

Dr. Michael Brown: Did God Send COVID-19 as a Judgment From Heaven?

Did God send COVID-19 as a plague on the LGBT community? That's the shocking claim made by evangelical newscaster Rick Wiles.

Pointing to the virus-related death of attorney Richard E. Weber, Wiles said, "He was a senior lawyer for the LGBT Bar Association of New York. The lawyers who sue churches, the lawyers who sue ministries ... one of their senior lawyers for the gay rights movement died today in New York City of the coronavirus. There is a judgment, I'm telling you. A plague is underway."

But Wiles was not the only one to say something like this. *The Sun* reported, "The minister [Ralph Drollinger] who hosts a weekly Bible study for President Donald Trump's Cabinet members has appeared to place blame for the coronavirus on gays and environmentalism." Drollinger explained that "relative to the coronavirus pandemic crisis, this is not God's abandonment wrath nor His cataclysmic wrath, rather it is sowing and reaping wrath."

Jeremy Sharon in *The Jerusalem Post* also reported that "a prominent ultra-Orthodox leader, Rabbi Meir Mazuz, ... claimed that the LGBTQ community and Gay Pride marches were against nature and had caused the coronavirus pandemic." Similar claims were made by Pastor Steven Andrew of the USA Christian Church.

What are we to make of such claims? It's understandable that the secular world would mock words like this, especially the very specific statement of Rick Wiles. Yet when we read through Rev. Drollinger's Bible study in full, we realize he

takes time to go through the Scriptures, noting how complex the issue of divine judgment is when applied directly to a nation or people. He also looks carefully at the divine judgments in Romans 1, as God gave us over to our sins, and he equates our extreme environmentalism with idolatry, also noting the emphasis Romans 1 puts on homosexual practice.

But does that mean that COVID-19 is a specific, direct, judgment from God on extreme environmentalists and gays? Wiles may say the answer is yes, but what would he say about pastors or children who have died of the virus? Was this divine judgment on them? The first coronavirus casualty in Oklahoma was a Pentecostal pastor, presumably a man who viewed homosexual practice as sinful. And an elderly pastor who attended John MacArthur's recent leadership conference in California has apparently died of the virus—yet he too presumably opposed LGBT activism. Why, then, did they die?

We need to be very careful when we speak of divine judgment, since in God's sight, all of us are worthy of judgment and wrath. We stand by mercy more than merit.

Who's Being Judged?

To be sure, the Scriptures are clear that God is a righteous judge, and there are times when He pours out His wrath on the earth. And sometimes He judges us by giving us over to our sins, as stated in Romans 1:28-32: "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not proper. They were filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, proud, boastful, inventors of evil things, and disobedient toward parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, calloused, and unmerciful, who know the righteous requirement of God, that those who commit such things are worthy of death. They not only do them, but also

give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

Based on this section of Scripture, I do see evidence of God’s judgment in our society. But a light should go off when you read a passage like this. Rather than pointing the finger at others—those evil gays or terrible atheists—Paul points the finger at the human race as a whole, which includes you and me, outside of grace. We are all guilty and worthy of judgment. These words describe all of us.

Jesus addressed this in Luke 13:1-5, where we read, “There were present at that time some who told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all men living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.’”

Do you see what the Lord is saying? It’s easy to look at someone who died an unusual, sudden or gruesome death and say, “Obviously, he deserved it” or “She got what was coming to her.” Jesus says, “Not so!” All of us, outside of His grace, are habitual sinners, and all of us, outside of His mercy, are worthy of judgment, both in this world and in the world to come.

Of course, there are times when God brings judgment on sinning individuals, like Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament (Lev. 10:1-3) or Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament (Acts 5:1-11). There are times when God singles out a sinning person for a specific act of disobedience, like Uzzah in the Old Testament (2 Sam. 6:1-8) or Herod in the New Testament (Acts 12:21-23).

But in the vast majority of cases, we do best to be slow to

speak and slow to judge. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever you are who judges, for when you judge another, you condemn yourself, for you who judge do the same things" (Rom. 2:1).

That old saying remains true: When we point one finger at others, we have three fingers pointing back at us.

The Cause of COVID-19

Can God give specific revelation to His people, explaining that something is a judgment from His hand? Absolutely, and we should take that seriously, especially if the person speaking has a reliable, proven track record.

There are some leaders, like Pastor Ed Silvoso, who says there is an important divine message in the coronavirus: "The darkness covering the Earth, in my estimation, is not demonic in origin. It's God dimming the lights in the theater before shining a spotlight on the church, 'so that the eyes of the world will turn toward those that have become the light of the world because they carry Jesus in their heart.'"

