

How God Is Using COVID-19 to Reveal His True Nature

The first time it happened, only eight people survived. The flood destroyed every person and creature except those hidden safely in the ark. Nothing like it occurred since then.

Catastrophes occur in every part of the world. Global disasters usually come in the form of illness. The Black Plague caused the deaths of thousands of people. Various forms of flu caused millions of deaths over the years.

Scientists developed medicines to “cure” and vaccinations to prevent some of the worst ones: smallpox, polio, measles, mumps and others. Yet, in spite of these advances, new contagious illnesses occur.

In fact, a novel virus is attacking individuals on a worldwide scale right now. It possesses many names, but the simplest calls it COVID-19. Its appearance on the world’s stage brought with it ugly symptoms and, in many instances, death to its victims.

Scientists rush to develop a vaccination against it to prevent its spread. Other medical experts look for medicines that will relieve the symptoms of the virus, perhaps in some instances bringing a cure to patients whose doctors prescribe appropriate drugs.

In its wake lies fear of contracting the virus, and those fears have led to an increase in panic. At times like these, people wonder what the Bible says about these conditions:

–Does the Bible help us understand these problems?

–If God is a God of love, then why does He allow these disasters to occur?

–If He possesses all power, how come He doesn't prevent them or stop them?

Yes, the Bible does disclose God's truths about them and how He uses them for His purposes.

Why Do Catastrophes Occur?

When God created the worlds and all things in them, He made them perfect without flaws. After each stage of creation, God looked at what He completed and called it good. At the end of creation, in fact, He called it very good (Gen. 1:31).

No illness or defect inhabited God's original masterpiece. Adam and Eve lived holy lives in health in a perfect creation. They worked in the Garden of Eden without sweat and the in the absence of weeds and death.

Then disaster occurred. Adam and Eve rejected God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden. When tempted by Satan, who inhabited a serpent, they ate the forbidden fruit. They experienced the pain that God promised for their disobedience: They would die (Gen. 2:17).

Sin and its consequence, death, entered paradise. Prior to their sin, they experienced perfect health with no illnesses, no imperfections and no death in their world. But their sin brought death upon all creation and all the imperfect things that led to death. We live in an imperfect, fallen world.

The existence of sin in our world brings forth the effects of sin:

–Disease.

–Disfigurement.

–Disaster.

–Disability.

–Defects by the multitudes that led to death.

All of these effects of sin produce the exact result that God promised to Adam and Eve: Dying, we will die. We are all mortal. No one escapes death's grip.

Therefore, catastrophes like COVID-19 occur because we live in an imperfect, sinful and fallen creation. And they afflict all strata of society and every nation, bringing death to both saints and sinners. We all suffer the consequences of sin in our lives and world.

Why Does God Permit Catastrophes?

God could prevent them or at least stop them after they begin. But He uses disasters of all sizes and kinds for His purposes. Through them He reveals the condition of mankind and our need. He also uses devastations to reveal aspects of His nature.

Condition of Mankind

Since the sin of Adam and Eve, all of their lineage, including you and me, inherit their sinful natures. We do not like to think upon this reality. But that does not change it. By nature, we desire and perform sinful practices. Evil consumes and permeates all of our behavior. We are helpless to live any other way, and we lack the spiritual desire to change our condition.

But God is a God of love, and He wants us to know this spurned truth about ourselves. Therefore, He uses various means to reveal this fact to us. For example, He sends to us family and friends whom He has enlightened. They share with us the fact of our sinfulness to inform us, too.

Again, God steers us to a church service where the speaker discusses these issues. Or someone gives us a Bible or other book(s) that explain the biblical truth of our condition. God wants us to know our sinfulness, helplessness and need for a

power other than our own strength, abilities and desires to release our lives from slavery to our sinful natures.

Contrary to our natural thoughts, God permits catastrophes as a means to these ends. The adversity points out evil in the world: imperfections of a fallen world, weakness, helplessness in the face of adversity, and even greed and the basest of sins that mankind can inflict upon others. The catastrophe brings the opportunity to see the existence and effects of sin in our lives and the world.

He uses cataclysms to reveal to us our natural, sinful condition; its effects; and our need for help beyond ourselves to bring relief and freedom from its bondage.

Revelation of God's Attributes

At a time of disaster, we often think about God and His role in events. In these times, God displays His unique attributes that we might know Him. Our present pandemic, COVID-19, is no different.

–Judgment of God: Catastrophes reveal God's judgment upon sin. God hates sin. He always judges it. The Bible records 47 references to pestilence as a judgment for sin. Pestilence describes a sudden, fatal epidemic, like COVID-19. In addition, the Bible describes a variety of other means of His judgment upon mankind because of sin: plague, blasting, mildew, locusts, dearth, drought and sickness (2 Chr. 6:28).

–Sovereignty of God: Although mankind can neither predict nor control disasters, God does. He controls their occurrence, the kind of calamity and its duration. Nothing happens in our world or lives that He does not control.

–Love of God: In the previous section, I describe how catastrophes can show the love of God to mankind. He uses them to reveal our true nature and our helplessness, an important step on the way to freedom from bondage to sin.

-Grace and mercy of God: Disasters do not last forever. They do end. God in His great mercy does not give us all that we deserve because of sin and brings relief from adversity. In grace, God provides a means to mitigate the horrible effects of catastrophes. As further evidence of God's sovereignty, He dispenses His mercy and grace, each by definition a gift from God at His option, upon whom He chooses.

-Salvation: In the midst of calamity, God reveals His salvation for sinners like you and me. His grace and mercy help resolve the disaster. But greater still, He provides the solution to our inherent sinful natures. In love, God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to become the substitutionary offering for the sins of people like you and me (John 3:16). He lived a sinless life that qualified Him for the death that He died. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for sinners like you and me, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Implications

Some of you, your family or friends might suffer under the present catastrophe, COVID-19, or a previous one. This present threat to our peace injures us deeply. We experience loneliness, financial insecurity and fear, and perhaps even panic.

Truth sets people free. Insight into the nature of our fallen lives and world, and God's role in each, helps us grapple with apparent whimsical circumstances. It enables us to understand our helplessness against a seeming unbeatable foe.

As a child of God, one who trusts in His provision for you through faith upon Christ, you possess an inner life and relationship with God that will bring you through disaster. You recognize that in your own power and ability you cannot overcome tragedy. You realize its role in your life and know that God cares for His own children.

God, by His indwelling Holy Spirit within you, enables you to walk in freedom from slavery to sin and to experience His love in the midst of difficulty.

If you do not now trust Christ, you have no such security. You fear the consequences the storms of life may bring to you, your family and friends, perhaps even death. Your fear may even approach panic as you realize your helplessness against an invisible and powerful foe.

I pray for you that today God will:

–Cause His life to come into you so that you might experience a new birth of life from above.

–Send His Holy Spirit to you to give you this new life and enable you to see Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners.

–Give you the faith to turn from your bondage to inherent sinfulness and helplessness to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God's gracious provision for sinners like you and me.

Although helpless in our own natures in these times, we can find help in God's provision for mankind. My dear friends, our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He sees our dismay.

In just the way He quieted the storm long ago that frightened His disciples in the boat with His strong voice, He will quiet this storm for His children, too. We will find a quiet peace when we lean upon our comforting Savior, Jesus Christ.

I testify to the presence and power of these truths in my own life. I pray that God will give them to you today, too. {eo}

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