



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

Messianic Perspectives[®]

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

A hand wearing a green nitrile glove holds a petri dish. The dish contains a red agar plate with several dark, circular bacterial colonies. In the background, another petri dish with a red agar plate is visible, but it is empty. The background is a textured, yellowish-orange surface.

**DID THE
CORONAVIRUS
BRING US
A MESSAGE?**

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

A few weeks ago, astronomers announced that a radio telescope in British Columbia, Canada, detected “fast radio bursts” (FRBs) emanating from a spiral galaxy 500 million light years from us.

Scientists around the world were very excited! After all, volunteers at places like SETI (the “Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence”) have been sitting in front of computer screens for decades, waiting patiently to detect signals like these. Twenty-eight bursts were recorded over the span of a little more than a year. Their hope, of course, is that signals such as these could put us in touch with an alien civilization “out there somewhere.”



ESO/José Francisco Salgado

The problem, of course, is that it would have taken 500 million earth-years (applying uniformitarian, evolutionary timescales accepted by most astronomers) for those radio signals to reach us here on earth. So, any alien civilization that may have existed half a billion years ago probably wouldn’t have survived for this long.¹

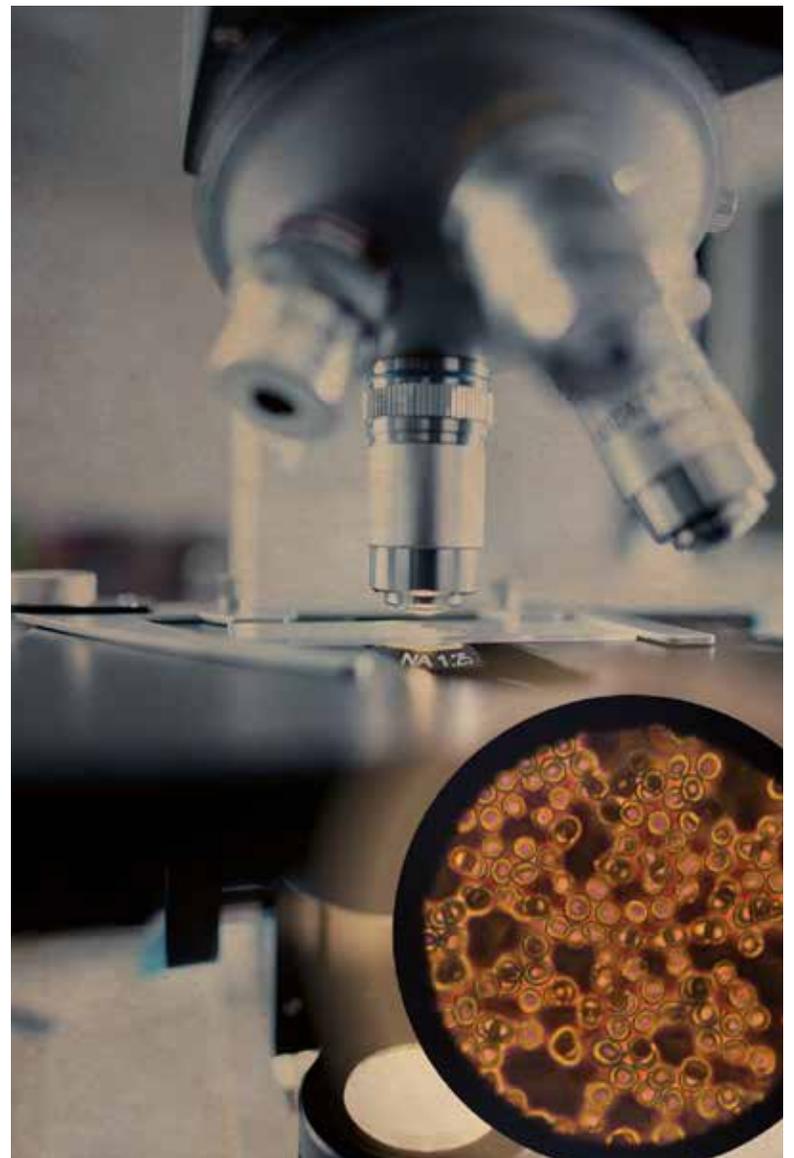
Our friends at SETI are stubbornly persistent, however. They are people of faith—true believers in the existence of other intelligences that they believe have evolved on other earth-like worlds. So even though the odds are overwhelmingly against them, they’re not deterred.

