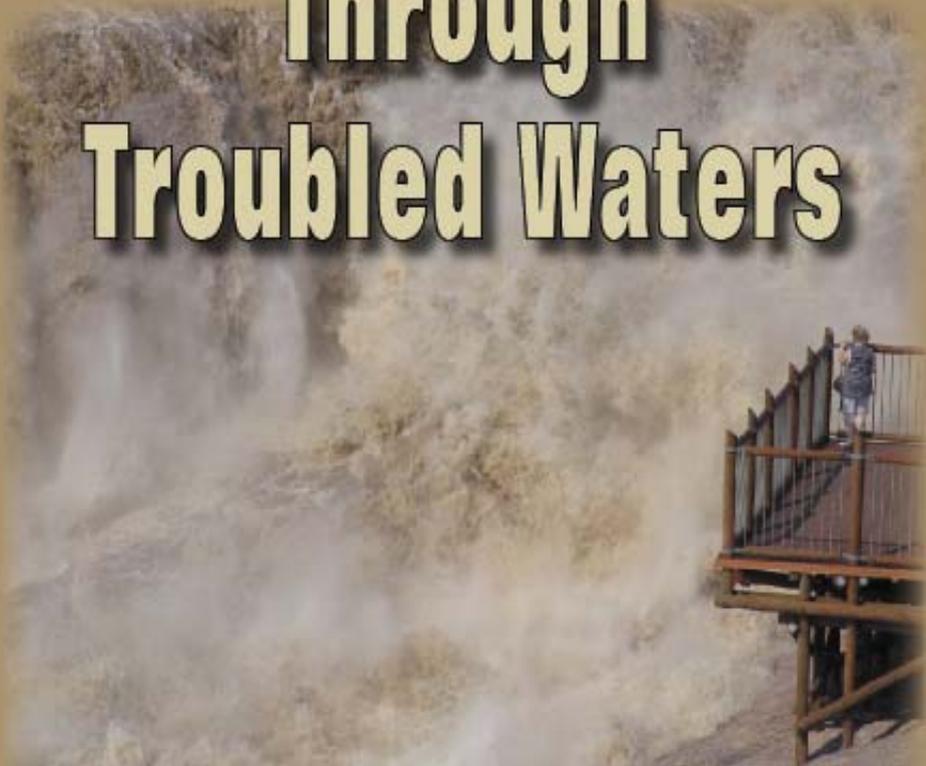


# Following Jesus Through Troubled Waters



Capitalizing On Faith  
Through A Pandemic War

**DICKSON**

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Roger E. Dickson

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Cover: Martha Dickson standing at the edge of the Augrabies Falls, South Africa

## INTRODUCTION

### *“We Smell Rain”*

(A Short Story)

*“Father! Father! There are two baby tigers outside the house in the garden,”* cried out one of the three sons in horror as he frantically came rushing through the front door of their newly completed house.

*“Calm down, son. I am sure there is a logical answer for this,”* replied the father of the excited young man.

*“No, Father. That’s not all. Behind the two tigers are two baby lions,”* as the voice of the son intensified. *“I’m scared.”*

By this time the entire family had rushed from the table of their morning breakfast to gaze in wonder out of the only window and door of the house. And sure enough, their jaws dropped open as they all stared in awe at what they beheld. They couldn’t have in their wildest imaginations have conceived such a sight.

The father and husband immediately tried to calm everyone’s nerves. *“Be calm, everyone. We must trust in the Lord concerning signs as this. I am sure there is a reasonable explanation.”* The father and husband was only calming his own excitement concerning the unbelievable sight that was transpiring right outside their cozy new house. The Lord had given him the blueprint on how to build the house, but he had given him no instructions on how he would gather the animals.

Now every member of the entire household was out of their seats in the living room and had their faces pasted against the window. They were peeking through a crack in the door which they had now secured tightly with their hands. Dishes had crashed to the floor as the mother frantically rushed toward the window at the urging of the three daughters-in-law. She had to see for herself.

As far as they all knew, there had been no tigers or lions in the region when they first settled in the location in order to build the house. They had been camped in this clearing of the forest for at least seventy-five years, and yet, had not seen such a diverse assortment of animals.

But the new house that they had just completed only a day before now had these two little wild beasts, plus thousands of other animals, scampering around in their garden, which beasts had somehow migrated across the country and were now camped close to their house. It was as if they were all waiting for a command to enter the new house.

*“Look,”* cried out the mother in an almost hysterical tone, *“There are two little lambs just behind the tigers and lions!!!! They will surely be killed and eaten by those wild cats, right here in front of us.”*

And then someone noticed. *“No, Mother. Look, the lambs are snuggling up against the tigers and lions. The cats are motherly licking the lambs!”*

And then everyone was shocked as they looked up beyond the cats and lambs and realized that beyond their garden there were animals everywhere. Even into the forest that they had not cleared over the last several decades, there were animals. And one curious thing about all the animals was that they were all baby animals. There were no full grown animals among the entire mass of creatures who were lined up two-by-two for the command to come into the house. The daughters-in-law simply wanted to cuddle every cute little animal, and the mother was still struggling to calm herself down.

All of the animals seemed to sense an impending international tragedy as they pressed close to the door behind one another. For some reason, they all wanted into the newly constructed “house.”

But then mother complained, *“We have spent decades building this house out here in the solitude of the forest, and now all these animals have showed up. We won’t be able to eat our porridge on the backyard porch without all these animals gathering around the table and begging for a morsel of food.”*

*“Calm down everyone. PLEASE!”*, the father reassured everyone. *“This is not a problem because the Lord has revealed to me that it is time for **lockdown!** All these animals surely received an inner sense from the Lord that now was the time. They, too, want to be locked down with us. The house was too small for all the fathers and mothers of these animals to be saved, so they sent their babies our way.”*

*“WHAT!”* the wife complained out of frustration. *“I thought we*

*spent all these years so that we could enjoy this mansion by ourselves, with our sons and their wives, and especially the grandchildren. Will we have to share this house with a horde of stinky animals? This is just not fair!”*

Trying to calm his frantic wife, the husband quietly explained, “So now you understand why we have been packing away all the grain and hay in the bottom floors and the closets. My dear, it will all be just fine. I do not understand everything that is coming, but I trust that the Lord has everything under control. And besides, I’m tired of preaching year after year for the past seventy-five years and not one person has responded to what I have had to say.”

Then one of the sister-in-laws revealed, “Your explanation about the babies explains what happened in my bedroom just yesterday. A bird flew into my bedroom and laid two eggs on my pillow. And then, she just flew out the window.”

“Your pillow also?” the other sister-in-law immediately responded. “There have been birds flying into my bedroom for the past week. They just fly in and lay two eggs, and then, they just fly right back out the window. I even had a vulture fly in, and before I could shoo her away, she laid two eggs and flew away, right out the window.”

The father then instructed his daughters-in-law, “Just gather up all the eggs and put them in a warm place in the upper attic of the house. We will sort them all out later when they hatch.”

The father then instructed everyone, “Just leave the house door and window open. God has revealed to all these animals that they, too, must enjoy the lockdown with us that is coming. We do not know how long the lockdown will last, but we must trust in our God who has all these matters under His control.”

“And they [the animals] went to Noah into the ark two by two of all flesh in which is the breath of life. And those that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him. **Then the Lord shut him in**” (Gn 7:15,16).

“Then every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the earth, both man and animals, and the creeping things, and the birds of the heaven. And they were destroyed from the earth. But Noah only

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*remained alive, and those who were with him in the ark. So the waters [of the lockdown] prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days” (Gn 7:23,24).*

## Chapter 1

### JOY AMIDST TRAGEDY

We cannot help ourselves. We are incurably optimistic, and certainly believe that “*all things work together for good to those who love God*” (Rm 8:28). We trust in the revelation of God that there is an impending tragedy that is coming upon this world in the future. We do not know when this tragedy will occur, but we know that King Jesus is coming with destruction. All global tragedies that have occurred from the beginning of time, including the destruction of the world during the life of Noah, are only in-time illustrations of what will happen at the sound of the last trumpet to announce the final appearing of the Son of God.

When national Israel was at the brink of total devastation, with the loss of over one million lives in a matter of weeks in the destruction of Jerusalem, James wrote the following to Jewish Christians two or three years before the national disaster of A.D. 70: “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials*” (Js 1:2). The destruction of national Israel in time would be another illustration of what would transpire at the end of time when the Son of God would be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. He would likewise be coming to destroy (2 Th 1:6-9). Nevertheless, in all the tragedies that God would bring on the earth in order to illustrate the final destruction when King Jesus comes, all God’s people must continue to rejoice, for in the judgments in time we are assured of the judgment at the end of time.

If we did not credit the statement of James 1:2 to the Holy Spirit, then the Jews at the time of the national tragedy of Israel in A.D. 70 would have had a right to mock James and his words as preposterous as they stood on the walls of Jerusalem and witnessed the Roman army surrounding Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But when the stench of dead bodies finally filled the air as they cast their loved ones over the wall into the camp of the Roman army, the words of the prophet James would ring with insanity. But for those whose citizenship was far beyond worldly

ways, stock market crashes and viruses, and reverence for religious centers, his words reverberate every day to the inner most sanctuary of the Jewish Christian's souls. We can join with the faithful Jews. We too can count it with all joy because we understand that King Jesus is still in control of all things regardless of any tragedy that may befall this world. We will not forget the promise of Revelation 17:14:

*These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful.*

So we are very optimistic in reference to the present attack of the "invisible enemy" (Covid-19) throughout the world. We live in a world that is at war with an enemy we cannot see. We are fighting against an enemy that is so small that it can be detected only through symptoms, and sometimes, there are no symptoms. So how can we make such an audacious statement that this enemy will eventually lead to the saving of tens of thousands of lives in this world? Just do the math.

First consider the annual deaths that are caused by the Spanish influenza flu virus. In 2019 there were over 16,500,000 people in America who were stricken with influenza. Of that number, over 34,000 people died. The year before the numbers were even worse. Over 61,000 people died in America of the common flu. This number of deaths was still in view of the urge from the medical community to get a "flu shot." And many did. Unfortunately, most of the millions who were infected had not received the flu vaccination, and consequently, many of these who contracted influenza died. Now think for a moment. Over 34,000 people died in America of influenza in 2019 **without all the preventative measures that have now been imposed on society.**

At the end of 2020, we must watch the figures and do the math. There is presently an obsession about reporting every day the number of people throughout the world who are infected with the Covid-19 virus. The number of deaths in America are also reported. And noticeably, the number of deaths continues to rise. In the middle of March

2020, about 100 people had died of Covid since the beginning of the year. That number by the end of September had reached over 200,000.

But compare that number with the number of deaths we have recorded in reference to influenza in 2019. On the average, 2,833 people died **every month** in 2019 of influenza. But from the beginning of the year to the middle of March, people were almost hysterical about the 100 precious people who had died of the Covid virus. If we were comparing this number with influenza deaths since January, instead of the 100, this number would be about 3,675 by using 2019 figures. Every death is a tragedy. We are not comparing death spread sheets, but in some way we must compare the numbers in order to see in all the tragedy something marvelous that is happening.

Because 2020 is/was an election year, the news media continually bombarded the populous with hysteria concerning the Covid pandemic. Fear mongering subsequently invaded every living room around the world, especially in America. Because 2020 was an election year, parties were overzealous to accuse opposing parties of having no strategy to deliver humanity from this vicious Covid monster that we cannot see.

But sometimes, when the news media is overzealous in their fear messaging to the populous, they ignore some statistics that are cause for rejoicing. For example, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in America released in September 2020 the recovery rates for those who survived the Covid virus. Of those who were 20 years of age and under, 99.997% of the infected Covid patients survived. Those who were between the ages of 50 and 69, 99.5% survived. And those who were 70 years of age and older, 94.6% survived. Add to this the fact that the CDC reported at the time of the release of these statistics in mid-September, that 35% to 50% of all Covid deaths occurred with those who were in nursing homes.

All these figures seem to be a reason for not submitting to the fear messaging of the news media. These low death rate figures existed even in the absence of a vaccine for the Covid virus. It seems that many politicians, and misguided news media commentators who have lost their way in the objective reporting of news, have put politics be-

fore the actual scientific facts of the pandemic.

Now when we come to the end of 2020, there is a figure for which all of us must search, if indeed the news media will report it. Maybe no one will make the comparison, and no one will do the math. Being honest and straightforward about these matters does not sell newspapers, or inspire viewers to watch their favorite TV news. Neither does it encourage voters to vote for all those doom and gloom politicians.

Nevertheless, at the time of writing, we are anxiously awaiting to see the figures in order to compare the combined deaths from both influenza and Covid-19 for the year 2020 with the deaths of influenza alone in 2019. If we seek a prophecy for ourselves on this matter, then we can at least be assured that the combined number of deaths from influenza and Covid by the end of the year 2020 will be high, but deaths from influenza will be significantly lower because of all the precautions that we now take in order to guard ourselves from the Covid-19 virus. Just watch and see, for at the time of writing, we do not have these figures. But by comparison, the CDC has reported that if one contacts bacterial pneumonia, there is a 14% chance he or she will die. If one contacts the Ebola virus, there is a 50% chance that one would die. These percentages are astronomical in comparison to the Covid death rate.

