

Coronavirus: An Epidemic of Depression and Despair or A Harbinger of Good News?

The February 3, 2020 issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs* refers to an “Epidemic of Despair” which began in the 1990’s and has climaxed with the outbreak of the coronavirus.

I was struck by the fact that the word “epidemic” was not used in reference to the virus, but to the feelings of depression and hopelessness which the virus and the accompanying changes of lifestyle have engendered. As if the medical issues and the disruptions weren’t enough to make one despondent, many people feel that there is something sinister behind what is perceived as overreactions on the part of governments.

Understandably, many are openly wondering if, and when, our lives will ever be the same. And many, including the secular media are wondering if we are nearing the end of the world.

Jesus predicted that there would be a time when people would be in despair and full of fear:

Luke 21:26: “men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world”

Ironically Jesus tells us what our response should be as we see the seemingly unsolvable problems:

Luke 21:28 “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The expression “straighten up and lift up your heads” paints a picture of a person who had been looking down or around, seeing what was happening and reacting with fear. Jesus says, in effect, “stop looking down and start looking up”, the implication being that if one were to look up to heaven, he would see encouraging news.

So, what is the good news that one would expect to see by looking up?

The answer is: our coming “redemption”.

The word “redemption” literally means “the act of being purchased out of something”. In the spiritual realm, whenever anyone trusts in Jesus as savior, he is automatically purchased out of the world of Lucifer (a.k.a. Satan), out of the world that is headed for judgment, and, amazingly, he is taken out of the position of judgment altogether.

So it may seem odd that Jesus refers to a future redemption, since our redemption was accomplished at the cross.

But there is still a future redemption waiting for those of us who have personally trusted Jesus as savior. When Jesus appears in the clouds and calls our name, immediately our body of flesh will be glorified. All of our imperfections {physical, mental, and emotional} will fall away and we will be perfectly in accordance with the perfect realm of heaven which is our inheritance.

The very good news is that all of the disturbing things we are seeing - the coronavirus and all of the other pandemics that are permeating the world, the natural disasters such as earthquakes, the apparently unrealizable end of terrorism, the loss of the Gospel – every one of these issues is a sign that Jesus is coming soon!

In the Olivet Discourse - **Matthew 24** - Jesus describes a world that would seem alien in the first century, but which reads as the front page of a current newspaper:

- “You will be hearing of wars” {*actual open warfare*}

- ”and rumors of wars”
 {*cold wars, wars of propaganda, “fake news” media creating hostility*}

- ”For nation will rise against nation”,
 {*literally, people group against people group, as in terrorism, the war against Islamic terrorism*}

- “and kingdom against kingdom” {*country against country*}

- ”and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.”

{Earthquakes have always been part of the history of the world. However, they have historically been located in “normal” places, such as along fault lines, the principal one being the “ring of fire” which contours along the west coast of North America and the east coast of Asia.

Now we are seeing earthquakes in places such as West Texas which are far removed from any fault lines. In fact, the cities of Odessa and Midland, the sites for recent quakes, sit on a gigantic rock over one half of a mile high! }

In **Luke 21**, Jesus gives additional signs that would indicate that the end of this fallen realm is near:

- “and in various places famines and pestilences”

{The word translated “pestilences” is the Greek word “loimos” which means an infectious disease.}

The apostle Paul points out another sign that our redemption is near:

1 Timothy 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith.

Obviously, an individual believer cannot lose his salvation. However, a church or a Christian institution can fall away from the faith by abandoning the Gospel. Beginning in the middle of the 20th century many of the formerly great Protestant churches began to lose the Gospel. Now most Protestant denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic church are apostate (*i.e.*, there is no Gospel).

We find passages from the Old Testament which also convince us that our meeting with Jesus is near. The prophet Joel describes a horrifying plague of locusts:

Joel 1:4 “What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.”

This is an accurate picture of what is happening now in Africa and the Middle East.

The online edition (February 2020) of the magazine *Wired* describes the locust problem in this way:

“Africa right now is a plague of biblical proportions: Hundreds of billions of locusts in swarms the size of major cities”

I would imagine that the author did not recognize the profound nature of the adjective “biblical” – note the lower case “b”!

The coronavirus is one of many current events which seem to be converging in rapid fire to fill out the events the Bible identifies as characterizing the days just prior to the rapture, including:

- The chaos within the European Union, including Brexit and other proposed departures (precisely the state of Europe when Antichrist comes to the rescue)
- The current American-lead Middle East peace proposal
- Signs in the skies: more and more unexplained phenomena

We are undoubtedly seeing the setting of the stage of the last days.

So, while we do look around in the sense of keeping informed and being cautious, we follow Jesus’ counsel to “straighten up”, we keep our chin up, we see these seemingly disturbing events as good news because we are about to lift off from this fallen, Luciferian world system forever. We are about to see Jesus personally; the time is drawing close when He will put His hand on our shoulder and welcome us to a seven-year feast.

Just think, the day is near when we will be re-united with our loved ones – and there will never again be a separation!

But I have to add a word of warning. The current events are signs of good news for believers, but the same events are a harbinger of terrible news for the unbeliever.

So it is imperative for anyone to know if he or she is a “believer”.

Although this term is used by most religious entities in a vague sense, the Biblical definition of a believer is clear. A “believer” is someone who, at one point in his life, has recognized that he is a sinner, that he cannot earn entrance into heaven

by his good works, and he has made the one-time decision to trust in Jesus as his savior.

He recognizes that Jesus, God in human flesh, took the believer's sins upon Himself as if He {Jesus} Himself had committed those sins. Therefore when Jesus died on the cross, He paid the full penalty for all of the believer's sins.

If you have not made that decision, you can settle that issue right now by deciding, by an act of your will to trust in Jesus now. If you have done so, your eternal life in heaven has been assured, and you can look at the current troubling events without fear.

These are exciting times for believers in Jesus!

We pray that God will protect us,
our families and friends,
and that God would grant President Trump and his team --
extraordinary wisdom & protection from all of his and our enemies.

May God bless and protect every one of you until we meet again,
or much preferably,
until Jesus comes for us in the air

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P.S. For a more in-depth explanation of "the Gospel" and how a person trusts in Jesus as his savior, scroll down the front page of RadicalGrace.com to the document entitled "What the Gospel is – and is not".

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