LOOKING IN THE WRONG PLACE?

What if an extraterrestrial Superintelligence sent us a message through the micro-universe (that is, what we observe through a microscope) rather than through the macro-universe (what we see through a telescope)? Would we recognize the message? Would we be willing to receive it?

The world has been rocked recently by the novel coronavirus. It’s called “novel” (new) because this was the first known appearance of this particular strain. It’s evidently a cousin of the SARS coronavirus from the early 2000s.

This most recent virus is extremely contagious—and unpredictable. For some people who contracted it, COVID-19 has been like getting a common cold or a mild case of the flu. Some people didn’t even realize they were sick until they tested positive.



Messianic Perspectives®

Dr. Gary Hedrick, *Editor in Chief*
Erastos Leiloglou, *Creative Director*



Messianic Perspectives is published bimonthly by CJF Ministries, P.O. Box 345, San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345, a 501(c)3 Texas nonprofit corporation: Dr. Charles Halff (1929-2000), Founder; Dr. Gary Hedrick, President; Brian Nowotny, Vice President for Administration; Erastos Leiloglou, Creative Director. Subscription price: \$10 per year. The publication of articles by other authors does not necessarily imply CJFM’s full agreement with all the views expressed therein. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Visit us online at cjfm.org. Toll-free OrderLine: (800) 926-5397. © 2020 by CJF Ministries. All rights reserved.

In other cases, however, this coronavirus has been devastating, with its victims overloading ICUs all over the world, where they're on ventilators to help them breathe and stay alive. In spite of everyone's best efforts, though, thousands have died—and the death toll continues to rise in some areas. There have been other pandemics, of course, but the world hasn't seen anything quite so contagious and widespread since the late Middle Ages (1347-1351), when the Plague (also known as the Black Death) swept across Europe and Asia, killing roughly a third of the world's population at that time.²



Coronavirus patients at the Imam Khomeini Hospital in Tehran, Iran

Mohsen Atayi



President Trump Holds a News Conference on the Coronavirus

The White House

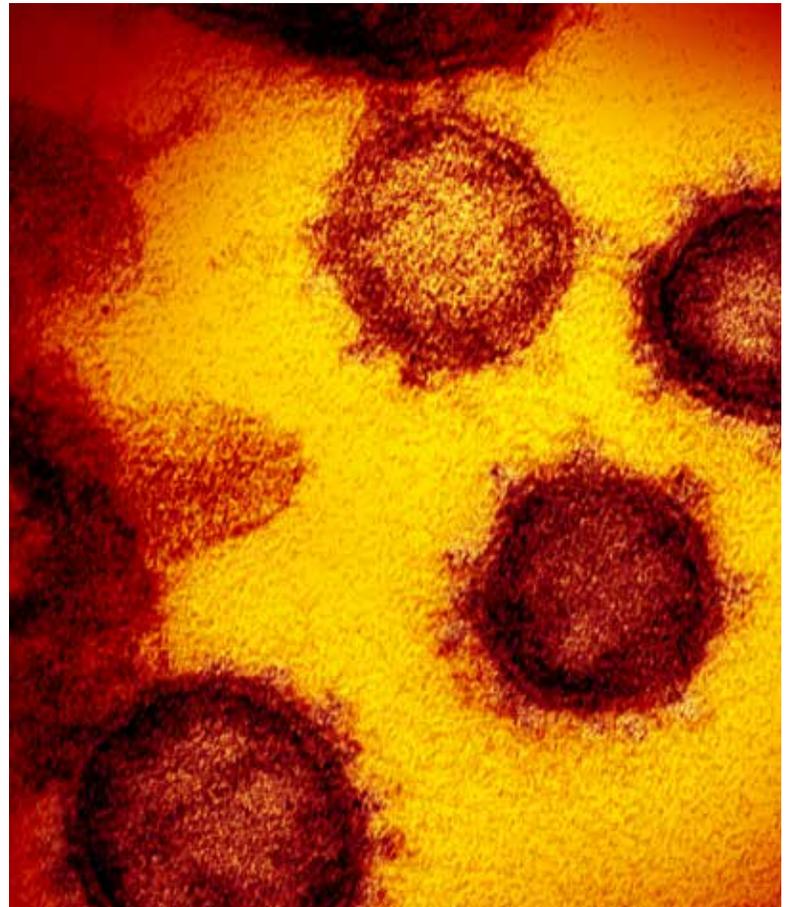
When this new COVID-19 coronavirus was first detected in China, and it became clear that it was going to spread quickly, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), the Trump Administration, and health organizations in Europe, all sprang into action. In the private sector, health centers like Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore launched massive research projects and began publishing regularly updated maps of the spreading threat worldwide. Pharmaceutical companies have been working on vaccines to counter it.