There are reasons to be optimistic in reference to the Covid pandemic. Consider all the health precautions that are now sweeping across America, and the world, in order to deter the spread of the Covid-19 virus? It is almost incredible as people in fear are obsessing on how to do now what they never considered doing during, or before 2019.

The 34,000 who died from influenza in 2019 never made any headlines. And we would think that in 2018 the 61,000 people who died from influenza would have made the news and inspired some of the cleanliness motivation that we are witnessing today. Somehow, the deaths from the Covid virus are posted on the daily news like a sports score board. Toilet paper stocks have gone off the charts. Life-styles have changed and we will never be the same. Even this is good news. But because 2020 is/was a political year in America, we were bombarded with negative news.

All the health precautions that are now being implemented by society in reference to the Covid-19 pandemic will also greatly curb the spread of the common flu, and in the case of countries as South Africa, the spread of tuberculosis (TB). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), South Africa is the most TB infected nation of the world. In fact, the WHO estimates that of the fifty-five million population of South Africa, about 500,000 are TB positive today. In 2018 there were about 63,000 recorded deaths from TB. There was a recovery rate from those infected of about 70%. By way of comparison, in September 2020, there were 16,376 Covid deaths in South Africa. The recovery rate was about 90% of those who were infected. All the health measures that have been implemented in South Africa in response to the Covid pandemic will greatly reduce the TB infections and deaths. The Covid preventative measures will have positive results around the world in reference to deaths that are caused by all other airborne viruses. In other words, when we count up all the deaths related to all airborne viruses in 2020, there will be far less than 2019. At least this is our assumption, and thus, some good news on which we should be focusing.

This will not only benefit South Africa, but countries around the world. For example, Martha and I had to go into the big city and do what small-town people must do on a trip to the city. We first went to the medical clinic for a doctor's appointment. At the clinic we were met at the door by two people at a table with hand sanitizers and a tablet on which we had to write our names and contact details. Our hands were sprayed for us in order that we vigorously scrub them. We then went to the food store. Sure enough, there was stationed at every entrance someone with a bottle of hand sanitizer, spraying our hands before entry into the store. Mask were also required. And then we went on to the government offices, and there they were again. A young man was stationed at the entrance with the usual hand sanitizer with which he anointed our hands abundantly before we entered.

Since South Africa has not been known for such cleanliness, we wonder how many thousands of lives will be spared this year from contracting tuberculosis? Bus stations and taxis are cleaning them-

selves up in fear of the Covid virus. Such diligence will lead to the saving of thousands of people who should have been cleaning themselves up long before this plague arrived from China.

Therefore, at the end of 2020 we must keep an eye out for the combined deaths from Covid-19, influenza, and in South Africa, tuberculosis. We think that by the end of 2020, the combined number of deaths from Covid, influenza or tuberculosis will be significantly lower than the deaths from TB alone for 2019.

## Chapter 2

### THE NEW SERENDIPITOUS NORMAL

Dictionaries define the word “serendipity” to mean an unexpected surprise. Out of abnormal social crisis arise those surprising blessings that are eventually advantageous to society. As a society cringes through those times of tremendous struggle that are inflicted upon it, serendipitous blessings arise that we did not normally expect when times were “normal.” In other words, the “new normal” is new because many serendipitous blessings are no longer serendipitous. What was formerly serendipitous has become a social trait of the new normal.

So here we are in an era of world history that what is happening now has never happened before in the population of the world as a whole. Certainly during the 1917/18 influenza pandemic (Spanish flu), it was estimated that over one hundred million people in America and Europe died of the affliction. Many died in colonial possessions at the time. However, we must not forget that at that time in history there were portions of the world, especially Africa, that were not afflicted. There was no international news in those days, and thus, the world outside those areas where the pandemic occurred was not brought into fear concerning the pandemic. People simply died and the population of the world eventually emerged out of the pandemic.

It is different with the Covid pandemic. Because of our global movement of civilizations through air travel, cars, buses, trains, etc.,

no part of the world is exempt. This is a “world war III” affliction that has invaded almost every country of the world. Therefore, we must not underestimate the social impact that this unseen viral enemy of civilization will eventually have on the global community.

Nevertheless, there are some unexpected surprises that are already being discovered as a result of the plague. These are serendipitous social blessings that will be of great benefit to humanity when we all eventually emerge on the other side of the pandemic, though the virus seems to be with us for many years to come, just as the Spanish flu virus is still with us today after more than a century. Therefore, it would be good in the midst of all the fear and anxiety that we are presently experiencing to take a moment and focus on a few of the serendipitous surprises of the present pandemic in order that we keep ourselves positive.

Christians must remember that God the Holy Spirit did not lie to us when He promised, “*We know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God*” (Rm 8:28). When we understand just a few of the good serendipitous blessings this pandemic will socially produce, then maybe we can better understand why our Creator has allowed this present population of the world to be disciplined into repenting of past ungodly behavior in order to be a more spiritually healthy people for the future.

- **Coming together:** It is almost ironic that the further we force ourselves away from one another in social distancing and lockdowns, the more we crave being together. This is simply true because it is totally unnatural for human beings to live like hermits. The social distancing that has descended on humanity in these days may be a social paradise for all the hermits around the world. But be assured, the majority of us are feeling great emotional pain about the matter. We now crave a hug more than ever.

For a specific example, we have two good friends who are grandmother and grandfather to some very lovable grandchildren. The problem is that the grandchildren live just across the street from the grandparents in an area where social distancing and lockdown are/were in

force. The grandparents could look out their living room window and wave to their grandchildren across the street, but they could run over to their house and hug them, at least until the lockdown period was completed. We wonder how tight those grandparents hugged those grandchildren when the lockdown was over? This is where we are at this time in society. We want a hug, and we want to hug our spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ and our physical brothers outside Christ.

Nevertheless, being barred from one another has produced an unexpected serendipity. This serendipity was recently expressed by Dana Perino, one of the Fox News cohosts. She said on the program, *The Five*, “I like being together. **It feels good!**” It could not have been said in better words. We do not feel good when we are forced to distance ourselves from one another. In such situations, we always look forward to the time when the hidden enemy that separates us is defeated by our medical research teams around the world who will eventually come up with an effective vaccine that will lessen the pandemic. We will feel better after the pandemic, than before it began.

When Paul completed a doxology in reference to the final resurrection of all Christians, he concluded, “*Comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18). To the same group of Christians in Thessalonica who were in the midst of “social distancing” by an idolatrous society, he continued, “*Comfort one another and edify one another, just as you also are doing*” (1 Th 5:11). When we are restrained from doing this important social interaction, we hurt. We do not feel good. Therefore, we must continually remind ourselves, “It will eventually be OK.” We will once again “feel good” in one another’s presence and arms.

In the context of Paul’s preceding words, we must remember that the “one another” in the context can now be just for those of our immediate family who are locked up in the prisons of our own houses. Therefore, during these times of social distancing, we must turn off the negative news people who seek to market fear. We must find the games that stimulate interaction, and comfort one another. And most important of all, it is time to repent and restore family Bible study time. We need to dust off our Bibles and enroll the entire family in acting out Bible stories before the family.

This is a time for family interaction and connection. Having lived in a Western world where family members were disconnected from one another by so many activities outside the family, this is an opportunity to reconnect. In a Christian family that has long forgotten daily Bible reading, these are times for a restoration to the word of God as the center of reference for the family. On the other side of the pandemic, it is our prayer that we do not forget these serendipitous behavioral practices.

- **National unity:** It is almost surreal that those nations who have worked so hard to socially divide over every conceivable issue are now struggling to come together. Since the Covid virus is not racist, we seem to become less racist. Since the virus considers no social status, we feel a great sense of social equity. Since the virus has no gender, we have minimized gender inequity. And since it attacks both the rich and poor, it has stripped us of much of our riches. The virus does not economic classes. And thus, in our solidary as rich and poor we are coming together in an economic meltdown. When millions lose their jobs, there seems to be no inequity among the jobless ... only solidarity.

Only those morally dysfunctional democratic societies that have been politically divided, continue with some foolish remnants of their deviated politics. For example, in some countries the news media have lost their way in reference to that which is truly news. So the Covid pandemic became the opportunity for this pack of hungry wolves to reveal their moral bankruptcy. They have thus digressed to the lowest level of news propaganda by devouring their government officials by feeding the public with fake news that causes social chaos. Instead of working with their existing governments in order to calm the fears of the people, they whip up hysteria by sensational accusations against those in government who are working diligently to solve the problems that society must go through when enduring a pandemic.

But we would expect no less from those whom the Holy Spirit called brute beasts during the chaotic years that led up to the consummation of national Israel. When Jewish Christians throughout the Roman world were suffering under the strong arm of the Roman Empire

in its efforts to squash Jewish nationalism, some Jewish Christians became brute beasts. We are reminded of the present liberal news media who are speaking as the brute beasts about whom the Holy Spirit spoke: ***“But these speak evil of those things that they do not know. But what they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves”*** (Jd 10). These are those dreamers who ***“defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignitaries”*** (Jd 8). Sound familiar?

But this arrogant news media that dips itself into the insanity of social division by which they functioned before these times, should now be ignored as citizens seek to come together in solidarity in order to win the Covid war. This is a historical moment for patriotism, not pandemic politics. And those social means of media that do not seek to bring us together in solidarity, must be weeded out of society. This is not the time for political propaganda.

The social force of unity that has come upon stricken societies around the world today is overwhelming. It is overwhelming to the point that even the most divisive elements of society have reasoned with some sanity that we must stand together in order to win this war.

When disease ravages society, politics seem to be so trivial. In fact, those politicians among us who still bathe themselves in such opportunistic arrogance become most repugnant. When one is struggling for his last breath of life on a hospital bed, considering the one for whom he might vote in the next election seems somewhat delirious.

- **Restoring empathy:** Social empathy is the opposite of social narcissism. When a generation of privileged narcissists arise in our society, there is a waning of empathy for the poor. Economic inequity always gives birth to social exploitation and a lack of concern for the working class. We must not forget that one of the primary reasons why God took Israel down was that the rich marginalized the poor (See Am 3:1-15).

When the rich exploit the poor, then a society becomes dysfunctional. The rich become insensitive, and the poor feel trapped in an economic situation from which they have little hope of being deliv-

ered. (And now we understand the purpose of the year of Jubilee that God established in the economic society of Israel. Is the Covid pandemic a year of Jubilee throughout the world? Probably not, since it seems that the rich in a capitalistic economy seem to become more empowered with riches as the result of the pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the inequity between the rich and poor. At least this is true in those economies where the governments have started up their printing presses in order to print more money for the people, which money eventually ends up in the hands of the rich land owners and corporate banks.)

This was the lesson that Jesus tried to teach the rich young ruler when He instructed him to sell all that he had and give to the poor (See Mk 10:17-31). In order to have the incarnational mind of Christ, the rich young ruler needed to prepare himself for what was coming. At least Jesus gave him the opportunity to crash his own stock market and identify more with those who are more receptive to the gospel, that is, the poor.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus was specific in what caused the problem of economic inequity when He taught His disciples the following principle: *“The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word”* (Mk 4:19). To a great extent in the present economic environment, the strangle hold of riches seems to be tightening its grip on the throats of the poor.

Unfortunately, in such economic depressions as today, the poor suffer even more. In the American economic environment millions have lost their jobs. The same is true around the world. We are now in a situation where those who lived from one paycheck to another now have no money to buy food, regardless of whether the food markets stay open. It is a time, therefore, when some societies must share with one another in order to survive as a society. In our repentance to economic solidarity during the pandemic war, we can appreciate the serendipity of this social blessing after the war.

It is true that lockdowns are sometimes necessary in order to slow down the spread of the Covid virus. But we also must keep in mind

that the implementation of lockdown puts people out of jobs, and thus out of money. Developing countries throughout the world that cannot write a government paycheck to bail out their citizens will simply have large segments of the population going into famine. The extreme measures to fight the war against the virus may in some cases cost more lives than the virus itself. Since any society cannot move into and out of perpetual lockdowns, society as a whole in a free-market economy will eventually have to make a decision to continue on with life regardless of the Covid virus.

In famine, people become desperate. For example, one existing government has implemented harsh lockdown restrictions upon the people in order to decrease the possibility of the virus getting a foothold in society. All shops and businesses were closed. The people were suffering because they had no money to buy food, even if food were available. Subsequently, groups of people rallied in protest in the streets. The president of some countries have sent in the police to disperse the crowds who rebel against strict lockdown rules. In desperation, one particular commander of the police commanded those under his command, “If anyone does not go home, shoot them dead.”

Some societies, therefore, are between a rock and a hard place. Either they allow their citizens to return to work in order to stave off starvation, but in turn spread the virus, or remain in lockdown environments, and thus possibly inflict greater damage on the economic environment of the country. Will the cure cause more casualties than the war itself?

Nevertheless, if all the social and economic distress does restore a sense of empathy within a society, then that society will be blessed as the society of Israel. When God pronounced that Israel was past repentance, and thus needed to be purged as she was through captivity, He promised that a repentant remnant would eventually emerge from their captivity as a different people. But first, their social dysfunctions had to be purged: “*Behold, the days will come on you when He [God] will take you away with hooks [in your mouths] and your prosperity with hooks*” (Am 4:2).

