

## Disasters

*Where is God in the China virus?*

The dawn of the atomic age gave people an excuse to reject God and instead place their faith in Science. As Esqueleto said to Nacho, "I believe in Science."<sup>1</sup> However, the China virus that is now devastating the world is unprecedented in our lifetimes. The inability of the scientific and medical communities to effectively control it shows that science is not omnipotent or omniscient. However, many are making the same statements about God. Some say God is good, but not all powerful. God means well and wants to stop the virus, but He can't. Others, more hardened against God, say if there is a God, and He is all powerful, He must not be a good God, otherwise He would stop the virus. So we are logically impaled on the horns of a dilemma: either God is good but not all powerful, or God is all powerful, but not good.

*How are we, who worship Jesus as the one true God, to view such disasters as the China virus? Would Jesus let one of us catch the virus, or worse yet, someone we love die from it? Where is Jesus in that? Why does God let such things happen? Is it God's judgment for some specific sin like abortion or human trafficking, or war?*

I heard one prominent preacher quote 2 Chronicles 7:14 as the prescription for cure:

**ESV 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.

Back during World War One, a flu epidemic swept the world, killing millions. Back then, as now, our government ordered churches to be temporarily closed. The pastor of FBC of San Francisco thought he had the cure. He said, "churches must repent their sins, and when they do the plagues will cease."<sup>2</sup> (Simple cause and effect).

*Where is God in the China virus?*<sup>3</sup>

-----

### 1. God is Both Good and Sovereign.

**ESV 1 Chronicles 16:34** Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good . . .

**ESV Psalm 25:8** Good and upright is the LORD . . .

**ESV Psalm 145:9** The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

---

<sup>1</sup> From the movie, *Nacho Libre* (2006).

<sup>2</sup> Rev. John Quincy Adams, "What the 1918 Influenza Pandemic Epidemic Meant for American Churches", Patheos.com. Accessed April 05, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Essence taken from John Piper, "How Do We Make Sense of the Coronavirus?", DesiringGod.org. Accessed April 02, 2020.

ESV **Mark 10:18b** [Jesus speaking]: No one is good except God alone.

ESV **Psalms 34:8a** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

ESV **Psalms 100:5** . . . the LORD is good . . .

ESV **Psalms 31:19a** Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you . . .

Before we try to interpret any crisis, any disaster, any personal tragedy, we need to be sure we have our theology straight: God is good.

And, God is also sovereign. God is in control of all things, even the China virus.

ESV **Ephesians 1:11** [God] works all things according to the counsel of his will . . .

ESV **Job 42:2** [Job speaking] I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

ESV **Mark 4:41** [The disciples speaking]: “even wind and sea obey him . . .”

This was true then, and it is true now:

ESV **Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

**Hard Truth:** Jesus could have stopped the China virus, but He didn't. He has all knowledge and authority over nature. And, He always does what is wise, and good, and just. Nothing can stop Jesus' plans and purposes. This is where true faith comes in. We can't easily see how there is anything good in or behind the virus, but we are called on to trust that God is both sovereign and good.

Not to make too fine a point of it, but God not only allows things like the Corona virus, He actually causes it.

ESV **Isaiah 45:7** I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

It is not like God is an Olympic swimmer, standing on the beach, watching someone drowning in the sea, caught in an undertow, who has the ability to rescue the drowning man, but does nothing to stop it. Instead, God is the One who created the Olympic swimmer, and the drowning man, and the sea, and the laws of buoyancy, and the undertow.

Here is how we make sense out of this tragedy:

-----

## 2. The Creation is Under a Curse

**ESV Lamentations 3:37-39** Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?

Way back in the day, our ancestral parents, living in paradise in the Garden of Eden, rebelled against God and sinned. God's penalty for that sin is death. That penalty is still in effect today. One way or the other, we are all going to die. And, the creation is under a curse.

**ESV Genesis 3:17b-19** Because you have . . . eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' 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 . . . By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

**ESV Romans 8:20-23** . . . the creation was subjected to futility . . . because of him who subjected it, in . . . bondage to decay . . . the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Even we Christians, God's people, who have the Holy Spirit, groan. We too suffer from the curse, decay and die. We too are subject to droughts, famine, pestilence and the Corona virus.

**C.S. Lewis** asked his readers to consider the important but unsettling truth that "Nature does not, in the long run, favor life."<sup>4</sup>

**Perspective:** Yet for us there is a difference. We wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies (this will happen at the resurrection of the dead).

**ESV Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**ESV 1 Thessalonians 5:9** . . . God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

**ESV 1 Corinthians 15:55** "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

**Application:** Christians will die from the China virus, but for us, the sting of death has been removed.

-----

---

<sup>4</sup> "C.S. Lewis and the Coronavirus", ColsonCenter.libsyn.com. Accessed April 05, 2020.

### 3. Some Sickness is a Mercy From God.

Some Christians will get sick simply because the world is under a curse. Others of us will get sick specifically because of God's mercy, to keep us from continuing in sin.

ESV **1 John 5:16-17** If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death

ESV **1 Corinthians 11:29-31** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

-----

### 4. Some Sickness is Judgment for Specific Sins.

Sometimes there is a cause/effect relationship between a specific sin and a specific sickness.

**Example:** One example of this are venereal diseases. Those most likely to contract V.D. are those who are not pure in their relationships.

**Example:** Drunkenness is a sin. Sclerosis of the liver caused by drinking too much alcohol.

**Example:** Another example are the sicknesses associated with homosexuality:

ESV **Romans 1:27** . . . men . . . gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

God does sometimes bring sickness as a judgment upon some people because of specific sins. It's not an act of mercy, it is an act of judgment.

-----

### 5. All Natural Disasters Are God's Call to Repentance

ESV **Acts 17:30-31** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

**Application:** This is a great witnessing opportunity! I was speaking with a business man who had to shutter his business due to the virus. As we pondered the unusual situation we faced, I mentioned to him that I thought it was God's call to repent. I got a text from a nurse caring for Corona virus patients asking me to pray for her to make the most of the many opportunities she was having to speak of the things of the Lord to her patients.

There was a tower that fell in Jesus' day, killing 18 people. Jesus used that tragedy as a teaching opportunity:

ESV **Luke 13:4-5** . . . those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Jesus turned it from "them" to "you". He personalized a civil engineering error that resulted catastrophic failure.

### **Conclusion**

We always and only suffer under God's loving care. God may seem to be asleep in the storms of our lives the way Jesus was (**Mark4:38**, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?").

However, God is not asleep, but He won't be rushed. He knows what He's doing. He has a plan and it's a plan of love.

#### **John Newton:**

"Begone, unbelief, My Savior is near,  
And for my relief, will surely appear;  
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform;  
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."