

GOD AND THE CORONAVIRUS

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INTRODUCTION

Incredible as it seems, a virus as small as COVID-19 has put all the nations of the world in check. Health, the economy, the stock market, the price of oil. Tourism, factories, commerce, cultural activities, sports, congresses and even church meetings have been paralyzed. It has locked everyone in their homes, emptied the streets, and is "forcing" us to rethink many things. There is uncertainty, and many questions arise.

I want to order my words around FOUR QUESTIONS:

1. HAVE VIRUSES BEEN CREATED BY GOD?

The first thing I must clarify is that God is not the author of any disease or death. God is the author of life, of good health. God did not create evil, or sin, or death, or disease. The Bible, in Romans 5.12, states the following:

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.

The first man, despite having been warned by God, by sinning opened the door to the devil and death. And, therefore, to all diseases and pests.

Jesus said this about the devil: "*He was a murderer from the beginning*" (John 8.44). And also: "*The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly*" (John 10.10).

When man sinned, there was an alteration in creation; not only spiritual but also biological and genetic alteration in nature. Everything became infected because of man's sin. The author of this "degeneration" was Satan, but it was man who enabled him, because of his disobedience to God.

Therefore, every virus is a degenerative mutation due to man's rebellion against God.

2. IS THE CORONAVIRUS A JUDGMENT OF GOD?

On Saturday, March 21, the day after the President of Argentina, Dr. Alberto Fernández, wisely decreed the cessation of all activities at the national level, three pastors and two Catholic priests were invited by the Minister of Human

Development and Habitat of the City of Buenos Aires, including members of her team, to discuss how to coordinate the interaction between the City Government and the city's Catholic and Evangelical churches in these pandemic days.

Upon entering the building, an official took our personal data. When I was alone with her, she asked me: "Do you belong other ministry?" I replied: "No. We are pastors. " "Ah! Pastors?" And, after a brief pause, she added: "God must be angry with us and with the world. Right? Because there is a lot of evil in the world. What do you think, pastor?" I replied: "I agree with you. But, we can also see it in another way. God loves the world so much, and so He allows this pandemic for us to repent and change".

Returning to our question: Is the coronavirus a judgment of God?
I want to explain it like this:

In the Bible we find two kinds of judgments:

- 1) Corrective trials or penalties (discipline)
- 2) Condemnatory trials (sentence or verdict)

In the Greek of the New Testament there are two different words:

- 1) Παιδεία (Paideia) = Corrective judgment or punishment
- 2) Κριμα (Krima) and Κρισις (Krisis) = Condemnatory judgment

Definitely, the coronavirus is not a condemnatory judgment for men, because, according to the Bible, that will happen to all of us after death.

Hebrews 9.27, declares: *"And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment. Here the word judgment is krisis.*

Romans 2.3: *"And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Here the word judgment is krisis.*

In both verses it refers to the CONDEMNING JUDGMENT.

But let's look at these other biblical texts in which God speaks of CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENT. Let's see some examples:

Isaiah 26.9b says: *"... for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness".*

Isaiah 26.16: *"Lord, in tribulation they looked for you; They poured out prayer when you punished them".*

Some, in the face of adversity, react well. They allow themselves to be corrected by the Lord's punishment. Blessed!

Others, unfortunately, do not respond well. They cannot be corrected. As the Bible mentions in the book of Amos, chapter 4, God says to the people of Israel:

V.6: *“But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places, yet you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord”.*

V.7-8: *“Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you ... yet you have not returned to Me,”*

V.9: *“I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; and the caterpillar was devouring your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; yet you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord”.*

All these punishments or judgments had a corrective purpose; for the people to repent of their sins and turn to God. But Israel did not repent, and was exposed to God's damning judgment. Therefore, he concludes by saying:

V.12: *“... because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”*

The New Testament teaches us the same about God's corrective punishment.

Hebrews 12.6: *“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines”* (paideia) ...

Revelation 3.19: *“As many as I love, I reprove and chasten (paideia): be zealous therefore, and repent”.*

So, in my understanding, the coronavirus is not God's judgment on the sins of humanity, but God's corrective punishment for all nations to repent of their wickedness and sins and turn to God.