• **Learning selflessness:** Every time we now see a surgical mask we think of selflessness. We think of the thousands of doctors, nurses and medical workers who have given themselves so unselfishly to serve and save others. Their service is rubbing off on societies around the world. It is rubbing off because we see more than a doctor or nurse leaning over an afflicted patient wearing surgical masks. People around the world are doing the same in the streets. Though it has not been proven that a mask is a guarantee against the Covid virus, at least people must try to be considerate of one another by wearing one.

Often in underdeveloped countries one of the cultural traits that is many times absent is the willingness to volunteer. For example, we were once in the company of an evangelist in a developing country who had received a shipping container of donated food supplies from America. He needed some help to unload the container for distribution to the unfortunate, the ones to whom the shipment was designated. So naturally he asked some of his local brothers with whom he had been working at the time to help him unload the container, which thing they did. But the next day the brothers who helped him to unload the container of donated food were somewhat disgruntled. With much curiosity, they were asked by the evangelist why they were unhappy with the distribution of the food. They replied, “We were not paid anything to unload the container.”

This was the first indication that the culture in which the evangelist labored suffered from the cultural trait of voluntarism. And worse, these disgruntled brothers certainly had no idea what incarnational gospel living was all about. We wonder if after Jesus had paid all the sacrificial price necessary to redeem us from sin, would we ourselves complain that He should pay us for the donated sacrifice that He freely gave to us?

In the present traumatic experience in which the world is now suffering, we are witnessing a phenomenal desire to volunteer to help. At one time, the government of England asked for 250,000 people to volunteer in certain areas of needed medical help in order to deliver food to the aged who were in lockdown. In less than two days over 500,000 people grabbed their surgical masks and volunteered. This is what is happening around the world.

People can be brought together only when they start thinking about others. Instead of our past individualism, we are now thinking more sacrificially in order to help others. This indeed is a beautiful serendipity that is arising out of the present war that is sweeping around the world.

It goes without saying that these can be good times if we can rid ourselves of some of our past social cancers. The serendipity of the present social and economic predicament of civilization is that we will come out of this better people on the other side of the war. This is certainly what happened to the people of Israel after the repentant remnant returned from their God-appointed cleansing in captivity. Never again did they forsake God and run after gods that they created after their own imagination.

When God eventually terminates the work of Satan in the present social and economic disaster, those who do not curse God for their calamity, will, as Job, be rewarded many times over.

*And the Lord turned the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends. The Lord also gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and all his sisters, and all those who had been of his acquaintance before. And they ate bread with him in his house. And they consoled him and comforted him over all the adversity that the Lord had brought on him. Each one also gave him one piece of money, and every one a ring of gold (Jb 42:10,11).*

### Chapter 3

#### "FIVE DEAD IN CHURCH SHOOTING"

The above statement was the headline of a Monday morning newspaper in Johannesburg, South Africa. It seems that the founder and leader of this miracle-working church had passed away a few years before and the church still could not settle the matter as to who would assume the purse and power of this predominate South African church.

Throughout the years, there had been several skirmishes among the leaders as to who would claim the treasure trove of the weekly contributions. In fact, it was one of the largest and richest churches throughout South Africa. All the conflict eventually led to a gun battle between leaders in order to sort out who would take control, and thus assume the power and finances.

Before the police and military showed up on the scene to prevent a total bloodbath, over forty hostages had already been taken by the assailants. Five members had been shot dead. When forty people were eventually arrested, pictures revealed them prostrate on the ground before the church building with a cache of forty firearms and numerous boxes of ammunition. The murderous disgruntled members were there for the final showdown in order to take control of a church that even had the word “holiness” in the church title inscribed on the building—and we wonder why the unbelieving world mocks Christianity.

We can only imagine that some of the murdered members and some of the murderers had personally sat together in the assembly of that “holiness” church with hands raised, speaking in tongues, and witnessing supposed miracles that were performed by the self-appointed apostle. They had formerly said “Amen” together for miracles performed before they took up arms against one another in a murderous mania to shed blood. This is religion at its most evil and wicked stage of digression. The religious hypocrisy of the entire episode was that next Sunday the adherents were praying for one another in their homes. We must never underestimate the extent to which people will allow themselves to be self-deceived in their religions.

So on Monday morning after the tragedy, we were in a cafe with some fellow evangelists, enjoying the sweet fellowship that has too often been restricted by Covid restrictions. There we were together with sanitized hands and hearts, with our face masks firmly attached to both mouth and nose. We appeared as a gang of bank robbers who were taking a break between bank jobs.

During our enjoyable conversation together, one of the preachers posed a question: “I wonder where all the miracle workers have gone?”

He continued to explain, “One of my friends asked me the other

day to explain to him why there are now fewer miracles and people breaking out in tongue speaking. Has the Holy Spirit gone on holiday?” (The church that was mentioned in the newspapers was known for miracle-working assemblies where people were supposedly healed and spoke in tongues.)

So as concerned evangelists, we all could not help ourselves but to go deeper into the matter. We all joined into a healthy discussion concerning the disappearance of all the modern-day faith healers when the government shut down the assemblies of the churches throughout the country during the initial phase of the lockdown, including the one that had just had a shoot out among the members. Had the Covid virus truly stymied the work of God? Had the Holy Spirit taken a vacation from tongue speaking? Where had gone all the so-called miracles that supposedly occurred every Sunday morning in the mega-churches?

We all agreed that there was an eerie silence from all the empty church halls of faith-healers throughout the world. Government restrictions had silenced all the hysterical assemblies before whom cheerleading prophets put on their theatrical miracle performances every Sunday. In fact, all the miracle-working assemblies that we now witness on television were all recorded **before** January 2020, before all the restrictions on church assemblies as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Interesting! Some of these enthusiastic specialists in miracle performing have either gone silent, or found it quite difficult to stir up miracles through online live-streaming programs. The emotional stimulus just does not seem to be there, though they give it a hardy try. Maybe there is no internet in heaven, or the Holy Spirit is just not on Facebook? Some have even tried to generate emotional hysteria in their viewing audience with vain cries as those false prophets during Elijah’s day. Those prophets cried out and cut themselves with knives until blood gushed out upon them (1 Kg 18:28)—we pray that we will not see some blood splatter on a recording camera lens.

We were all reminded in our cafe discussion that too much shame has been brought on the name of Jesus for decades by supposed miracle-working false prophets. Mockery of Christianity has been spewed out by the unbelieving world because of all the fake healers in the religious

world who have misdirected the people away from a faith that is based on the word of God. These now former profiteering prophets have been shut down by a virus we cannot see. We refer to these want-to-be miracle workers as “former” because the Covid pandemic struck from pulpits around the world those who would every Sunday morning mount their altars as Baal prophets and do their hysterical best to muster up some supposed miracle from their gods.

So all of us preachers wondered where all these fake healers are today in this pandemic. They are surely sitting at home in lockdown, frustrated that they are barred by the government from having a “Mount Carmel” opportunity to practice their religious antics before some large assembly. Some are now sitting alone with their families because they do not have the opportunity to take up a contribution from an assembly of deceived attendees who were promised, “Give to God and He will give to you!” We even heard one of these profiteers say, “There can be no miracle tonight until there is more money in the contribution.”

One thing is certain. All the profiteering prophets are not down at the local hospitals “healing” Covid victims. If they were truly working miracles, then they should be lined up at the local hospital, healing Covid victims as they came in the ambulances.

All of us in that cafe concluded that these fake healers are also in lockdown in their homes with masks covering their faces of shame, fearing that they too might become a victim of that which they cannot heal by calling on their god. They would be as those Baal and Asherah prophets of Elijah’s day who had created gods after their own imagination, and then led astray all but 7,000 of the entire population of Palestine by leading people to put their faith in false gods (1 Kg 19:18).

Those imagined gods could never heal. They still cannot heal today. So we, as Elijah, would mock those who believe that the gods of religion today can do only that which the one true and living God of heaven has assigned to Himself. One blessing of the Covid pandemic is that the faith-healing false prophets of today have been mostly barred from their opportunity to continue their deception of miracle working. By this we know that they do not believe in, or preach, the real miracle-working God of heaven. Unfortunately, most of the people will not

relinquish their faith in their “faith-healing pastors,” and thus they will continue to be carried off into captivity as the apostates of Israel.

Nevertheless, we pray that thousands are now picking up their Bibles, dusting them off, and reading for themselves about the one true and living God who providentially works in our lives. *“So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ”* (Rm 10:17). We are confident that great numbers of people are now growing more in faith because they are reading their Bibles like they have never read them before. Instead of trusting in the pastor who supposedly works some wonder, people are being restored to the word of God as the foundation of their faith.

Elijah led a great restoration to the God of Israel by eliminating the false prophets from their influence over the people (See 1 Kg 18:40). In a similar manner, the Covid pandemic has removed the false prophets from among the people by shutting down thousands of miracle-performing assemblies around the world. The people are now quietly at home on their knees, pleading for a closer relationship with their Creator that is based on His word. They are doing so apart from the influence of hypnotic assemblies that were the intoxicating work of Satan. Not all is bad with the present pandemic. It may be that God is cleaning out of “Christianity” all the evil prophets who have masqueraded themselves as messengers of God. We still believe 2 Corinthians 11:13: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading themselves as apostles of Christ.”*

## Chapter 4

### OPPORTUNITY TO SHINE

The true personality of an individual is often revealed when he or she is thrown into an environment of hard times. During normal times, the person we seek to present to the public is often hidden under the cloak of a smile or soft tone of speech. Hard times, however, usually remove all the masks and people see us for who we are.

Sometimes it is through smooth and fair speech that some seek to conceal their true character or ambitions. At least this was in the mind of Paul when he wrote in Romans 16:18, *“For they who are such serve not our Lord Christ but their own belly, and by appealing words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the innocent.”*

Times of social chaos brought on by war or pandemics in society often reveals our true character, whether good or bad. It is during such times that the true character, or aspirations, of an individual are laid bare. When a society is in social turmoil, the flaws that are embedded within a particular society as a whole are likewise brought to light. For example, we were recently listening to a broadcast on the international news media, *Russia Today*. We were listening to an interview with a prominent Russian diplomat. At the end of the interview, the reporter asked the diplomat, “Who do you think should win in the coming American presidential election?” (Referring to the Trump-Biden presidential race.)

In answer to the question, we thought that the Russian diplomat was right on target. He replied, “It doesn’t make any difference who wins.” The reporter was not satisfied with the answer, so he pressed the question. The Russian diplomat reluctantly responded, “Just flip a coin. It does not make any difference who wins the American election for president. America has lost its moral foundation upon which it can be governed.” We were stunned because the Russian diplomat was correct.

When discussing times of social chaos that afflict humanity at different times throughout history, it would be good to identify some of the character skeletons that are now coming out of the closet in these times of pandemic fear and lockdown. It is very interesting to see the true character of some societies during these times, especially in a society that has in the past been considered to be a lighthouse for moral standards. It is often quite unnerving to witness the social imperfections that rise to the top and present themselves through political ugliness and street riots.

On the other hand, there are some good things that are being revealed during these times when trials, both natural and political, are

cast upon us as members of our own society. We must not forget, therefore, that pandemics (hard times) reveal the best that is in people, but sometimes the ugly. Unfortunately, we often notice more the negative social behavioral traits that are revealed, while at the same time, we overlook those good things that also arise to the occasion.

When the Holy Spirit said, “*All things work together for good to those who love God,*” He was encouraging us to be optimistic (Rm 8:28). We must always look for the good that is emerging out of any worldwide calamity that may befall us during any time of social chaos. After all, trials that we face in times of social chaos are an opportunity to do as Jesus said we should do: “*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven*” (Mt 5:16). This is exactly what Peter admonished his Jewish readers to do when God would eventually visit (judge) national Israel in A.D. 70:

*Keep your behavior honest among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers [as supposed Jewish insurrectionists], they may, because of your good works that they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation [or, judgment in A.D. 70] (1 Pt 2:12).*

We must always keep in mind that social chaos, whether triggered by wars, natural disasters or pandemics, is an opportunity for society to sort through the old order in order to formulate a new order. Revolution in a particular society reveals that the people are seeking to discard the old order so that a new may be formed. Revolution is often the social mechanism for change within a society. Revolution is not brought by any particular individual. Revolution is a movement of the whole, not a single part.

Though those who are involved in the immediate social chaos (revolution) may not know what new paradigm will come out of a particular time of social chaos, at least the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:28 encouraged Christians to be incurable optimists during the times of transition. Hope must never be lost, regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. The beautiful thing about being on the side of Jesus is that we will always transition through chaos into whatever new normal

may arise out of any social chaos. We will victoriously transition because our minds are focused on those things that are above and **not on those things that are on earth** (See Cl 3:1,2). This is the foundation upon which John wrote in the theme verse of Revelation:

*These will make war with the Lamb and **the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful** (Rv 17:14).*

When we view the present social chaos from the heavenly viewpoint of God, it is then that we can do as James, who at the time of writing, addressed his epistle to an audience of predominantly Jewish Christians who were about to enter into a decade of extreme social chaos. The social chaos of their time would produce a total meltdown of the old Jewish society in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Therefore, when reading what James wrote, we understand that he was not writing to those who were in some comfort zone. He was writing to those who were in the consummation of a national heritage that had existed for over two thousand years. So James wrote to his fellow Jewish readers, “*My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials***” (Js 1:2). Our present social order may come to an end, as it did with the Jewish heritage of James and his immediate readers. But during the transition from the old to the new, King Jesus will still be leading victorious saints through all the social chaos of the transition.

