

Is Deadly Ebola Outbreak the First Bowl of 'Revelation' Judgment?

It's official. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa an international public-health emergency. Stopping the global spread of this deadly—and generally fatal—virus will demand a swift, mass response.

"Countries affected to date simply do not have the capacity to manage an outbreak of this size and complexity on their own," WHO Chief Dr. Margaret Chan said at a news conference in Geneva, according to an Associated Press report. "I urge the international community to provide this support on the most urgent basis possible."

Over 900 people in West Africa have died—and those are only the ones we know about. Ebola experts are warning of an African apocalypse in the face of an unprecedented outbreak that has left hundreds lying dead in the streets, *The Daily Beast* reports.

"The disease is uncontained and out of control, the international response has been a failure," Ken Isaacs, vice president of Program and Government Relations for Samaritan's Purse, told *The Daily Beast*. He thinks the reported number of infections and deaths "represent just 25 to 50 percent of what is happening."

Dr. Heinz Feldmann, chief of virology at the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, told the AP that the "situation is very critical and different from what we've seen before. There are so many locations with transmission popping up, and we just need more people on the ground."

Prophets Claiming God Sent a 'Plague'

Now, Liberia's church leaders are claiming the deadly outbreak is a plague God has sent to punish the nation for "immoral acts" such as homosexuality. Liberia's *Daily Observer* reports that more than 100 bishops, pastors, general overseers, prophets, evangelists and other ministers of the gospel who are part of the Liberia Council of Churches have resolved:

"God is angry with Liberia, and that Ebola is a plague. Liberians have to pray and seek God's forgiveness over the corruption and immoral acts (such as homosexuality, etc.) that continue to penetrate our society. As Christians, we must repent and seek God's forgiveness."

Are Liberia's prophets and pastors right? Is the Ebola outbreak God's judgment on the nation for immoral acts? And, if so, shouldn't we expect it to spread to the doorsteps of Europe, Asia and America, whose citizens are practicing many of the same immoral sins? Or is this just one small piece of the bigger end-times picture? Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 in context to the age:

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be

saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:5-14).

Discerning the Signs of the Times

Let's look at the landscape as it compares to Jesus' words. Persecuted Christians are being run out of Iraq en masse. There is war in the Middle East, airplanes being shot out of the sky over Ukraine, drug wars south of the U.S. border, and, of course, culture wars over God's Word in many nations.

Meanwhile, a man-made famine is on the horizon in Sudan, an huge earthquake just hit Hawaii as it waits for two hurricanes to clobber its shores, an earthquake in China on Wednesday left nearly 600 dead. Earlier this week, earthquakes hit Johannesburg, South Africa; Indonesia; and Napa County, California. And an earthquake just hit Greece this morning.

A couple of days ago I asked on my Facebook page, "What are your thoughts on the Ebola outbreak? I am praying about this and its prophetic implications. Is God speaking to you about this?" I got hundreds of responses. Some think the Ebola outbreak is the first bowl of judgment in the book of Revelation. Others say judgment is coming. Still others think the news of the virus is just fear and propaganda.

How Should Christians Respond?

I don't think the Ebola outbreak the first bowl of judgment—but I don't think it's propaganda either. We need to rightly interpret the signs of the times (see Matt. 16:3). This is certainly not the first time we've seen deadly outbreaks of viruses, but we should take notice when experts like Isaacs make these kinds of warnings:

"I think we are going to see death tolls in numbers that we can't imagine. If we do not fight and contain this disease, we will be fighting this and containing this in multiple

countries across the world. The cat is, most likely, already out of the bag.”

No, I don’t think it’s the first bowl of judgment. Believe me, there won’t be any wondering or speculation when the first bowl of judgment is poured out. But I do believe it’s time for the church to rise up and stop playing patty-cake with pastor on Sunday. I do believe it’s time for saints to hit their knees in intercession for the lost—and the living. I do believe we need to settle in our hearts the reality of Psalm 91 and refuse to walk in fear. I do believe that we need to recognize the signs of the times and respond accordingly. What do you believe?

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor of Charisma. She is also director of IHOP Fort Lauderdale and author of several books, including *The Making of a Prophet* and *The Spiritual Warrior’s Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.