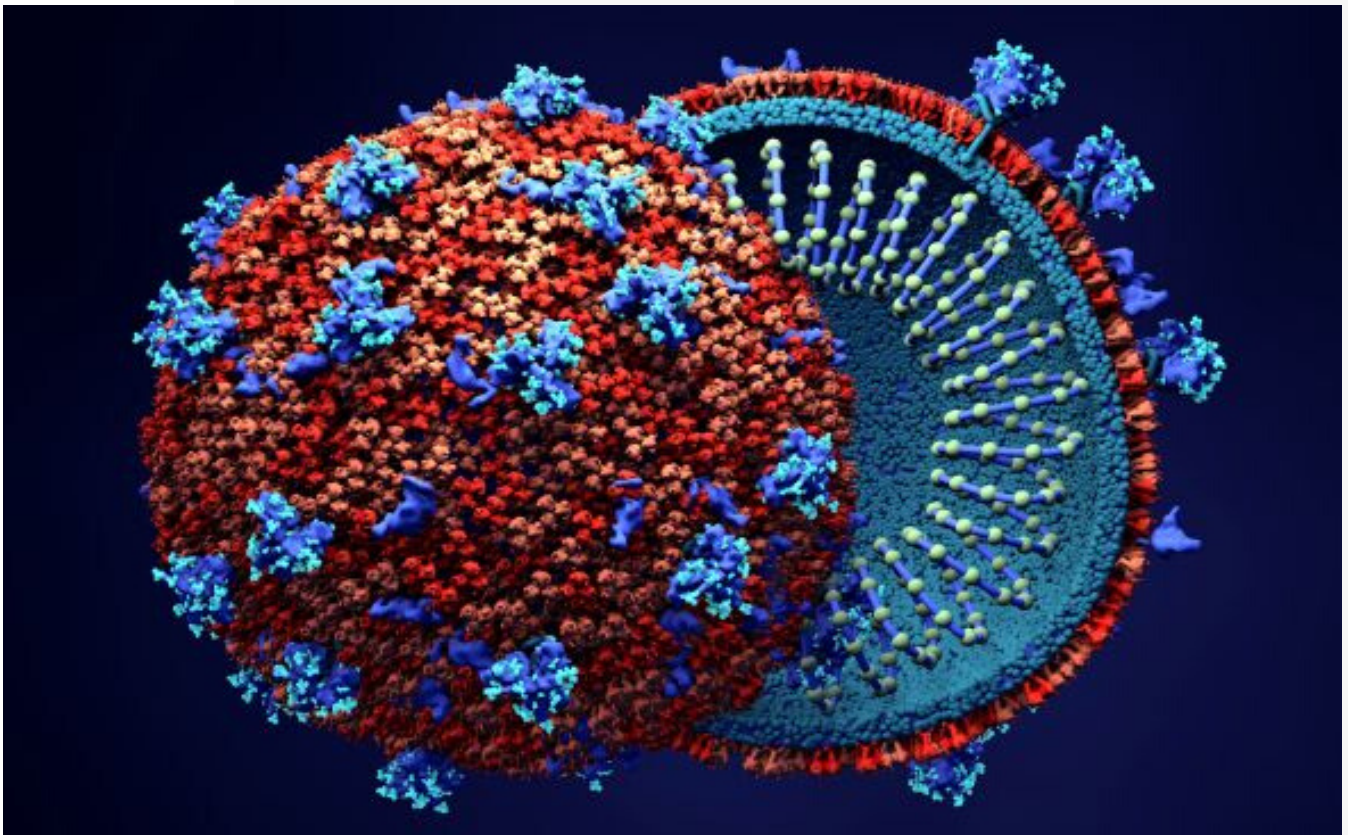


A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

EXODUS 8:19

THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

What would Jesus say to us were he living in this world during the Coronavirus pandemic?

That's the question I've been wrestling with the past few days. It sent me to my Bible because that's the way Jesus speaks to us today. I turned to Exodus chapters 7-11 where we read of another time God used plagues to create a national state of emergency. I encourage you to read these chapters and ask God to help you hear his ever-relevant, ever-powerful Word. We will focus our attention on God's message in chapter 8.

Errors

We can make two major mistakes when God sends judgments on the earth. We can **under-estimate** God's judgments or we can **over-estimate** God's judgments.

We can **under-estimate** God's judgments in two ways:

- **We minimize them:** We can do this by ignoring God's judgments, by playing them down, by attributing them to chance, by false assurances that all will be well.

- **We equalize them.** We wrongly think that human power is equal to the challenge of God's judgments. Or we can equate God's power with the devil's power, seeing any battle as one between two equals with an uncertain outcome.

We can **over-estimate** God's judgments in two ways:

- **We catastrophize.** We panic that it's all out of control and there's no way of escape. God's just lashing out at everyone.
- **We idealize.** We are sure people will be scared of God's judgments and turn to him in repentance.