The trials about which James wrote were more than individual hard times. Those to whom James wrote were at the beginning of the end of national Israel. The lives of the Jews would never be the same after they had transitioned through the destruction of national Israel. It was a time, therefore, when the two millennia old Jewish heritage was going to be transformed, if not in many ways come to an end. Nevertheless, because their minds were focused on the unchanging reign of King Jesus, Jewish Christians had nothing to fear. On the contrary, they had everything about which to rejoice because Jesus could never be unseated from His throne by any social paradigm shift that would transpire on the earth.

Christians today can likewise have all hope and joy because they know that during times of social chaos Jesus is still King of kings. He is still Lord of lords. He is still on His throne with authority over all things (Hb 1:3). Regardless of what social paradigm in which Christians may find themselves at any time in history, they can count their trials with all joy because their victory is their faith (1 Jn 5:4). They have the victory because they know the final outcome of all things. Therefore, times of social chaos are an opportunity for each one of us to remember who is still the King of the universe.

## Chapter 5

### REVELATION OF THE GOOD AND BAD

With some trepidation we would set forth some of the good, bad and ugly things that are being revealed in the current social calamity that has befallen many people throughout the world today in reference to the Covid pandemic. As we survey through these blessings and cursings, we must never forget that there is nothing new under heaven. Whether as individuals, or as a society of individuals, history is filled with all that might transpire in the present and future. As the people of God endured the past, so they will do the same today as we transition at different places in the world into new social paradigms.

- **Revelation of demigods:** Remember the following statement when King Jesus said to John at the beginning of His revelation of traumatic social chaos that was about to come upon the Jews, “*Do not fear. I am the first and the last*” (Rv 1:17). We must never forget this. And then again Jesus said to those in Smyrna, “*Do not fear those things that you will suffer*” (Rv 2:10).

We are sure that Jesus did not give a command that could not be obeyed by His disciples. We must not think, therefore, that He asked those disciples to do something that they could not do, that is, proceed fearlessly into the future. Our assurance that Jesus is King of kings and

Lord of lords should calm our spirits, no matter what social chaos that might prevail at any one time in history. Paul reassured his readers, “*The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*” (Ph 4:7). Therefore, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice!*” (Ph 4:4).

Those who are fearful are easily subjected to those who would reign over them. Demigod rulers seize the opportunity when the people of a society are brought into a state of fear. Fear can be produced by the authorities of the state, or brought on by some Covid disturbance or natural calamity. Regardless of the origin, fear within a society is fertile soil for those who would seek to rule by mandates that they are allowed to bind on the people.

In these times of a worldwide pandemic, the world has been brought under fear by those who worship the god of science. And since the world is in fear, then the want-to-be kings and lords of this world often take the opportunity to subjugate the people to their control. Demigods always feel good when people are under their control. Control gives them a sense of power, and therefore, a sense of worth.

We see such in some of the present rulers of the nations that have issued lockdown measures because of the Covid pandemic. Some governors in America have behaved as demigods over the people of the states of which they were democratically elected. Without the permission of the people, and sometimes the votes of their own state legislators, they have issued mandates to the public that often do more harm to the social economics of the society than the virus of the pandemic. The same has occurred in Europe.

We have also witnessed that these lords would become self-righteous and hypocritical judges of other nations that cannot enforce lockdown measures on the people. We must keep in mind that “lockdown” is a Western concept, which thing cannot be implemented in most developing world societies where people live in mass congestion in shanty villages and towns. And besides this, we have also witnessed that those lords who are quick to bring restrictions on others in their own cities often feel that they themselves are free from adherence to such restrictions. It is often the case that lords do not live consistently according to

those restrictions they impose on others. Hypocrisy is always in the behavior of those who lord over others.

The worldwide pandemic has often been the opportunity of some to reveal their thirst to reign over people. There is a thirst for power in every lord. Sometimes the fear within a society becomes the opportunity for those who have a hidden desire to lord over others to reveal their thirst for power. Nevertheless, Christians must never be subjected to fear, either by governments or natural calamities. Those who are brought into fear are brought into the bondage of irrationality. It is truly the fearless who live in freedom. And since Jesus sought to set us free, our freedom is not only from sin, but also from any calamity that this world would deliver.

In reference to America, who would ever have thought that there would be governors of certain states who would ignore the first amendment of the US Constitution? Those who fled religious persecution in Europe and immigrated to America, did so in order to find freedom in the New World. Those forefathers could never have conceived that when they wrote the Bill of Rights that there would arise over two hundred years later in their descendants those who would not honor the constitutional amendment that there should be a separation between church and state. They would never have dreamed of the day when in the “land of the free,” they would hear from the state, “Your rights to assemble as Christians have been suspended.” Liquor stores and abortion clinics may remain open, but church assemblies will be shut down.

In the lockdown times in America, and other countries around the world, church assemblies were closed down because of fear. Some church members were fined even when they sought to stay in their vehicles and drive to an open-air parking lot where the preacher stood outside and preached to everyone who remained in their vehicles. In these cases, civil liberties were being ignored for the purpose of “keeping the people safe from the virus.”

This does not mean, however, that the people should ignore safe behavior. However, it is the right of the people to make this choice. The choice should not be made by a lord of the state, and then imposed on the people. The people should be educated concerning behavior

that is safe for the people, and then, the people should be able to implement such safety measures without the fear of the state. Living under a constitution means that we live by the rule **of** law. But in communistic countries, lords rule **by** law. The difference between the two systems of rule is whether we want to live in freedom or under bondage.

We must always remember that when we are in fear, we often lose our sense of rationality, and sometimes our freedom for which many died in conflict to preserve. Sometimes we lose sight of the very foundation upon which a free nation was built. Therefore, we must not forget that fearful people are easily brought into the bondage of those who thirst to be demigods, and thus rule by law. We do not move into the future, therefore, under a shroud of fear, but caution. Since Christians are not to fear, then they move forward with caution.

The last thing that should bring fear in our hearts is fear of anything in our environment. So we go forward with the following words of the Holy Spirit clearly on our minds: *“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Rm 8:31,32). The Spirit continued, *“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril [as pandemics], or sword?”* (Rm 8:35).

- **Revelation of profiteers:** One of the good things that has come out of the Covid pandemic is the fall of the profiteers in the religious world. The good sense of those who came to mass assemblies judged that continuing to do such would not be safe for those who attended. Many assemblies around the world, therefore, have been curtailed in order to guard the health of all those who would attend. But there has been a serendipity to curtailing large assemblies. Profiteering false prophets have been deprived of an innocent audience from which they could extract contributions.

We say this knowing that many good preachers of the gospel have also suffered. When assemblies were curtailed around the world, many preachers, whose livelihoods depended on the weekly contribution, also lost much of their support. Nevertheless, those profiteering faith-heal-

ing preachers who roamed among the churches were shut out. These religious marketeers had no opportunity to generate hypnotic audiences from which they could extract contributions. Those governments in Africa who barred some of these profiteering prophets from coming to their country needed to worry no longer. Shutdown airlines stopped many of these religious charlatans from boarding airplanes, and traveling throughout the continent. If they did arrive in some country, the people were barred from attending their miracle-working assemblies.

Must we remind the religious world that the profiteering prophets also missed a great opportunity in 2019? If they were true prophets, then why did we not hear from them in 2019 to make prophecies in reference to the coming Covid pandemic in 2020? Those who are thinking should now be able to make a judgment concerning such self-proclaimed false prophets. They were not there in 2019, and neither should they be among us today.

- **Revelation of narcissistic preachers:** Those preachers who built churches around themselves are now in trouble. Some have used the faith of the people as an opportunity to build a support base of people within a community. On the continent on which we live, this is a very common practice. Now that this support base has been greatly diminished, it is often quite difficult for those prophets who depended on the people for support to be financially secure. On the other hand, there are those preachers who are worthy of support, but we are not discussing these faithful servants. We are focusing on those whose purpose for building an assembly had ulterior motives. These were unworthy motives for financial gain.

In Achaia there were those who were extracting support from the church because they had established themselves to be somewhat among the brethren (2 Co 11:12-15). There were those who were using the church as an opportunity for gain (See 2 Co 11:19,20). If such happened in the church of the first century, then certainly we would assume that such would also happen today. There will always be those who seize the opportunity to take advantage of the innocence of the sheep in order to get gain. There will always be those who are “mas-

*querading themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Co 11:13).*

• **Revelation of worship without an audience:** Instrumentalists often seek an audience. It is quite rare to find a group of instrumentalists playing for themselves. They may do so in order to practice their concert performance. However, their goal is often to play before an audience in order to entertain the people. It is believed that worshipers are inspired as they pluck away on a guitar, or beat on a drum. They forget that though they may individually pour out their hearts by playing an instrument, at the same time they make all those who cannot join in with an instrument to be the audience. Or, all those who do not play an instrument become spectators. Though spectators can be mesmerized by the skill of those who play, being mesmerized through our ears is not worship from our hearts.

Now that the many audiences have been taken from the instrumentalists, the worshipers have discovered that they can just as well worship God in their homes without all the distractions that produce noise. Worshipers have discovered that they can express their worship on their knees in the quietness of their living rooms without all the distractions of an instrumental concert. People of faith are learning that worship is not in being a mesmerized spectator, but being an individual who seeks to pour out his or her heart to God.

• **Revelation of ritual-free worship:** Related to the preceding point, worshipers have also discovered that they can worship at home without the priest or preacher taking them through some religious rites, rituals or ceremonies. It has been discovered that performing religious acts of worship are not necessary in order for one to pour out his heart to God with his family at home. True worship has been discovered as individuals confine themselves to the quiet environment of their homes, and on their knees, pour out their hearts to God.

By going home, the worshipers of the world are now discovering the simplicity of worship apart from all the formal presentations of curtains and colored windows in church buildings and temples. Meritorious performances of assembled religionists have been taken away

in order that we discover again the simplicity of worship. We can now go back to our closets in secret and pray to our Father who is in secret. We can fulfill what Jesus instructed in reference to our individual and personal outpouring to our Father: *“But you, when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you”* (Mt 6:6).

- **Revelation of stymied evangelism:** One of the greatest detriments to the pandemic is the shutdown of many evangelistic outreaches to the public. Travel has been greatly hindered. Public assemblies have been banned in many countries of the world. Some missionaries have returned home, and many hundreds of local evangelists have lost their support. It is indeed a dark day in reference to evangelistic outreach around the world. People are simply fearful of coming together in an assembly to hear the preaching of the word of God.

If it were not for the internet, we would imagine that the disciples’ outreach with the gospel would be almost brought to a close. We personally do not believe that God will allow this to continue. If evangelism ceases, then the purpose for this world has ceased. If we are to populate heaven by reaching out to the lost with the gospel, then if the lost can no longer be reached with the gospel, then there is no purpose for this world.

It is difficult to preach the gospel of love through a mask that conceals one’s face. “Faceless evangelism” has minimal results. We can try to smile with our eyes, but unless people see teeth, we are as expressionless zombies in a disconnected, if not distanced world. This is not the social environment for evangelism. If there are those countries that require a face mask in all social environments, then we are headed into a faceless world. And evangelism without a face, is greatly hindered. We suppose that Satan is tremendously excited about these times.

We can understand why there are marches in different countries around the world against the law to wear a face mask in all public situations. We admired the Germans who were the first to have such a march in Berlin. If one does not know the history of Germany during

the reign of the Third Reich, then he or she will have difficulty understanding why the German people were on the streets marching against a state-imposed law to wear a mask in all public environments, especially remaining socially distanced when outside in fresh air. The Germans were traumatized by Hitler and his henchmen for over a decade eighty years ago. They were eventually freed by the Allied Forces in WWII. They now have a phobia about any indications of being brought again into the oppression of any dictator who wants to rule by law.

Those who would seek to lord over the people with laws that work against the human nature should think twice before they work against the consent of the people. People naturally seek to be free. Even for the sake of public health matters, we are apprehensive about being brought into bondage for any reason.

This is particularly true of the typical American Western citizen. Being free is a deeply emotional cultural trait of the Western resident in America. Americans do not like to be told what to do because they fought for constitutional law that would throughout their history guarantee freedom through the rule of law. Americans fled from rule by law under feudal kings and queens in order to enjoy the freedom of human rights that were guaranteed to each individual citizen under a constitutional Bill of Rights.

Immigrants throughout the world today are still clamoring to get into America in order to enjoy the freedoms for which Americans have struggled to maintain for the past two centuries. Therefore, any inclination on the part of any politician that brings this society of people back under dictatorial rule by law of either a socialistic or communistic government of demigods is grounds for war. The Americans fought two of these wars in Europe in order to continue the freedom that they now enjoy, as well as give the Europeans the same. There are hundreds of thousands of young Americans in graves in European soil who are a testimony that prove the sincerity of this cultural trait on the part of Americans. Americans have no intention of allowing any inclinations for power hungry politicians to take them back to the feudal Europe of the Dark Ages. They abhor any European “game of thrones” being played out on American soil.