Is it possible that God is speaking to the world through this microscopic entity that we call a virus? And if so, what's the message?

WHAT'S A VIRUS?

A virus is a microscopic pathogen that attaches itself to a host and hijacks the host's cellular apparatus to release poisonous particles and infect more cells, causing disease.³

Coronaviruses constitute a subset of viruses that cause disease in mammals (including humans) and birds. In humans, they infect the respiratory tract and cause symptoms (at least in the beginning) like those of a common cold. In extreme cases, which until recently were relatively rare, symptoms worsen over time and result in something like viral pneumonia, which can be life-threatening. Patients may require a ventilator to breathe. Some die.



SARS-CoV-2—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19, shown through a transmission electron microscope

NIAID-RML

Most viruses are much smaller than bacteria;⁴ and like bacteria, they can cause disease in both animals and humans. Some viruses infect humans due to poor hygiene or at-risk behaviors like drug use or promiscuous sex. The condition poliomyelitis, for example, is known to result from the ingestion of fecal matter, where the poliovirus colonizes the gastrointestinal tract.

Medically, viruses generally don't respond to antibiotics, which are widely used by doctors to eradicate harmful bacteria. Viruses are not "alive," at least not in a technical sense, because they can't survive or reproduce without being attached to a host organism. They are easily spread through droplets in the air (from the coughs of an infected person, known as a "carrier"), or through direct contact (touching). Viruses can enter the body through the mouth, nose, or eyes. COVID-19, in particular, is extremely contagious.

SMARTER THAN YOU THINK

Are viruses intelligent? Well, it depends on how you define “intelligent.” They have the ability to sense danger and plan ahead—and they can mutate (that is, make changes in their genetic structure) so they can evade the body’s natural defenses (the immune system). Some viruses are able to adapt and change so rapidly, immunizations developed to combat them are no longer effective by the time they’re made available to the public.

