. 23), and “they did not see fit to have God in their knowledge” (ver. 28). The judgment God sent upon them was: “God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity (ver. 24), God gave them over to degrading passions” (ver. 26), and “God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which were not proper” (ver. 28). This continues to be a judgment of God upon the nations today because, for the most part, all nations of the world are guilty of comparable sins. When the “wickedness of man is great upon the earth” His “Spirit will not strive with man forever” (Gen.6:3,5), the nation’s “iniquity will become complete” (Gen.15:16) then like Israel “until there is no remedy” (II Chron. 36:16), God’s wrath is unleashed. Jim Nelson Black in his book *When Nations Die* quotes Alexis de Tocqueville as saying “If the lights that guides us ever go out, they (nations) will fade little by little, as if of their own accord...we therefore should not console ourselves by thinking that the barbarians are still a long way off. Some peoples may let the torch be snatched from their hands, but others stamp it out themselves.” Then he writes: “Just 140 years after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*, the nations of Europe and North America are lost in a sea of doubt and confusion. Millions have seemingly lost their moral compass, and to fulfill their innate spiritual longs, they are turning to a witch’s brew of New Age beliefs, paganism, environmental pantheism, humanistic egoism, and even devil worship. Deprived of faith in the one true Good, men and women will worship anything, even foreign ideologies and destructive beliefs that will destroy society. The pagan beliefs and false ideologies of our day have robbed millions of people of the meaning and value of life. And the tortured humanistic philosophies of America’s social reformers have contributed to deep inner sickness that is destroying the soul of the nation.” God will allow nations to continue in such behavior only so long, then His wrath is unleashed (Rom. 13: 1-6). However it is as Charles Colson wrote in *Kingdoms In Conflict*: “Governments, with rare exception, seek to expand their power beyond the mandate to restrain evil, preserve order, and promote justice. Most often they do this by venturing into religious and moral areas. The reason is twofold: the state needs religious legitimization for its policies and an independent church is the one structure that rivals the state’s claim for ultimate allegiance.” This is illustrated in the governments mandate that legalizes the killing of over one million six hundred thousand unborn babies a year. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reports that this number means one baby is aborted every twenty-six seconds and a hundred thirty-six babies are aborted every hour. God brought judgment upon Israel for building “high places of Topheth to burn their sons and daughter in the fire” (Jer. 7:31) and “they

made their sons and daughters pass through the fire” as an offering to Baal (II Kings 17:17). If God’s judgment was upon nations, including Israel, which practiced such heinous deeds as child sacrifice to these gods, how much more His judgment upon the sacrificing of babies today? The last thing in Ezekiel’s four severe judgments is the *plague!* *And that is what the world and the USA are experiencing today.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, famous martyred German preacher wrote in *Sermons by Dietrich Bonhoeffer*: “Fear crouches in people’s hearts, it hollows out their insides, until their resistance and strength is spent, and they suddenly break down. Fear gnaws and eats away all the ties that bind a person to God, and when in time that person reaches for those ties and clings to them, they break and the individual sinks back into himself, helpless and despairing, while hell rejoices.”

At this point we quote Butch Paugh in *News With Views, Daily Email Alerts*: “Jehovah God! There is no higher power or magistrate to whom we must all give account! This powerful force used by wicked men doing the will of their god, Satan, is none other than *Fear!*” Fear is a natural emotion everyone faces in life. In these times of the danger of the unknown we face when we are bombarded with frightful news releases and vivid scenes of hundreds of people suffering from an invisible enemy that no one, it seems, can give us any answers concerning the troubling enemy everyone faces. The question, then, is: “are there any answers to this dilemma the whole world is facing?” The answer is simply found in “whom do you trust, the government or God?” If we love God, then we can be assured that “Perfect love casts out fear” (I John 4:18), and “He who listens to Me shall dwell securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil” (Prov. 1:33). Also, “Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the storm of the wicked when it comes” (Prov. 3:25).

It was a stormy night when the disciples found themselves in a terrible storm, and their boat was being tossed about by the winds and waves. Water began filling the boat and it looked as if they were on the verge of sinking. Fear and panic filled the hearts of the twelve, and when they awakened the Lord, who was in the stern asleep on a cushion; they said to him, “Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?” And he got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Hush, be still.’ And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?’” (Mark 4:37-40). Hundreds of years earlier the Psalmist had asked himself a similar question: “Whom shall I fear?” and “Whom shall I dread?” His answer was: “The Lord is the light of my salvation and the defense of my life” (Psalm 27:1). In these days of uncertainty, when we are being overwhelmed by daily reports from the experts which leave us with very little certainty about the pandemic that is holding the whole world in a vice of fear, we need to listen to the Apostle Paul when he stated: “God has not given us of a *spirit fear*, but of power and love and discipline” (I Timothy 1:7). This means the believer has something the world does not have. There is a lot of confusion and uncertainty in the world about Covid-19, and it is hard for the Christian to apply Paul’s statement in Philippians 4:6, 7: “Be anxious (worry about) nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,” but believe it, and live it

before the unbelieving world! This is the answer the media, the elite of the government and for the most part, the elite in much of the religious world would scoff, ignore and pass it off as something to be held in derision.

With all the fears we face concerning Covid-19 is it possible to live through this pandemic without fear? The secret of living without fear is found in Psalm 34:4: “I so sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.” The Christian should not react toward problems the way the world reacts. The scriptures, the gospel, and faith in Christ is the difference in how we face fear, and the world rejects all these, leaving them with empty answers to all the adversity confronting them. Take these words from Psalm 91 seriously and apply them to any fear of the plague of Covid-19 we are facing. “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!’ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and the *deadly pestilence*. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; you will not be afraid of the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day; of the *pestilence* that stalks darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.” (verses 1-6).

Perhaps the greatest fear people have is the fear of death, and in this pandemic an uncountable number of deaths have been reported. The scripture has an amazing answer to the fear of death: “Since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through *fear of death* were subject to slavery all their lives (Heb. 2: 14, 15). For the believer whose sin is forgiven, Satan’s power to hold them in slavery by the *fear of death* has been broken.

The Covid-19 pandemic has generated many questions and much speculation, chiefly, the question: Why? Perhaps the experts will some day give us some answers, but until they do, we will continue to be hear speculations and opinions, but no concrete answers. As we noted in the beginning of this article there is no definitive answer found in Scripture that explains it. However that has not kept some prophesy experts from declaring it to be the prelude to the beginning of the end time apocalypse and the end of the world. There have been many major disease outbreaks that have shaped American history, from Cholera to Measles, from Spanish Flue to Polio, and from Aids and Ebola to the Coronavirus Covid-19, and the failed prophesies have not abated. But there are some important Scriptures we should consider. Remember the last judgment mentioned by Ezekiel 14:21 is the *plague*. “They (Israel) continually mocked the messengers of God, despised his words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against them, *until there was no remedy*” (II Chron. 36:16). God had given Israel every chance to turn from their idols and obey Him; They refused until there was no remedy except captivity for seventy years. We wonder how long God will let our nation continue in their downward cycle of disobedience until there will be no remedy and it will face judgment. When God called Abraham and gave him a covenant promise, He revealed to him that his descendants would not come into the land of promise until the fourth generation because “the iniquity of Amorite was not yet complete” (Gen. 15:16). When will USA’s “Iniquity be complete?”