## Chapter 6

### RESTORATION OF THE ESSENTIALS

During times of trial that come upon us, we must always focus on the positive. During the times of a pandemic wherein we are greatly restricted from one another in our common assemblies as the church, there are some serendipitous results that have come into our lives. These are blessings on which we must focus in order to understand that Satan cannot win. He will have his momentary victories, but when all things seem to be hopeless, we must never forget that there are blessings that keep our hope alive. It is for this reason that Paul wrote that all things work together for good to those who love God (Rm 8:28). We must view all times of trial, therefore, as a refreshing time of restoration to spiritual matters in our lives that are beyond this world.

• **Restoration of personal Bible study:** One of the greatest blessings about being locked in one's home for a period of time is that one has the opportunity to find his or her Bible, dust it off, and once again study God's word. Instead of depending on the Bible study of a hired professional, the average member has in lockdown the opportunity to take ownership of his or her own personal Bible study.

It is now like it was back in those days a century ago when people were cut off from the biblically educated world. Each brother had to take his turn to preach on Sunday. As in some places in the West Indies where we once worked, if one was a baptized male member of the body, then he had to take his turn to preach. One of these young men related to us that he was twelve years old when he was baptized. When he came out of the water, someone gave him a towel to dry off. Another brother said, "You preach next Sunday." He told us that he preached that which he had to know before he went down into that water.

Professionalism was not a part of the early church. However, professionalism today now strikes a blow at the very heart of each member taking ownership of his or her responsibilities to be a disciple of Jesus.

If one needed an answer to a Bible question, there were no professionals close by in the first century to which one could go for a Bible answer.

It is often different today. Professionals have made gaining Bible knowledge cheap for the members, at least cheap in the amount of time one should personally spend in Bible study. All one has to do today is show up at a class and the professional will teach all that he or she needs to know. This steals away the opportunity for each disciple to give all diligence to present oneself approved unto God through diligent personal Bible study (2 Tm 2:15). In the days during the Covid pandemic when the professionals were limited in their assembly with the members, it was an opportunity for the members to once again study the Bible for themselves. Of course we are considering this matter outside the Western internet context where almost every person is on-line streaming his message to an audience that is also online. But this is not the situation in the developing world. People have simply been confined to their huts with only their Bibles in hand.

Unfortunately, the discussion that is now common among all local assemblies of disciples is that many of the members have vanished. Many churches have started restricted assemblies in a pandemic environment. Many members in such an environment of fear are not coming back to the assembly. These members have become so disconnected from the people during the lockdown that they have decided to stay away from the assembly forever. In some churches up to 40% of the members have decided to go away, and thus stay away. It may be that these members are not coming back to the assembly because they were never really there in spirit in the first place.

Those who do come back to the assembly are reaffirmed in their relationships with one another because they have been friends for too long to stay away from one another. In their return to the assembly, they have discovered the true purpose of the assembly, that is, a weekly opportunity to renew friendships in a communal worship of God. If one were never connected into making of friends with the members of the body of Christ, then this is the member who will disappear into the oblivion of pandemic fear.

• **Restoration of personal spiritual growth:** Once one is locked away from those on whom he or she relies for spiritual strength, then one must dig deep inside in order to discover the spiritual strength that is needed to survive as a disciple. One must take ownership of his or her own spiritual growth. If one does not, then this is the person who has lost his or her focus on those things that are above.

We need not depend on professionals to be the foundation of our faith. Only Jesus can be in that position. The purpose of an assembly of disciples is that we can take the opportunity to regularly renew our friendships with one another (Hb 10:24,25). But when this opportunity is taken away, it is then that we learn to be somewhat self-reliant in reference to our spiritual growth and relationship with Jesus. We cannot depend on the “pastor” in such social restrictions. We must depend on Jesus alone in our homes. It is as the rural Israelites were on their farms that were scattered throughout the land of Palestine. Those farmers were not in close contact with one another. Nevertheless, they survived with their families alone in their homes, with an occasional visit from a roaming Levite.

• **Restoration to stronger families:** One of the greatest blessings of the pandemic is that families have been forced to be together. This was certainly difficult for the older children of the family who before the pandemic were scattered in the community almost every night of the week. But the restrictions of the pandemic brought them home. Lockdown forced the teenagers to be at home with the families.

During the lockdown weeks families were forced to learn how to play games together. They could have family Bible studies together. They could pray together as a family. And, fathers and mothers could get more sleep on Friday and Saturday nights when before the restrictions they had to wait up until their teenage children came home before curfew.

When we were young and living on a farm, we were in “lock-down” every day. In the evenings, all of us learned to play games with one another. We were a family unit and never felt as if we were deprived from social activities with others. In those days, families learned how to be dependent on one another. Unfortunately, the fear of most

urban families today is the possibility of being bored out of their minds if they are not continually involved in some social activity. They are bored if the mother is not rushing the children around for all sorts of school and sports activities. But this is only a recent, if not only an urban, cultural behavior. No farmer is resistant to lockdowns since that is often his normal behavior of life.

• **Restoration of preaching outside four walls:** One of the blessings of the pandemic lockdown was that Bible teachers were forced to reach out to the world by live streaming their Bible lessons. Some preachers did this before the lockdown. However, the practice accelerated during the lockdown. We see this as a good thing, and pray that it will continue in the future. Live streaming one's studies through the internet is simply being a better steward of one's Bible study and lesson preparation. One can reach out to more than those who are seated before him in a church house on Sunday morning.

We could add here that those writers who are somewhat lazy in their efforts to write good material can now focus on the world through the internet. The opportunity to use the internet for writing has always been there. But few preachers and Bible teachers have used this opportunity to reach out to a greater audience than what shows up in a classroom on Sunday morning. Writing is very difficult, but it is a ministry that must be used in order to reach this world. In fact, in the days of the lockdown, other than live streaming one's message, writing reached those who would seek to download information for their own personal Bible study.

• **Restoration of our thirst to be together:** There is nothing like understanding how much we need one another by being barred from seeing one another. We are social beings. It is the way God created us. This is especially true in reference to the assemblies of the members of the church. But when Christians are locked away from one another, then they begin to understand why God encouraged us to be with one another.

We have learned that the assembly of the church is not a legal

religious ceremony. It is an opportunity to connect spiritually with one another in Christ. We cherish our friends when we are separated from them. As any Christian would confess, being forced to socially distance from one another is not fun. It is not natural. What is natural is a hug and a hand shake. Those who bow down to the science god must understand that humanity cannot live forever without human contact. We must never forget that science has no morality.

## Chapter 7

### MAINTAINING THE FABRIC OF CIVILIZATION

We must remember that while we are bowing down to the pronouncements of all the scientists among us concerning the Covid pandemic, we need to reflect on a social tragedy that is playing itself out in our times in reference to social friendships. We will listen to all that the scientists say to us in reference to social distancing and mask wearing during this pandemic. We will listen in order to protect ourselves. But in protecting ourselves, we are actually protecting ourselves from one another in the pandemic world in which we now live.

Nevertheless, there is a social tragedy we must not forget during these times of self-protection. When the pronouncements of science start inflicting pain on our human behavior, then we become concerned. Some people, in their overprotection of themselves, often begin to ignore the fact that we are both psychological, that is emotional, as well as physical human beings in our relationships with one another. Regardless of all the scientific facts that are thrown at us almost every day, we must not forget that we are human beings with a psychology that motivates us as people to interact with one another.

Science researches areas of both the psychological and biological world. But when conclusions of the scientific method of study start focusing, or obsessing, exclusively on the physical, then science starts attacking the behavior of human interaction. It is then that social problems arise, problems about which most people are fearful even to ques-

tion, lest they be accused of being unscientific, or even worse, against science. But as Christians, and those who recognize that we are not the product of some evolutionary process of development over millions of years, we consider ourselves in view of the fact that we are the creation of God. This means that our existence on this earth is not the result of some spontaneous generation of life from the impersonal elements of physical matter. We are mind, body and soul, and the product of a God who created us (1 Th 5:23).

As we proceed through this discussion, therefore, please keep in mind that during pandemics as that which is currently ravaging the population of the world today, we firmly believe that one must do all that is necessary in order to protect oneself and others from infection. If this means for a time to wear a mask in public, wash our hands, and socially distance ourselves when possible, then we will do so. Being safe makes sense. As from childhood, we were instructed to wash our hands, especially after coming from a gathered crowd. But if life must forever be defined by the required behavior that is necessary to decrease our contact with one another, then we must be prepared to live a life that is contrary to the very nature of human interaction.

The point of our concern at the time is not whether one should do all the safety measures to keep oneself and others safe from infection, but the negative social consequences that we must recognize in order to do so. This is a subject that is commonly ignored, especially when a pandemic strikes in the midst of ambitious politicians in their efforts to win elections. However, regardless of all the fear-mongering that is spouted by politicians, we must remain focused on society as a whole. **We must understand that the implementation of all the safety measures to protect our physical bodies from viral infection is not without harm to our spiritual self and relationships with one another.** It is for this reason that we must consider the social ramifications of all the restrictions to keep ourselves safe from one another. We must do so in viewpoint of what God has revealed to us concerning human relationships.

We must not forget that man-made social restrictions that come from unbelieving people do not come without harm to society. This is

especially true if the social restrictions are placed upon society by the atheistic officials of government who have no consideration for the behavior of a God-created human being. But what seems to be more of a problem in these times of democratic government is that the elected officials are placing the restrictions on society because they do not want to be accused of doing nothing in reference to the Covid pandemic. They want to be known for doing all that can be done, whether all that can be done damages both the social structure of societies, as well as the businesses and financial security that families have built up for generations. For a few months of lockdown, elected officials, in order to get reelected are willing to destroy that which will take more than a generation to rebuild. We see this as a selfish move on the part of those who thirst for power.

• **Damaging social function:** My wife and I were recently sitting in our living room, as all lockdown “patients” often did, in front of the one-eyed creature, our television, that we have invited into our house to prevent boredom. We were listening intently to the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) concerning the daily body count in reference to the Covid-19 pandemic. And then the BBC moved on to an interview with two psychologists who covered a subject that we had not observed on any of the other news media at the time.

Almost daily on all media networks there were dismal information reports concerning all the attacks of an unseen viral enemy that ravaged humanity around the world. We were bombarded with strategic lockdowns and social separations that seemed to have engulfed humanity around the world. But sometime very important was lacking in all these reports. **Science was dealing with the physical, but ignoring the emotional.** The scientists were ignoring the fact that all their prescriptions to prevent the spread of the Covid virus were taking a tremendous toll on the social interaction and financial well-being of humanity. Some the scientists seem to have forgotten that science has no morals. Human beings establish morals in view of science. If the authority for establishing moral standards is reversed from people to science, then we are in deep trouble.

For example, evidence of all the sociological problems that are arising out of the mandated restrictions that have been imposed on humanity around the world are now coming to the surface. The psychological trauma that people are suffering concerning the pandemic restrictions that are based on the proclamations of science has now increased to the point that societies can no longer ignore the fact that people's lives are being greatly impacted by all the pandemic restrictions on human interaction. This problem has become so pronounced that the BBC could no longer refrain from alerting people of something that all of us have known for years, especially those of us who recognize that we are God-created human beings. This was a news report of old news, therefore, that has been revealed in the Bible for millennia.

- **Attack against discipleship:** The subject of the BBC report reflected on the very meaning of what the Holy Spirit revealed to Christians long ago in Hebrews 10:24,25: “*Let us **consider one another to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.***” This was a hortatory declaration, not an imperative commandment. This meant that the statement was not a legal mandate, but the behavior of those who walked in appreciation for what God had done for them.

The statement is hortatory because being together is the very nature of who Christians are in their covenant relationship with God. In other words, being together is inherently natural for the covenanted people who walk in appreciation for what God did for them through the gospel of grace (See 2 Co 4:15). So the Spirit added the following responsibility of what grace-living Christians do for one another: “... **but encouraging one another**” (Hb 10:25). And then again the Spirit added in another context, “*Let each one not look out merely for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Ph 2:4). Disciples cannot do this unless they are together.

These, and many other similar statements in our Bible, refer to something that is beyond supposed legal commands on “church attendance.” Jesus reflected on the meaning of these statements when He said, “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for*

*his friends*” (Jn 15:13). “**You are My friends**” (Jn 15:14). Attendance at the assembly is a reunion of Christian friends. We are Christian friends because we lay down our lives for one another. And sometimes, this can be life-threatening, at least it was for Jesus who laid down His life for us, His friends.

When Jesus was on earth, He made friends with people. We seem to sometimes forget this very important point in reference to our relationships with one another. Friends, especially those who are friends in Jesus Christ, seek to be together. They will risk their lives for one another. As Jesus wanted to be with His friends, we as His friends seek to express our love for one another in order to encourage one another. Christian friends look out for one another, and in order to do this, they must be in one another’s presence on a regular basis. This was what the Hebrew writer was trying to convey to us when he submitted to the Holy Spirit to write through him the instructions of Hebrews 10.

