CORONAVIRUS: ARE YOU PREPARED?

Practically the whole world is thinking about this deadly disease and it is striking fear and panic in the hearts of many. If the disease itself is not bad enough, the social disruption brought about by the disease—the closing of schools, churches, malls, restaurants, places of entertainment, termination of athletic events, loss of part-time jobs and income, etc.—are of great concern to all. Let us turn to the Bible to see what it has to say about infectious diseases.

Obviously, our all-knowing God has always known about the coronavirus and every other infectious disease. However, the Holy Spirit led some of His faithful servants to write the Holy Scriptures using language and terminology that could be understood in every age of history, so we don't read about viruses and bacteria and other microorganisms. But we do read about PESTILENCES from early in Biblical history. One of the most well-known passages on this subject is found in the book of Exodus when God sent various plagues and diseases to the people of Egypt so they would let His people leave for the land of Canaan. In Exodus 9:13-16 God told Moses to tell Pharaoh (the King of Egypt): "Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me, for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I MAY SHOW MY POWER in you, and that MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED in all the earth." In these words the Lord is reminding Pharaoh that He could have completely destroyed the people in the pestilences that had already taken place (see verses 1-12), but instead He spared many of them to display His power and make His name known in all the earth.

We believe every pestilence God has allowed since then should serve the same purpose; to show ungodly people His power and to declare His name. God is no doubt trying to speak to people today through this deadly coronavirus. He is trying to get their attention. He is trying to remind everyone that we have not been sufficiently thankful to Himself for all of the times of prosperity and good health that we have enjoyed. But the question is: Do we have ears to hear?

Let us add that this present pestilence pales in comparison to future ones that are prophesied in Scripture. We read of them in Luke 21:11, "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." Like today, men's hearts will be filled with fear at that time: "Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things that are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (verse 26). Again, God uses pestilences, along with other calamities, to get people's attention. God wants all people to face their own mortality and consider their eternal destiny. But the question remains, "Do we have ears to hear?"

Our lives have been turned upside down and not one of us knows how long and how bad this is going to be. You may very well be thinking, "I could even die if I become infected with this dreadful disease." If you were to die, where would you be? The Bible is clear that there are only two destinies, heaven or hell. The Lord Jesus pleads with us in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to DESTRUCTION, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to LIFE, and there are few who find it." Jesus does NOT want you to continue on the road that leads to destruction (hell); He wants you to "enter through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life," and HE IS THAT GATE. In John 10:9 Jesus said, "I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." In John 14:6 He declared, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." We would plead with you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

The Bible also says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Some may be asking, "Don't I have to do something to earn or merit my salvation? Ephesians 2:10 adds, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." In other words, we will not earn heaven by our good works, but having placed our dependence upon the PERFECT WORK of Christ on the cross for our sins, we will want to live in a way that pleases God as our way of saying, "Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving my soul."

As you make preparations, such as social distancing, to protect you from the coronavirus, do not forget the Lord's appeal to you that He once wrote to Israel, "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12).

—Dennis J. Oberg and Paul L. Canner