Solution?

We don't want to fall into these errors and lose the spiritual profit that is available. Is there a way to approach these judgments of God that will yield the maximum worship for God and spiritual profit for us? In Exodus 8, Moses helps us to have a balanced view of God's judgments that neither under-estimates nor over-estimates them.

CONTEXT

Exodus chapter 8 narrates the second, third, and fourth plagues that God sent upon Egypt as a judgment upon Pharaoh for refusing to obey his command to release Israel. Up until verse 18, the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate the signs and wonders of God. But in verse 18, they are powerless to duplicate the plague of lice, and admit to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (19). But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.



How do we offer maximum worship and gain maximum profit in times of judgment?



1. GOD'S JUDGMENTS GLORIFY HIM (1-15)

They glorify his truth (1-6)

God promised plagues and plagues came (Ex. 7-11). He specified what, where, when, how and why; and it happened exactly as he promised. Ten plagues, one after another, flawlessly executed exactly as he said. God's Word is powerful, reliable, and unstoppable.

They glorify his power (7-15)

We see God's power in his sending of the plagues and in his removal of the plagues. Yes, to some extent, the Egyptians could duplicate some of the early plagues and miracles, but their power ran out and even where they could duplicate a plague, they couldn't remove it. Only God could do that, in response to prayer (10).

APPLICATION

♥ **God has promised judgment upon sin and he will keep his Word.** Pharaoh said "Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go?" (5:2). God is showing who he is. He is the God who does what he says and therefore we should do what he says.

♥ **We deserve far worse.** So far, about 60 people have died in the USA. Every day over 2000 babies are killed by abortion in the USA. That's about 750,000 a year.

♥ **God can arm and deploy his whole creation against his rebellious creatures.** If we fight against God, God will fight against us. God can use the mighty Nile or tiny mosquitoes, and everything in between, including invisible viruses, to damage our health, our economy, and our psychology.

♥ **This is a shadow-judgment.** However much damage this pandemic may do to our health, our economy, and our psychology, it is but a tiny sample of the main judgment, the final judgment of God that is definitely on its way. The shadow warns us that the ultimate judgment, the final judgment, is just around the corner and getting closer

♥ **Prayer removes judgments.** Who is the Lord? He is a God who judges sin, but is also ready to forgive. President Trump called for a national day of prayer today. Let's heed his call, but especially God's, to prayerfully seek his mercy (2 Chron.. 7:14). Let's humble ourselves in these days when God is lifting up himself. Let's examine ourselves, confess our sin, and seek God's face in prayer.

GOD'S FINGER LIFTS HIM HIGH,
BUT BRINGS US LOW



I love that God's judgments lift him high and bring us low.
But will we see evil brought low?



2. GOD'S JUDGMENTS DEFEAT EVIL (16-19)

Evil is powerful

The magicians had the ability to duplicate the plagues up until this point. That may have been by trickery or by accessing evil power. Pharaoh had so much power that the Egyptians believed Pharaoh was in control of the climate and the whole cosmos.

God's finger is more powerful

The magicians could only make things worse by adding to the existing plagues. They could not defeat God. The magicians could not remove any plague. They eventually recognized their impotence and God's omnipotence (19). God won; they lost. Evil was powerful; God was more powerful.

APPLICATION

♥ **God will defeat evil.** May God use these present judgments to dethrone evil by convicting our consciences of sin, reminding us of our mortality, and pointing to the final judgment when God will wipe all sin and evil off the face of the earth with a flick of his finger.

♥ **God is in ultimate control.** He rules over all humans and all evil. God has the devil on a chain and sets limits upon him. Same goes for evil in general. Evil can only go so far by God's permission. The coronavirus is under his control, and so is the stock-market.

YOUR FIST IS NO MATCH
FOR GOD'S FINGER



How can I be sure God's judgments will not spill over and impact me too?



3. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE TARGETED (20-24)

God targets the Egyptians

Although it may have looked as if God was just unloading on everyone, he was specifically targeting the Egyptians.

God protects Israel

God put a difference between Egypt and Israel (22-23), ensuring Israel was not affected. The difference was probably there before, but this time it was more visible and observable. God knows his people, distinguishes them, separates them, and can protect them (2 Tim. 2:19).

APPLICATION

♥ **Remind yourself of God's special care for his people.** Read Ezekiel 9 and Psalm 91 to encourage and comfort you. In 1990, my pastor's son, a British soldier and a Christian, was sent to help drive Kuwait out of Iraq. One night, his anxious Father woke up with the

words of Psalm 91 deeply impressed on his mind and heart. He knew his son would be safe, even though he was in the first convoy to break through the Iraqi defenses and fight the Iraqi army. He knew God would take special care of him.

GOD'S FINGER PANICS THE WORLD
BUT COMFORTS HIS CHURCH



Should I pray for God's judgments then, so that the wicked turn to Christ?