The instructions of Hebrews 10 were the natural result of our relationships with one another because Jesus laid down His life for us. Christians seek to interact with one another as Jesus interacted between God and humanity in reference to the washing away of our sins. He is still interacting on our behalf (1 Tm 2:5). Therefore, as Christians, we interact with one another because He interacted on our behalf. This is the definition of Christian fellowship. It is the definition of church. If there is no interaction among members of the church, then there is no church. And since “church”—that is us as His disciples—are an example for the world in reference to social interaction, then certainly people of the world should follow the interaction of the members of the church. The more the citizens of a society interact with one another in this way, the more society is both socially stable and functional.

Though the statement of Hebrews 10 was given in a Christian social context, the principle behind the statement has always been true in reference to all people who would seek to exist in a functioning society. In fact, if the citizens of any society of the world do not assemble for the specific reasons defined in the text of Hebrews 10, then there can be no such thing as a functional society. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Holy Spirit used the secular Greek word *ekklesia* (meaning,

“assembly,” and often translated, “church”) to define the existence and function of the people of God. Here’s the point: If God’s people are not able to come together on a regular basis to encourage love and good works, then the *ekklesia*, or the church, loses its purpose for existence in this world. It does so because it becomes dysfunctional, and thus, gives a dysfunctional example of human activity before the world.

Therefore, the Hebrews 10 statement was not a legal commandment, which if obeyed, would encourage us as the members of the body of Christ to put a shiny star on some attendance chart. Neither was the statement given in order to motivate us to show up on Sunday lest we receive a call from the preacher on Monday, inquiring as to our whereabouts. On the contrary, the assembly of Christians is the very core of Christian behavioral function. This does not mean, however, that all the Christians in a particular area must assemble together in a mass assembly at the same place. Nevertheless, it does mean that if one member does not want to be with fellow members of the body, then it is revealed that he or she does not want to be a functioning participant of what identifies the organic function of the body of Christ.

The same is true in any society. One is a hermit if he refuses to participate in the normal function of society. Hermits, therefore, play no part in maintaining the function of a healthy society. And for this reason, there is no such thing as a “hermit Christian.” If individuals of a society, or the church, are forced into being disconnected hermits, then as the church disintegrates into dysfunction, so likewise does society.

Legalities had nothing to do with the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the Hebrews 10:24,25 statement. Sometimes in our past exhortations from this text, we often missed entirely what the Holy Spirit was trying to communicate to His readers. But in the BBC interview that we have just mentioned, where two psychologists were interviewed in reference to the present dysfunction of human friendships, the reason why people need to be together was clearly revealed. In view of the social distancing and masking of people that are taking place around the world today, psychologists have now connected the dots. And the connection of the dots in reference to friendships is that people are

becoming more disconnected. And when friends are disconnected, friendships diminish.

When friends stay away from one another, friendships are damaged, even when they are socially distanced for health reasons. In fact, friendships cannot continue to be wholesome if people are socially distanced from one another on a continual basis. The two psychologists of the BBC program simply concluded that science cannot dictate that socially distanced humans can truly have socially distanced friendships. Humans need more than the bump of an elbow, or a disguised grin behind a mask. There is no such thing as close friends who are continually distanced from one another with concealed facial expressions. Friends cannot be locked away from one another in quarantine indefinitely.

## Chapter 8 MAINTAINING SOCIAL HEALTH

When Jesus said that His disciples would be the salt of the earth, He was using the word “salt” as a metaphor. As salt acts as a preservative, so would Christians with their influence act as a preservative for society. Christians would be the moral compass that would preserve society. The behavior of the members of the church in their relationships with one another, therefore, should be an example to the community, and thus function as preservative salt.

- **Principles for social health:** What the Holy Spirit was saying in Hebrews 10:24,25—and we have all known this for years by experience—is that for people to maintain the type of friendships that are necessary in order to prepare for eternal dwelling **is that the members of the body of Christ cannot be distanced from one another for any extended period of time.** Paul’s statements in Ephesians 2 is a social dictionary on the organic friendship of the members of the body of Christ. He wrote, “*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the*

**household of God”** (Ep 2:19). In Ephesians 4:16 Paul explained that Christians are the organic body of Christ, *“from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working of each part, causes growth of the body to the edifying of itself in love.”* This is the objective for maintaining the Hebrews 10:24,25 function in our relationships with one another.

Each individual member of the body must be connected with other members in order that the *ekklesia* function as a self-edifying body of believers. If social distancing is introduced into this dynamic, then the body becomes dysfunctional. As citizens of the household of God, there can be no member of the household who would distance himself from the organic function of the entire household. If “a part” (member) of the body chooses to socially distance from all other members of the body, then he has forsaken the responsibility that comes with being a member of the body. He has forsaken his responsibility to join in with all the other parts of the body in order to energize the body through love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24,25 does not stipulate the frequency of this body-building connectivity, or assembly. Nothing is revealed by the writer concerning frequency and the numbers of the parts of the body that must assemble at any specific time. Nevertheless, at least one thing is crystal clear: **Friends in Christ, that is, members of the body, who do not come into one another’s presence on a regular basis have damaged their relationship with the body as a whole, and thus, they have damaged the objective of building up the body of Christ through assembly.**

The Hebrews 10 statement does not explain how many of the members of the body must come together in assembly in order to accomplish the mandate of building up the body. In the first century, the disciples came together in small groups in the homes of the members. At least we must conclude that the Holy Spirit assumed the small-assembly home environment when He made the assembly statement of Hebrews 10 many years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. He certainly did not have in mind the mass assemblies of people we see today in large urban churches. Because of the size of these large as-

semblies, the assemblies themselves inherently fail to accomplish the very purpose of the Hebrews 10 statement.

In fact, the assembly of the early disciples in small groups in the homes of the members enhanced the personal relationships of the members with one another. Each member was brought into close contact in the home assembly, and thus into close contact with both the spiritual and physical needs of one another. In view of this, we would make a judgment on this matter in reference to the large-assembly churches today that tend to work against the members' opportunity to interact with one another in a large assembly context. Large-assembly churches are actually gatherings of "socially distanced" members. These churches encourage the membership of the body to be satisfied with socially distanced relationships while each member is seated alone in the presence of hundreds of people. After all, some of the loneliest people in the world are seated right in the midst of hundreds of people on Sunday morning.

Now back to the BBC report. What the BBC wanted to reveal through the interview of the psychologists, was that when the citizens of any society disconnect with one another, they will subsequently disconnect in their friendships within the society. The point that we discovered from the interview was that even those who function outside the realm of Christian-principled behavior, **now realize that human relationships are always damaged when people distance themselves from one another. And when friendships are damaged within a society, then society as a whole is damaged.** And salt that has lost its preservative power is cast out (Mt 5:13).

In other words, close human connection within a society is necessary in order that the members of society remain emotionally healthy. The thrust of the BBC report was that people must interact with one another in order to build one another up as members of society. If we distance the participants of any society, then we damage society as a whole.

As Christians, we must consider this social damage in reference to the church, for the church is a part of society. The principle of human connectivity as the church saturates the New Testament. If social distancing is practiced within a society, and subsequently by government

mandates imposed on the members of the body of Christ, then the body is dysfunctional, if not in many cases, terminated simply because the members cannot function as the body of Christ.

The longer individuals within a society socially distance themselves from one another, the more damage that is done to the society as a whole. Now please do not misunderstand us concerning this vital principle of human behavior. We are now witnessing the rebellion within many societies of the world today movement against the “science” of social distancing. This is not without a cause. As a whole, people seem to know more about human friendships than those scientists who would lead us to believe that we are the product of some impersonal biological evolution. On the contrary, we are the product of a creative God, not the result of some primordial “building blocks” of matter that by chance collected together to spontaneously generate life. For this reason, some scientists need to distance themselves from their cold laboratories in order to see the affect of their scientific pronouncements on the societies of humanity.

The movements against the imposition of impersonal mandates are generated by the very nature of human life. People are simply going to be with one another. The police can impose a fine on people being together, but the fines are totally against human behavior. Who would have ever believed that we would come to a point in history were we would be issued fines for being with one another on the street, under a tree in a park, and now, have too many guests in our own homes? Have government health officials actually considered the insanity of such laws? Have we now moved into a social order where the police can enter into the privacy of a man’s house and count how many people are in that house? And if there are too many people, the police are authorized to write a ticket and fine the house owner for being too hospitable to his friends? What insanity is this that we have digressed into a new social order wherein we are made enemies of ourselves? Why is it that Ann Frank keeps coming into our minds?

We are the creation of a God of love, and thus have fallen in love with His Son. Therefore, as Christians, John wrote, “*we love [others] because He first loved us [through] His Son*” (1 Jn 4:19). Because of

this, we have also fallen in love with all those who are the product of the God of creation. This principle belief, or behavior, is what holds civilizations of the world together. Within any society of any civilization of the world, people must have compassion for one another. And in order to have compassion for one another, healthy relationships must be established and maintained within every society.

All of us must understand, therefore, that for a season we must submit to the restrictions to distance ourselves from one another for safety reasons. However, those governments who impose such restrictions on the people must understand that they are trying to socially restructure human society. They may require such for a season, but there can be no long-term social distancing on a permanent basis.

We feel that at the end of the social tensions that resulted from social distancing, humans will win the battle, and thus come together again. The force within us to be together is far stronger than the forces of any government to keep us away from one another. If one is an unbeliever in the God of creation, then it will be difficult for him to understand this basic psychology of human behavior. On the other hand, if one believes that we are the product of a God who created humanity after His own image, then he will firmly agree with us on this matter. He will believe that we were created after the image of a God, who is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one. This God does not reside individually as distanced Deities throughout the universe. They are one God in being, essence and existence.

- **Cold science and moral principles:** We grew up with an illustration that was told by the old pioneer preachers who preached that if one took a piece of burning coal out of the “fellowship” of all the other pieces of coal, it would then cool, and eventually go out. Friends are no different in their relationships with one another. There is simply no such thing as endearing friendships among those who continue to be socially distanced from one another for any extended period of time.

And when two friends do come into the presence of one another after an extended distance from one another, there can be no endearing friendship restored if two friends must present themselves to one an-

other behind a mask, or remain at a distance from one another. No handshakes or hugs allowed. This is what sociologists are trying to tell us, at least in reference to spreading the present Covid-19 virus. And they are right on this change in our social interaction. Unfortunately, the biological scientists among us are still scaring us into remaining distant from one another on a continuing basis lest we infect one another. In the present pandemic, this may be true. However, we must also understand that in a social system of sustained distancing we will harm our relationships with one another as human beings if we continue to manifest a restrained contact with one another.

When biological science reaches into human behavior with conclusions that are without emotion or morals, then fear is often produced. The facts of science can indeed be cold facts. And when cold facts start to determine our social behavior, and particularly our social friendships, it is then that we are in trouble in reference to our relationships with one another. And when human relationships are dysfunctional, so also is society.

The cold facts of science sometimes produce fear. If the cold facts are violated, the biological scientists want us to conclude that we are unscientific if we violate their conclusions by questioning the implementation of their facts in reference to moral behavior and social interaction. But we must determine if endearing friendships should be sacrificed in order to maintain the cold facts of science that are without any emotion. Biological scientists need to sit down with sociologists. They need to do so in order to reach some compromise in order to sustain healthy societies. In other words, what good is it to preserve a society of zombies who have no relationships with one another?

The science gods among us sometimes forget that fear fractures friendships. In obedience to the impersonal facts of science, we are sometimes fractured into an existence of zombies who endlessly roam the streets behind masks that conceal our personalities, and identify us as estranged individuals in a somewhat impersonal society.

If we are kept in fear, science gods will easily reign over us. When government officials manipulates the cold facts of science in order to produce fear, and thus reign without question, then those who object to

their autocratic mandates are accused of being rebels against science. We must never forget that terrified populations are easily controlled by autocratic leaders. So for this reason we are always cautious when people start quoting science and not the Bible when determining moral standards.

And then, when the atheistic news media fails to report on fractured friendships, they too are in cahoots with the cold facts of the science gods. When the political figures of government implement law that is based solely on the foundation of cold scientific facts, without any consideration for the science of the social behavior of the people, then we have entered into a truly new normal of social reality to which none of us really want to go. Now bring the politics of a democratic system of government into this picture, and we are doomed. Social gods will arise among us and gradually transition society away from the rule **of** law (constitutional democracy) to the rule **by** law (dictatorial communism).

Democratic politicians will often scare the people into submission with the force of rigid scientific facts that have no personality. If one does not believe this, then do a study of how Adolf Hitler, an elected politician, eventually used the cold and immoral conclusions of atheistic evolution to convince the German society of his time to socially distance themselves from a particular race of people within society who were supposedly an inferior race to the Aryan race. The evolutionary development through the process of natural selection supposedly left behind the Jews, Roma, and other supposedly inferior races in order to develop the higher species of the Aryans.

## Chapter 9 HISTORICAL COMPARISONS

In our world history less than a century ago, “death camps” were constructed by the autocratic leaders of Nazi Germany in order to be the “final solution” to what the officials considered to be an inferior race of people within their society. Through propaganda, the general

population of the society was convinced by the atheistic politicians that the people should distance themselves from those they judged to be a lower race of people within their society. This supposed lower race of people was considered to be an “infection” of the true Aryan race.