Other leaders, like prayer leader Lou Engle, feel the virus is demonic in origin, stating, "It is our conviction that the storm of this pandemic has been stirred up by a high-level demonic principality to hinder the surge of the church's mighty assault of fasting, prayer, sending and missions on the global gates of Hades." Specifically, he believes that with so many significant Christian stadium events planned for 2020, the virus is a demonic attempt to thwart those major gatherings.

How do we sort this out? What do we do when major, respected leaders have different insights about the origins of the virus or the purpose of the virus?

There are also the conspiracy theories about the real origins or alleged nefarious purposes of the virus, and they are

growing by the minute. Fans have shared plenty of outrageous theories with me, including:

That the source of the COVID-19 virus was a meteor.

That 200 generals hatched this plot in the aftermath of 9/11, with a goal of destroying pedophile rings.

That there will be a chip in the vaccine, preparing the way for a one-world government and ultimately the Antichrist.

That the virus is somehow connected to Satanists in Hollywood who are sacrificing babies to the devil.

That the virus was “designed” to sterilize men.

This represents just a sampling of what is out there these days—and yes, some of what is out there is really “out there.”

I do not have the ability to investigate every theory. In fact, no one does, which is why there can be so many theories—who can disprove them all? And the Spirit of God has not chosen to reveal to me the origins of the virus. But honestly, I don’t need to know any of these things. I simply need to know what God is doing in the midst of the pandemic and how He wants us, as His people, to respond. In that regard, I can say seven things with confidence.

First, God is using this virus as a wake-up call to His people and to the nations. It is high time that we pray and cry out for mercy. It is high time we repent of our sins. Whatever caused the virus, the Lord is getting the attention of the world through it. This is not happening without His explicit permission.

Second, in the virus is a divine invitation to us to seek Him earnestly and to reevaluate how we live and how we function as the church. When else will we have an opportunity forced on us like this—shut up in our homes, with no sports and normal social outlets? This unique moment calls us to live in the

light of eternity and to recognize what really matters: Sharing the Good News with others. This is a great time for the harvest!

Third, and closely related, the virus offers us a platform to shine the light of the gospel and to live differently than the world. These are divine opportunities! As Bishop Joseph Mattera wrote, "The present coronavirus pandemic will demonstrate how the kingdom of God is different from the kingdom of darkness. It is also a huge opportunity for the church to function as the salt and light of the world. The reason is because the kingdom of the heavens is governed by a different set of laws and principles than those under the rule of the prince of this world (see John 14:30, 1 John 5:19).

"[For example,] instead of hoarding goods, we are generous with others. While Christians should save money and food to provide for their immediate family, our mindset should be to also have enough to provide for our community. Many great leaders I know in the body of Christ are always champions during times of crisis and utilize their church buildings and vast resources to provide food, medical care and much-needed intervention for their communities and cities."

In the words of Catherine Booth, "You are not here in the world for yourself. You have been sent here for others. The world is waiting for you!"

Fourth, the virus will uncover what is in our hearts, be it faith or fear, generosity or greed, consecration or carnality, courage or cowardice. In times of shaking, we see what is real and what is not.

Fifth, the sudden, radical world changes remind us that things can turn on a dime, that prophecy can be fulfilled suddenly, and that life as we know it can be turned upside down. All the more reason for us to put our roots deep down in God. All the more reason for us to know the Lord rather than just know

about Him.

Sixth, the virus reminds us of the frailty of human life, of how quickly life can be taken from us, of how fragile the elderly can be. We do well to cherish every day we have and to honor and care for those who are weak among us. I believe the Spirit is saying that old lives matter too.

Seventh, this present temporary shaking of the world provides a foretaste of the final, massive, overwhelming shaking that will come, a shaking so intense that only the kingdom of God will remain unshaken. Are we ready for that day?

In the book of Job, while we are given insight into the wager between God and Satan that caused him so much horrific suffering, Job himself is never given that insight. Even in the end of the book, when the Lord reveals Himself to Job, He never explains things to him. Instead, He reveals Himself—His majesty, His glory, His sovereignty, His power—and that is enough for godly Job. As he said to the Lord, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:5, NIV).

That will be enough for us too, even if we never know what was behind this current pandemic—or the next one that might come. Whether or not this plague is a judgment from God is not what matters most. Instead, if we encounter God afresh, if we experience Him more deeply, if we turn from our carnal ways and truly seek Him, if we turn our focus from selfishness to service, that should be enough for us—and it will be more than enough.

And through it all, come thick or thin, we proclaim with boldness and joy that Jesus is Lord. He is always more than enough. People may have their purposes and plans, and there may even be some truth to a conspiracy theory here or there. But in the end, only God’s purposes and plans will stand, and if we align ourselves with Him, all will be well. Stand firm!

Dr. Michael Brown served as a leader in the Brownsville Revival from 1996–2000, out of which was born the FIRE School of Ministry. He is the founder and president of AskDrBrown Ministries and the host of a nationally syndicated daily talk radio show.

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