

# Coronavirus CoVID-19, a Biblical Perspective

By Dave DeWitt

## A Few Statistics about the Coronavirus CoVID 19

This quote is from who.int:

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

The following is from Concierge Medicine office of Mercy Health/ Drs Baer and Triesenberg]:

Genetic data shows the virus is actively mutating, which will likely complicate efforts to combat it.

- Therefore, the infection rate doubles every ~6 days
- Incubation period of median 4 days with range up to 14 days
- Patients with chronic disease are at higher risk
  - 80% of symptomatic patients are mildly ill, and can be cared for at home
  - 14% of patients require hospitalization
  - 6-8% of patients require critical care, typically intubation
- Mortality:
  - 0.2% in patients age 10-39
  - 0.4% in ages 40-49
  - 1.3% in ages 50-59
  - 3.6% in ages 60-69
  - 8% in ages 70-79
  - 14.8% in 80+
  - Overall mortality is 0.6-1%
- This is an evolving situation, but the disease is spreading nationally, and likely locally. The large number of celebrities testing positive indicates a massive number of untested positive cases, the denominator is unknown in the US
- Social distancing is the only mechanism left to prevent the healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed until herd immunity is achieved

## Biblical Issues

There are at least four pandemic questions that require a biblical perspective:

1. Is the Coronavirus CoVID 19 a sign of the end times?
2. Is the Coronavirus CoVID 19 a judgment of God?
3. Why would God allow Coronavirus CoVID 19 to infect people?
4. Is there biblical advice for dealing with Coronavirus CoVID 19?

### 1. Is the Coronavirus CoVID 19 a Sign of the End Times?

True, there are pestilence pandemics during the future tribulation period. But they are never by themselves, nor do they occur before the antichrist is in power. The order of the four horsemen of Revelation 6 is: (1) the antichrist going out to conquer the world – the white horse, (2) war and bloodshed – the red horse, (3) famine – the black horse. The last horse (4) kills a fourth of the earth *with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth* (6:8). The future tribulation does not begin with a pandemic.

Jesus said of the future tribulation,

**Matthew 24:21** *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.*

But, so far Coronavirus CoVID 19 is not that. There have been many global pandemics since the time of Christ. I'm sure some people thought each of them was the *great tribulation*.

HIV/AIDS Pandemic (at its peak, 2005-2012), Death Toll: 36 million

Flu Pandemic (1968), Death Toll: 1 million

Asian Flu (1956-1958), Death Toll: 2 million

Flu Pandemic (1918), Death Toll: 20–50 million

Sixth Cholera Pandemic (1910-1911), Death Toll: 800,000+

Flu Pandemic (1889-1890), Death Toll: 1 million

Third Cholera Pandemic (1852–1860), Death Toll: 1 million

The Black Death (1346-1353), Death Toll: 75–200 million

Plague of Justinian (541-542), Death Toll: 25 million

Antonine Plague (165 A.D.), Death Toll: 5 million

[<https://www.mphonline.org/worst-pandemics-in-history/>]

## **2. Is the Coronavirus CoVID 19 a Judgment of God?**

The plagues and pestilence, mentioned in the Bible, are always a judgment of God. In the Old Testament, they are localized, and usually related to Israel (1 Chronicles 7:13-14). In the New Testament, plagues are only mentioned as occurring during the future tribulation period, after this (grace/church) age, preceding the Second Coming of Christ. The pestilence of Revelation 6 is indeed a global pandemic, but it is accompanied by, and preceded by, a whole host of disasters on earth. There is no statement anywhere in the Bible that suggests God will send a global pandemic by itself as a judgment. But it is also crucial to notice that God is not judging the earth in our (grace/church) age. All global judgment is seen as future, and this age is where the global judgment is postponed. In the explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, explained in verses 39-43) Jesus said the judgment is at the end of the age.

**Matthew 13:39-40**, *the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.*

When some people were saying certain circumstantial events were the judgment of God, Jesus clarified,

**Luke 13:4-5**, *Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*

The point is, if God were judging the world for its sin, we would all be dead, *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*. And He told us how He would judge the world, with the future tribulation that precedes the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus also said this of the cities Chorazin and Bethsaida because they were unrepentant:

**Matthew 11:22**, *woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! ... it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.*

Notice, even though those cities were evil and unrepentant, God is not judging Chorazin and Bethsaida until the *day of judgment*.

Of course, God may selectively judge certain people groups (Revelation 2:20-23) or nations (Psalm 110:6; Jeremiah 18:7-10) if He chooses to do so. But to claim a pandemic, or any catastrophe, is God's judgment on sin today, is to claim to know more than the Bible knows. It's never a good idea to replace the Word of God with our imagination. What we do know is that in the New Testament the judgment of God is a future event not prescribed for our age.

## **3. Why Would God Allow Coronavirus CoVID 19 to Sicken and Kill People?**

This is the age-old question as to why there is suffering in God's creation. The basic reason is that we live in a cursed world.

**Genesis 3:17-18**, *Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you.*

Paul told the Romans,

**Romans 8:20-22**, *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, 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. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*

Everything was created by God (Colossians 1:16), but all of creation was also *cursed*, and *subjected to futility* by the Fall. Microbiologists disagree about whether a virus is living. At any rate, “viruses are proteins and genetic material that survive and replicate within their environment, inside another life form” [microbiologysociety.org]. It’s kind of like a seed that doesn’t grow until it’s planted. The material that becomes a dangerous virus is part of the cursed creation. Viruses are part of a *creation subjected to futility* that *groans and suffers* pain. Paul metaphorically compares it to *the pains of childbirth*.

#### **4. Is There Biblical Advice for Dealing with Coronavirus CoVID 19?**

There are two things we can learn from the Bible about dealing with a virus:

**First**, Controlling the spread of a virus is our responsibility. As humans, it is our job *to subdue it; and rule over it*.

**Genesis 1:28**, *God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

**Second**, we are told how to protect ourselves from the spread of infections. In the Mosaic Law, God included many cleanings, washings, and quarantine procedures for disease. Here is an example of dealing with a *discharge* of unknown origin which, by application, could include discharges from coughing, running noses and sneezing.

**Leviticus 15:1-6** *The LORD also spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, ‘When any man has a discharge from his body his discharge is unclean’ (vv. 1-2)... Anyone, moreover, who touches his bed shall **wash his clothes and bathe in water** and be unclean until evening; and whoever sits on the thing on which the man with the discharge has been sitting, shall **wash his clothes and bathe in water** and be unclean until evening (vv. 5-6).*

#### **Conclusion**

Coronavirus CoVID 19 is, like many viruses, is a dangerous part of a cursed creation. It is not a sign of the end times or that we are in the tribulation. It is not a judgment of God on the earth. It is not something outside of the plan of God. But it is our responsibility as humans to *subdue it and rule over it*.

#### **Comment**

We are not yet in the tribulation. The antichrist has not yet taken over a global government. But notice how quickly and willingly people all over the world gave over their freedom to the authorities (Revelation 13:1-7). Similar to what we see now, the tribulation nations retain their separate existence, but they act in global way.