Adolf Hitler simply brought the “God is dead” philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche into his own social world view, and thus concluded that the Aryan race was superior to all other races of people. In the philosophical void that Nietzsche’s nihilism produced—in the absence of any higher moral authority than man, nothing has any inherent importance, and thus life lacks purpose—Hitler gave purpose to the German people. While living, according to Nietzsche, in the “despair of meaninglessness” in Germany after WW I, Hitler gave people hope. He first gave people the hope of developing for themselves a better life. He then convinced the people that the Aryan German race was the pure race that would guarantee a better world. Through their own will, the people could make life better for themselves.

Hitler subsequently established “breeding camps” in order to increase the population of a pure Aryan race, while at the same time, he eliminated undesirable races who still hung on to the concept of a God who gave to humanity divine moral standards. In others words, if Hitler were to implement his moral behavior to exterminate all inferior races, he had to eradicate first from the minds of the Germans any moral standard that was higher than man. It was necessary, therefore, that Hitler, with the philosophy of Nietzsche as his authority, to eradicate any belief in a God who gave to man an unchanging moral standard. With God out of the way, he and his ungodly leadership could establish any moral standard they so desired. They thus became a moral law unto themselves.

The general population of the German society was subsequently taught to despise and fear what was considered to be a lower class of human beings within their society. In order to identify this lower class of citizenship, the Jews of this lower class were first mandated to sew the Star of David insignia on their shirts and coats. In this way they could be identified in the streets, and thus distanced by the general German population. But this was not enough. The despised were then

herded into the ghettos in order that they be totally distanced from the general population. Eventually, two of Hitler's henchmen, Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Goering suggested a "final solution" be mandated to solve the matter. This solution was to eliminate the infecting race of people from the general population. The result was the extermination of over six million Jews in death camps across Europe during WW II.

In our recent history in Africa, one tribal group in the country of Rwanda was led to believe that another tribal group of the same country were the "cockroaches" of society. Twisted leaders then convinced the supposed superior tribal group of the country that the "cockroaches" needed to be eliminated in order to preserve the higher race of people. What is the difference between this thinking and a particular group within a society today who, for political reasons, labels an unmasked group of society to be selfish and inconsiderate? And thus, such "unmasked infecting cockroaches" must be disciplined by being fined for their lack of obedience to the social norms that are mandated by government? If the "unmasked race" do not conform to the "masked race," then the police must be sent out into the streets in order to subjugate those who refuse to wear a mask.

(But just for a momentary reality check on this matter, according to the CDC in America, 70% of those who were infected with the Covid-19 virus in American wore a mask continually when they were in public. So much for the belief that wearing a mask is guaranteed protection against the Covid virus.)

If we eliminate divine moral standards from social behavior, and deny the social glue of community that holds people together, then the standards we construct for ourselves, and by which we make judgments of one another, become twisted and impersonal. Again, we must never forget that a population of people who are brought into fear, can be manipulated by the political leaders to accomplish their own agendas.

The principle we would suggest in matters of public safety in reference to pandemics is that the people must first be educated on matters of personal and public safety. The people must then make their own personal decisions concerning these matters lest those in authority

become dictators of the people. We do not think it right that the government should force their restrictions for health on the people without first educating the people in health matters, and then allowing the people the right to make a collective decision.

The free world is not like the dictatorial social order of communist China. When the pandemic began in China, and the government called for community quarantines, some doors of houses were nailed shut, or chained, in order that the people not come out of their homes. In a dictatorial nation as China that rules by law, we can understand that the government would unleash such restrictions. Once a particular political system becomes dictatorial, it is easy to instill fear in the people, and then reign over the terrified. This behavior even occurred in some Western countries when some governors and presidents acted as dictators in handing down laws throughout the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

In the West, however, if the people seek to retain their freedom in the midst of pandemics, then it is the people, not the elected officials, who should make the decisions as to what restrictions should be implemented on the public in reference to public protection. This is where science plays a very important part in our culture today. It is the responsibility of the scientists among us to thoroughly educate the public concerning the hazards of a particular pandemic. It is then the responsibility of the people, who should be concerned for one another, to protect themselves according to the information that has been discovered and explained by the scientists. The public must make a decision as to whom they will give the right to initiate lockdowns and the termination of businesses, which termination destroys the livelihoods of many within society. And when society determines what is safe behavior for society as a whole, then it is the responsibility of each citizen to implement the recommended safety measures throughout society. Those who have any familiarity with the word of God on this matter will discover in this the approach of God's instructions for social behavior: "*Let each one not look out merely for his own interests, but also for the interest of others*" (Ph 2:4).

Though these things happened in the society of Germany in the 1930s, we must give credit to the present generation of Germans today.

We can understand why thousands of the citizens of Germany recently organized the first public protest in August 2020 against the government restrictions that were being arbitrarily imposed on the people in reference to “masking” and social distancing. The present German leadership evidently had a temporary lapse in memory by forgetting the terrible skeletons in their emotional closet in reference to such restrictions in their former Nazi past. They forgot that many years before they allowed the social gods of the Nazis to likewise place restrictions on a class of people within the population of Europe. In their past, as previously stated, the Nazi leaders imposed social restrictions on those they classified to be a lower race of people. Those Nazi gods pronounced that the supposed “cockroaches” of their society, the Jews, were to first sew the Star of David on their shirts and coats in order to be identified. We know the rest of this story.

We have discovered that few of the present generation of the West, especially the young, have little idea of the road that we can travel if we start marginalizing one another for some reason. When we allow scientists to start dictating moral standards by which we would judge one another, then we should throw up a caution flag. Again, it is not the place of science to dictate moral standards. We allow the scientists the privilege of giving us the facts. But as the people who must live with the facts, we the people will take it from there.

We could learn a great deal from the Germans. They once traveled down the road of moral decay through racial distancing. They have subsequently lived with the pain of repentance for this behavior for decades ever since. It is unfortunate that many today will inflict emotional pain on others that will take decades to heal. The Germans have to a great extent overcome their sociological scars, but the scars are still there. There is an inherent regret within the German culture that has a difficult time of fading into the past.

Therefore, before a generation of radicals inflict sociological pain on their own generation, they should take note that the emotional pain they inflict on society will leave scars in their culture for generations to come. This is especially true in the area of economics. If we are willing to sacrifice thousands of small businesses that took decades to build,

then it will take decades to build them again. Jeremiah meant something as this in the statement, “*The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children’s teeth are set on edge*” (Jr 31:29). Those who are out there burning businesses on the streets need to remember that their grandchildren must live with the legacy of what their grandfathers did in an effort to destroy a society with which they judged was inferior to their own society (race) they were promoting at the time.

## Chapter 10

### THE FALL OF CIVILIZATIONS

When there is so much going on in a society that causes social chaos, we seek for social solutions that will bring us peace of mind. Since no citizen of any society desires to live in constant conflict, then it is the purpose of each citizen of any society to work toward peace, not turmoil.

- **Surviving social damage:** Social chaos is often caused when the foundation for strong friendships and family are attacked within a particular society. The damaged friendships and families then spill over into the social division of every group within a particular society. When the foundation of friendships and family are damaged, this damage leads to the dysfunction of the society as a whole. This often leads to one group of a society judging another group when the judged group does not conform to the social norms that are dictated by the judging group. Conflicting social groups bring a civilization to the brink of revolution.

Those who give up on God’s moral standards have set themselves on a path to moral degradation. When a society starts making moral standards that are outside the moral standards of God, then that society has positioned itself on a road to doom. This is true because it is not within the citizens of any society to determine and establish their own moral standards. This is true because it is simply “*not in man who walks to direct his steps*” (Jr 10:23). And this is true because “*the way*

*of man is not in himself*" (Jr 10:23).

Moral degeneration is slow, and often without pain. It is often unnoticed within a society because it may take two or three generations in order to come to fruition. For example, we were recently surprised when we read a statement in the oldest magazine that has been published in South Africa. It was a statement that had never before been made in this magazine throughout its years of existence.

The *Farmer's Weekly* was first established in 1911. One of the interesting features in the magazine is called "The Hitching Post." The purpose of this feature is similar to the online dating services that are common today on the Internet. Any single person can write to the editor of the magazine with his or her desire to find a mate. These are usually widowed individuals in their older years who are looking for someone with whom to spend the remainder of their years. The requests are sincere, if not sometimes amusing. However, in the August 14, 2020 edition we read something that would have been unheard of only a few years ago. The requests are normally statements from those who seek "a nonsmoker," or "soft-hearted" individual, or one who "loves singing and laughter." One person requested that a potential mate "treat me like your queen and I will make you my king."

But in the August edition one requirement for a mate was allowed into the requests by the editor for the first time in the history of the magazine: Two people were seeking mates who "must be nonreligious." This is not the culture of the Christian farming community of South Africa. Nevertheless, the editors relinquished to the changing social conditions of the nation.

When the majority of a nation seeks to be "nonreligious," then we know that we are in trouble. We are headed in the wrong direction if we do not want to be continually reminded that there is a God out there to whom we must all eventually give account. This is the downfall of Western civilization that has basically given up on God, and thus, given up on any divine moral standards. This is evident in the population throughout South Africa. Fifty-one percent of all the women in South Africa have in some way been physically abused. South Africa is one of the countries of the world that ranks highest in the abuse of women.

It may be that we are in this country reaching toward the description of society in general that was expressed in Genesis 6:5: “*God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth ....*”

• **Committed to community:** We were recently contacted by the chairman of a political party in the country of Namibia. We have known Festus Thomas, the chairman of this party, for many years, having spent many nights in his home enjoying the hospitality of himself and his sweet wife. As the chairman of the Christian Party of Namibia, he sits in the Namibian parliament for the purpose of promoting the objectives of the Christian Party. He subsequently argues on behalf of the people he represents from the perspective of Christian principles.

Representative Thomas recently contacted us in order to inform us that the Namibian parliamentary leaders recently met in reference to the possible banning of church assemblies throughout the country because of the Covid-19 virus. Festus wanted to inform us that their party won their case, and thus the churches of Namibia would not ban assemblies throughout the country because of the pandemic. Churches would be allowed to make their own decisions concerning how they would meet, and what precautions they would take in order to protect their members. But the government would not be allowed to hand down any government mandates to terminate church assemblies. The government subsequently voted to stay out of the function of the churches.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in many countries of the world that are ruled by atheistic government officials, specifically in those governments of the West where politicians must please atheistic voters. Such governments see no problem with restricting church assemblies. They will often allow pubs to be opened, but ban religious assemblies.

We have no problem with restricting the large assemblies of the church for the sake of the safety of the members. Large assemblies were never a part of the assembly culture of the church until about the third century when Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, hijacked Christianity and built large purpose-built church buildings. But our concern

is with governments who seek to establish official presidents surrounding the function of the church. Such things should be left to the decision of the elders of the church, not to some atheistic politicians. If the function of the church is left to government officials, then we will end as communist China that takes every opportunity to ban any religious assembly, even small assemblies in houses.

We can appreciate the concern of governments to establish guidelines in reference to all assemblies in order that the citizens be protected from viral infections that are airborne. However, it is interesting to note that South Africa is the most tuberculosis infected nation of the world, with over seventy thousand deaths resulting each year because of this infection. But with such an infected population, the government has never considered banning church assemblies in the past in order to protect the people, neither have face masks been mandated to be worn in public by those infected with tuberculosis.

Some restrictions in reference to air borne viruses are possible in Western countries, but quite impossible in most societies of the developing world. Large cities in developing world environments have populations that are very congested. In these situations, people simply cannot be banned from being together in their communities. This is a reality in the major cities of these countries, and thus the possibility of banning people from socializing with one another is simply not possible. We must be careful, therefore, not to make moral judgments of those nations who cannot carry out in their normal everyday lives with the Western restrictions in reference to social distancing.

In most developing countries, the often unhealthy conditions that have existed throughout the years has produced a fatalistic philosophy of life and death. This was recently expressed to us by a good brother from Malawi who resides in South Africa. When we asked him about the Malawian Christians in the country of Malawi who continued to meet in assemblies, he responded, “We simply continue to assemble in our small groups. If we are infected with Covid-19, we simply die. We don’t worry about it.”

We must not forget that the emotional psychology of human behavior determines the very core of how societies function. When this

psychology is attacked by a moral norm that is contrary to God's moral standards, then society as a whole is under attack. And when the societies within a civilization become unglued with detrimental social norms that are contrary to God, then we know that a civilization is on the brink of decline, if not extinction. And once a civilization morally implodes, then those who survive must pick up the pieces of human fragments and start building again. If one does not believe this, then we would suggest that a good study of the rise and fall of the Roman Empire be in order. Better yet, it would be good to study again how God had to start human civilization over again with only eight people after the global flood of Noah's day (See Gn 6 - 9).

We were recently in a telephone conversation with a member of the church on the other side of the world. This was a member of a church that before the pandemic days, had an assembly attendance on Sunday morning of about four hundred people. When the pandemic struck, and the elders of the church introduced safety measures in order to protect the body from self-infection, they disbanded the assembly for a few weeks. They did so because most of the members were aged people who had known one another for decades. They were thus close friends because they had known one another for many years. Therefore, the leaders of the church, in agreement with the church, implemented safety measures in order to protect the aged members in reference to any large single assembly on Sunday morning. The members went to meeting in their homes. Because of their education concerning the insidious infection rate of the Covid-19 virus, the elders made a wise decision in order to protect the members. Until a vaccine is discovered, this was a decision that was based on love for the members.