4. GOD'S JUDGMENTS DO NOT SAVE (25-32)

Sometimes we can have great hopes about God's judgments, that they will be more effective than the preaching of the Gospel. The evidence is not encouraging. Look at how Pharaoh reacted. He didn't get softer, he got harder and harder after each plague. He did anything and everything but repent.

- **He delayed:** It was only after the third plague that a slight chink appears in Pharaoh's armor, a slight crack in his hard heart when he appears ready to compromise. It didn't last.
- **He negotiated:** You can go and sacrifice, but do it in Egypt (25). You can sacrifice in the wilderness but only nearby (28).
- **He lied:** He said he would let them go, but when the plague was stopped, he stopped them (32). That's solemn isn't it? We often overestimate the power of God's judgments to save.

APPLICATION

 **Don't harden your heart.** Revelation 16:9-11 is another passage that warns, "Those not made better by God's Word and providences are usually made worse by them" (Matthew Henry)

 **Bring the Gospel.** God's judgments may open the door to the Gospel. They give us opportunity to point to Christ's cross, where God judged Christ in place of sinners. He suffered God's plagues so we can have peace.

GOD'S FINGER DOES NOT SAVE,
BUT CHRIST'S BODY DOES.

MESSAGE FOR TEENS

Pray. Wisdom for the President and his team. Protection for healthcare workers, seniors and other at-risk groups. Help for those who may suffer financially. Acceptance of this time as part of God's perfect plan even though we may have to give up sports, vacations, trips, social occasions, and other events we were looking forward to.

Patience. It's going to be tough for our families. We're going to be home together a lot! We need help to love one another and cooperate together.

Profit. Our families may lose out financially, at least for a time. But this can be a relationally and spiritually profitable time. Think of ways to use more time at home to build relationships and your spiritual life.

Protect. Follow the advice of local and federal government and healthcare experts as part of our duty to the lawful authorities God has ordained (Romans 13:1-7).

Prepare. The Apostle John described Christ's final judgment using the imagery of the plagues: water to blood (Rev. 8:8; 16:4-6); frogs (16:13); disease and afflictions (16:2); hail and fire (8:7); locusts (9:1ff); and darkness (16:10). Use this time therefore to think and prepare for the final judgment by finding safety in Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

Peace. If you are a Christian then show your panicking friends that you have a peace the world cannot give or take away (John 14:27). Our security is not in our health or our wealth but in God and in his salvation.

Praise: Praise God that he has not dealt with us as we deserve. Praise God for his awesome judgments. Praise God that we have still time to repent and believe the Gospel. Praise God for the healing power of Christ's cross.

GOD'S FINGER POINTS US
TO CHRIST'S CROSS.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Thinking Christianly about the Coronavirus](#) by Tom Ascol.
- [Christians, this is our Moment](#) by Ed Stetzer.
- [How Should Christians Respond to the Coronavirus](#) by David Beauchamp.
- [How to talk to children about the coronavirus](#) by Cameron Cole.
- [Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague](#) by Martin Luther.
- [Reflections on the 1918 Spanish Flu](#) by Francis Grimke.
- [A Guide for Christian Leaders in the time of Coronavirus](#) by Andy Crouch.
- [Advice for Churches from the Surgeon General](#)

Discussion Questions

- Which of the four errors about God's judgments are you most likely to fall into? How can you put that right?
- How can we love our neighbor at this time?
- Write out a suitable prayer for this time. Include Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (ACTS).
- What are some positives that have come out of this already?
- What will you do to make this time spiritually profitable for you and your family?
- How would you speak the Gospel to a non-Christian who gets the coronavirus?
- If God can separate between his people and the heathen, what would you say to a Christian who gets the coronavirus?

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RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS

EXODUS 8

THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD

GOD'S FINGER POINTS US TO CHRIST'S CROSS.



We over- or under-estimate God's judgments.

- We minimize.
- We equalize
- We catastrophize
- We idealize

Biblical answer?



Be in awe of God's judgments, especially God's final judgment, and seek security in Christ today.



God's judgments glorify him

- Glorify his truth
- Glorify his power

GOD'S FINGER LIFTS HIM HIGH, BUT BRINGS US LOW

Evil brought low?



God's judgments defeat evil

- Evil is powerful
- God's finger is more powerful

YOUR FIST IS NO MATCH FOR GOD'S FINGER

Will judgment hurt me?



God's judgments are targeted

- God targets the Egyptians
- God protects Israel

GOD'S FINGER PANICS THE WORLD, BUT COMFORTS HIS CHURCH

Do I pray for judgments?



God's judgments do not save

- Pharaoh delayed
- Pharaoh negotiated
- Pharaoh lied

GOD'S FINGER DOES NOT SAVE, BUT CHRIST'S BODY DOES

Action?