The book of Revelation (chapter 8) reveals that in the end of times there will be many calamities and terrible cataclysms on earth. Who will send them? God or the devil? Does it matter? The important thing is that they will happen. We know that God is in control of everything. Whether corrective judgments come from God or calamities produced by Satan, they will always be under the permissive will of God. Why does He send them, or allows them? For all people, all families of all nations to repent and return to God!

But, sadly, Revelation 9.20-21 says: *“And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts”.*

God's intention is to correct us and not to destroy us. But he who does not repent when receives God's corrective judgment will one day have to face the condemnatory judgment, that is the final judgment (Revelation 20.11-15).

3. WHAT DO WE HAVE TO REPENT OF?

There have always been sins, but when humanity goes beyond the cup, God in his mercy, sometimes, dramatically intervenes. Intervene today out of love for this generation and future generations. To correct the wrong direction in which we are going.

When has there been more injustice in the nations than in our day? The gap between the rich and poor is widening in the vast majority of the world's nations. Instead of producing the welfare for all, the technological revolution of the 20th and 21st centuries has increased social injustice.

Let's think only about many countries. Can a God of love remain indifferent to the fact that there are millions of children and adults living in poverty and hunger.

How does God feel before the corruption of rulers, businessmen and unionists? How do you feel in the face of so much violence in homes, in bowling alleys, in stadiums, on the streets, in the face of so many homicides, femicides and crimes?

How does God feel when he sees that so many people intentionally ignore him, and blatantly defend gay marriage, abortion, divorce, free sex, living as a couple without getting married, and so many other abnormalities?

Can God remain indifferent to the vile drug trafficking business that is destroying millions of our own youth people and children, causing to the pain of so many mothers who, with tears and helplessness, have to bury their children?

We need to repent of all that and much more, and return to God. Each one of us needs to convert, and each one knows well what sins to repent of.

We have prioritized material things over the spiritual; the house over the family; pleasure over duty; comfort instead of inner peace; selfishness instead of love. We have become intoxicated through movies, television and social networks, instead of filling ourselves with the word of God.

We need to return to God. We need to be a holy nation that loves God, keeps his commandments, and loves our neighbor.

4. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS CRISIS?

There are multiple purposes: for nations, for governments, for society, for businessmen, etc. But now I want to limit myself to the disciples of Christ.

- Let's improve our prayer time being alone with God. On March 10 and 11, I was together with about 10 pastors gathered in a retreat. God gave us Isaiah chapter 26 as a word for these days. Specially verse 20 says: *"Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course"*.

This coincides with the words of Jesus: *"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret..."* (Matthew 6.6). Now we have no excuses. But the important thing is that by the end of the quarantine time we had learned to prioritize private prayer, as we did in our best times.

- Let's prioritize time at home. Let's improve dealing with each other. Let's be kind, helpful, companions, friends. Let's set aside a time to be with the children. Let's restore the family altar. Let's read the Word together and pray as a family. Let's not use the cell phone at the table, let's value talking with each other.

- Let's show more solidarity to everyone. Let's greet the neighbors with love. Let us love and serve our neighbor. Let's be creative in building bridges of friendship. Let's value each other's work. Let's praise the good things we see in others. Let's be grateful.

- Let us speak very naturally of Christ to everyone. We need to overcome shyness and individualism. Let's open our houses and invite the neighbors to pray and read the Bible (of course, when the quarantine is over. Meanwhile we can call them on the cell phone). Let us pray for the sick. We believe that God is close to each one, and that he works miracles.

- Let's rethink the church. Let's strengthen small groups. Let's devise new strategies for evangelization, prayer and communion. The church is very versatile; It can work in any time and circumstances. And grow.

- Let's be generous with those who go through financial needs. Difficult times may come. Let's avoid superfluous expenses. Let's save as much as possible to have something to share with those who need it.

- Let's pray that God will use the coronavirus to bring about a worldwide revival, beginning in our own home, neighborhood, city, and nation. We believe that wonderful days will come. Days of salvation and power. Christ will be glorified in our nation and in the world. And millions will be saved!