This particular church normally met in a building that they had constructed over a half century ago. But health restrictions that were suggested by the medical people of the country encouraged churches to refrain from large congested single assemblies. So this and many other single-assembly churches complied with the suggestions.

Once they returned to a single assembly, they organized their assembly in order to maintain social distancing as best as possible when meeting in the building. As families, they spaced themselves apart

from one another in the assembly. If they had to go to two assemblies, they did in order that each family not have to sit close to other families. The elders advised that the most vulnerable aged members stay home.

However, what was a pleasant surprise to us was what this particular member of this church said to us over the telephone. We commented, “We are supposing that the aged members are remaining at home in order to protect themselves. They are the most vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus.” However, the informant member on the other end of the line said, “No, it is the aged who are coming, and the younger are staying away.”

Now that was certainly surprising. Nevertheless, it was quite revealing, and understandable. The older members had for decades formed close friendships with one another. To them, it was not about attendance on Sunday morning in order to comply with some tradition nor legal mandate. It was about long-term friends having the opportunity every Sunday to meet together in worship of God. This was a beautiful testimony to Christian friendship, and the true intent of what the Holy Spirit meant for us to understand from His statements in Hebrews 10:24,25. These older Christians certainly did not show up because it had been ingrained in their conscience to be obedient to some legal doctrine of attendance. On the contrary, they were in love with one another because of decades of mutual friendships. No virus would keep them from one another. And so it should be.

We would assume that the younger members would develop such friendships in the coming years. Unfortunately, when similar church assemblies were banned in Western churches because of the pandemic, and then restarted, church leaders discovered that about twenty percent of the attendees never came back. Some churches have experienced up to forty percent drop in attendance, even when social distancing was incorporated in the seating arrangements within the building. However, one reason that many never came back is that they were never there in the first place. “Church attendance” was simply a legal matter, not a reunion of friends on Sunday morning.

So we would conclude that Christians who are in love with one another will always find a way to be with one another. It is their inherent nature, not a command that they would obey. If one’s attendance to

church assemblies is still focused on obedience to some legal command, then he or she still does not get the point of the assembly of the saints. Those aged members of the preceding illustration got the point. Their attendance was based on old friends enjoying worship together.

Regardless of any restrictions that may be placed on old friends in reference to protecting themselves from airborne viruses, old Christian friends will always be committed to one another. It is easy for atheistic societies as England and Europe to implement strict measures in reference to social distancing in church assemblies. But when Christians want to remain in contact with one another, they will find a way.

It may be that for a time, as in wars and pandemics, Christians being together may be highly restricted. Nevertheless, they will in some way find a way to associate with one another. This has happened for centuries, and will continue. Fortunately, Christians today in the West have the advantage of the Internet. But this has been a blessing only in the last twenty years. Throughout world history until about twenty years ago, Christians were out of contact with one another during times of great social distress. In fact, the Holy Spirit even suggested that Christians in some areas forgo marriage because of the social distress that had been imposed on the Christian community because of Nero's reign of terror against Christians in Rome during the 60s. In this case, the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to suggest,

*Now concerning virgins [who are not married], I have no commandment of the Lord. However, I give **my opinion** as one who has obtained mercy by the Lord to be trustworthy. Therefore, I suppose that this is good **because of the present distress**, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry [in these times of distress] you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless, such will have trouble in the flesh. I am trying to spare you (1 Co 7:25-28).*

After Paul wrote the preceding words, social distress would eventually increase against Christians in the Roman Empire. By the end of

the first century, and into the second century, Christianity would be made illegal. The result of this in the city of Rome was that those Christians who lived there would eventually have to socially distance themselves in the catacombs (caves) beneath the city of Rome. Some Christians lived and died in the catacombs, while some were caught and thrown to lions in the coliseum for the entertainment of a truly ungodly society. Nevertheless, the power of the gospel eventually prevailed throughout the Roman Empire because Christians refused to be subjugated to the control of an ungodly government. They chose to serve God above man. The same will happen today. It is simply true in all ages of history that *“in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Rm 8:37). That statement was first written to Christians in Rome. It is still true today because He who works in us is greater than he who is in the world.

## Epilogue

It is difficult to write an epilogue for a book as this. In many ways, we did not cover a great deal of expository Bible study in the book. On the contrary, we leaned more toward advice in reference to the present pandemic that is upon us throughout the world. If we lived in the early 1900's during the Spanish influenza pandemic, we would have written in the same manner because of the impact the pandemic was having on the world at the time. The difference between then and now is that in those days there was little scientific research on the subject of pandemics. And besides this, there was not the news media throughout the world as there is today to inform us of the worldwide impact of the Covid-19 virus.

There is at least one good thing about the international news media of today. Combined with all the scientific research in reference to pandemics, the news media has educated all of us on the matter of the Covid-19 virus. Everyone who has kept up will all the news on the subject has become an “expert” in the field to the point that the experts are no longer functioning alone in the isolation of some obscure laboratory. What has been discovered in the laboratories today has been

broadcast immediately to the entire world. The advantage of this is that we have all been informed concerning the Covid-19 virus. Though we have all been somewhat brought into a state of fear concerning the matter because of the world's obsession with how Covid supposedly affects how we should be governed, as individuals we will learn how to deal with the pandemic. Humanity has a way of dealing with pandemics, and then, moves on.

Nevertheless, we have been informed concerning the insidious nature of this particular virus. The world survived the Spanish flu pandemic over one hundred years ago, and the world will do the same with this virus. We will survive. Thousands have already died, and thousands more will perish. But we are confident that civilization will survive, and carry on. This is especially true in reference to the church of our Lord.

Millions died from the Spanish flu pandemic, but at the time of this writing only hundreds of thousands have perished from the Covid-19 virus. This may change in the future, but not likely. Since many vaccines are being developed and will be administered to the general public worldwide, it seems unlikely that the world population will suffer anything close to what it suffered during the Spanish flu pandemic when over sixty million people perished worldwide.

One good thing that has come out of this pandemic is that we have all been informed concerning the system of inflection by which the Covid-19 virus moves among populations. Science has published enough information about the spread of this virus that all of us have been taught what health precautions we must take in order to guard ourselves, and the general public, from being infected with the virus. Since much of the world is as the population of Africa—over half the population of Africa lives in urban centers—there are some very important health measures that we are encouraged to take in order to protect ourselves and society as a whole. These are often common sense measures that should have been taught long before the arrival of Covid-19. The implementation of these health precautions will not only spare many from the Covid virus, but also from many other viruses that continually circulation among the populations of the world.

In reference to the Bible, we have all learned a very important truth. The general cleanliness principles of the Sinai law are as valid today as they were over four thousand years ago when they were given to Israel at Mount Sinai. If even these laws had been practiced as health measures today, we would have been spared the tragedy of many diseases that people suffer today. Though not a specific point of any Sinai precept, we too can wash our hands regularly in respect to those Sinai laws that deal with cleanliness. We can minimize body contact, especially contact with dead bodies. We can eat clean food, and food that is meant for human consumption. The Israelites needed no social distancing rules since they were all socially distanced from one another on farms that were scattered throughout Palestine. It is only when people started massing in urban centers did the problems surrounding worldwide epidemics begin to occur.

The scribes and Pharisees actually had a point when they came and complained to Jesus about the disciples of Jesus going to “McDonalds” in downtown Jerusalem and then not washing their hands before they ate their hamburgers and fries (chips). Unfortunately, they complained on the occasion in order to set a trap for Jesus by enforcing an application of the law that was foreign to the Sinai law. *“Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? **For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**”* (Mt 15:2).

Of course the Sinai law said nothing about washing hands before eating bread. What the religious leaders had done was make a law in reference to the application of the laws that dealt with cleanliness. Where they went wrong was that they bound their applications (interpretations) of the law on the people. There was no specific precept in the Sinai law that commanded that one should wash his or her hands before eating. General cleanliness precepts were given, but the people had to be allowed to make a decision as to how they would apply the laws concerning cleanliness. The scribes and Pharisees implemented a good application in reference to not going to “McDonalds” and eating a hamburger without first sanitizing one’s hands. But their application was not a specific law. They only made their application (interpretation) of the law binding, and by doing such, they set aside the law itself.

Social distancing to contain the Covid-19 virus may be questionable since the contagion factor is still somewhat vague. Tuberculosis and influenza, as well as Covid-19, are all airborne viruses. However, tuberculosis and influenza are transmitted more by droplets, and not dispersed as an aerosol, that is, as a microscopic mist. And since the scientists are now concluding that the Covid-19 is an aerosol dispersed virus, then the social distancing formerly suggested by the scientific world must go far beyond the suggested two meters. In other words, the Covid-19 virus hangs in the air up to several meters away from the infected individual who coughs or sneezes. When the ambient temperature outside the human body is cooler than one's body temperature, this means that the Covid-19 virus will hang in the air for a greater period of time in the winter than in the summer. If one is not in a ventilated area, the virus can just hang in the air, awaiting someone to pass through the mist and subsequently inhale from the unseen cloud of contamination.

When found on surfaces, it was first assumed that within 72 hours the Covid-19 virus died. But recent studies have revealed that in laboratory conditions, the virus has remained active for up to three weeks on surfaces. That is not encouraging when considering the contamination of indoor restaurants. But then the scientists have correctly suggested that all flat surfaces be sanitized. It is good to sanitize our hands, but it is an extra precaution to sanitize all the flat surfaces of public places, including buses and taxis.

Wearing a face mask in public places is good advice. It is good advice because millions of people have never been taught to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze. In fact, it is quite amazing to discover how many people from childhood were never taught by their parents to wash their hands or cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze. One advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the Ebola epidemic, is that people have been taught to be clean. The Sinai law taught the principle that "godliness is next to cleanliness"—this statement is not in the Bible—which principle of life should be taught from childhood. The principle was based on the fact that godliness entails obedience to God's principles for cleanliness that were inherent in the

cleanliness laws of the Sinai law.

Everyone should probably download and read the book, *None of These Diseases* that was written by Dr. S. I. McMillen and first published in 1962. Later editions were coauthored by Dr. David E. Stern. Over one million copies of this book have been sold. McMillen did a masterful job in going through the Sinai laws in order to point out how many of those laws were connected with diseases about which the world at that time had no knowledge. It was not until the arrival of modern science that the reason behind the Sinai cleanliness laws was revealed, and thus why God gave the laws in the first place. When those laws were taught to the Israelites, the people protected themselves from many diseases. We must do the same in our world today which is overpopulated in many urban centers around the world.

If God was concerned about the health of His people throughout the Old Testament, then He is still concerned today. Since the giving of the Sinai law to the Israelites, we have learned a great deal about diseases and infections, which things the Israelites never knew. By learning how diseases and infections are transmitted from one person to another, we have learned why God prescribed for His people certain instructions in the Sinai law to prevent the transmission of such, and subsequently, germs and viruses that cause diseases. We are without excuse today if we scientifically know what causes many diseases and infections, and yet ignore taking the advice of the scientific community as to how to avoid such diseases and infections.

If the Israelites did not maintain the “cleanliness laws” of the Sinai law, then they were without excuse for breaking the Sinai law as a whole, though God never explained the purpose why He gave the laws concerning cleanliness. The Israelites may not have understood the reasons why the cleanliness laws were given, nevertheless, they had to keep the laws regardless of the scientific reasons for the laws that we know today.

If we violate cleanliness laws today that are explained to us by the scientific community, we are not breaking the law of God, as was the case with Israel. However, we are revealing that we are somewhat foolish by knowingly violating those principles of cleanliness that will

aid in our continued health. Violating cleanliness rules simply because we believe that God will take care of us, leans on the side of foolishness, if not tempting God. If we become ill because we willingly violated cleanliness rules, then we cannot blame God. The science of health is a blessing from God. Honoring rules of good health is common sense. One may not have been taught some of the common rules of good health when young, but it is time to educate ourselves on these matters. It is now as Paul wrote. *“When I was a child I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things”* (1 Co 13:11). It is now a time for one to educate himself or herself in reference to healthy living, and thus put away the ignorance of childhood in reference to one’s own health and the health of others. This is the implementation of love in which Paul wrote the preceding statement.

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 Book 83: *Gospel Teacher*  
 Book 84: *Gospel Teacher In Times Of Turmoil*  
 Book 85: *The Incarnational Journey Of God*  
 Book 86: *Angels*  
 Book 87: *Beginner's Road Map For Gospel Living Into Eternal Life*  
 Book 88: *Inscriptions III: Just Saying*  
 Book 89: *Your Gospel Journey With The Son Of God*  
 Book 90: *The Incredible Mystery*  
 Book 91: *Inscriptions IV: Finding Our Way Back*  
 Book 92: *Releasing The Gospel*  
 Book 93: *A Certain Destiny*  
 Book 94: *Latin America Odyssey*  
 Book 95: *African Odyssey*  
 Book 96: *African Workshop Odyssey*  
 Book 97: *African Literature Odyssey*  
 Book 98: *Encounter With Ghana*  
 Book 99: *Faith Is The Victory*  
 Book 100: *Passage To China*  
 Book 101: *Authority From Heaven*  
 Book 102: *Following Jesus Through Troubled Waters*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**