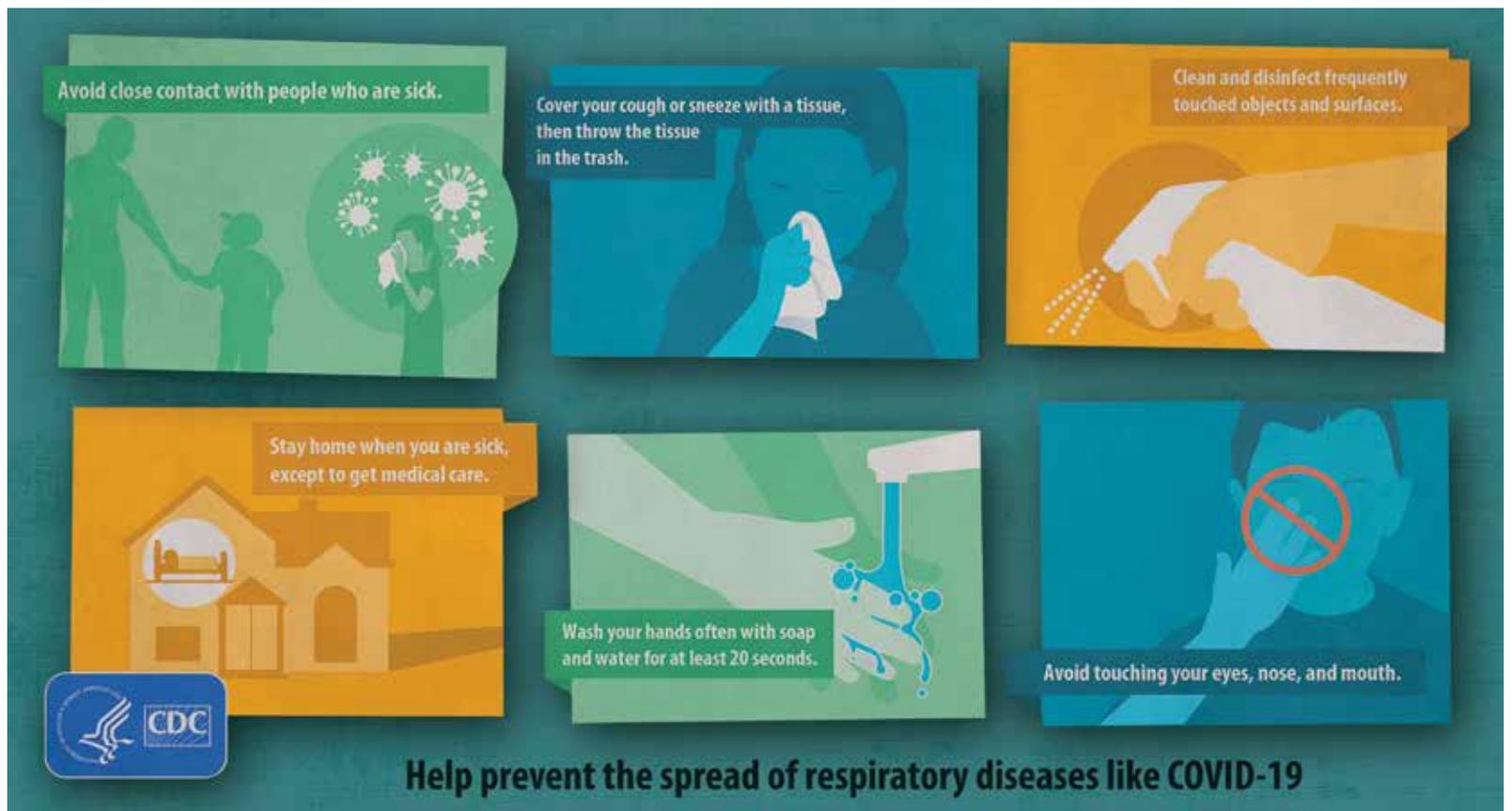
The medical community has done an admirable job of reminding us incessantly that the best way to avoid the coronavirus is to continually wash our hands and to avoid touching our faces—and to avoid person-to-person transmission by maintaining our distance from others.

We never notice most viruses. They simply run their course and eventually fall apart or “die.”⁵ Others, however, are more dangerous, persistent, and resistant to treatment, like:

- **Polio**—Also known as “infantile paralysis,” this RNA virus causes a condition known as poliomyelitis. Hundreds of thousands were afflicted **every year** before the 1950s, when inexpensive vaccines were developed by Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin.
- **Hepatitis A, B, C, D & E**—This is an assortment of various forms of inflammation that destroy liver tissue. There are immunizations for the A, B & D versions to prevent the disease. Several forms of hepatitis are curable and liver transplants are also an option in some cases.⁶
- **West Nile**—This virus causes West Nile fever, a (usually) mild infection that has no known cure but resolves in almost all cases within a matter of weeks or months. Like COVID-19, people at higher risk are those over 60 or who have underlying medical conditions.

- **Swine Flu**—This Influenza A (H1N1) virus came from Mexico and caused a pandemic from 2009 to 2010.
- **HIV/AIDS**—Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that infects the immune system, destroying CD4⁺ T cells. The disease itself appears to have originated in primates in Africa and spread to humans from there. It affects the homosexual community disproportionately but not exclusively. HIV/AIDS can be treated (and in some cases controlled) but not cured (as yet), and it continues to be classified as a global pandemic in 2020.
- **Ebola**—Also known as “hemorrhagic fever,” Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a frightening and deadly disease that researchers believe started among primates and spread to humans in Africa. There is now a vaccine (rVSV-ZEBOV) that prevents Ebola.
- **SARS-CoV-1**—Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), first recognized in 2003, is a respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus. Researchers believe that it, too, originated in animals (possibly bats) and spread to humans.
- **SARS-CoV-2**—This virus was the cause of the recent 2019-2020 outbreak. It caused a highly-infectious, respiratory, pneumonia-like and potentially deadly disease known as “coronavirus disease 2019”—abbreviated as “COVID-19.”

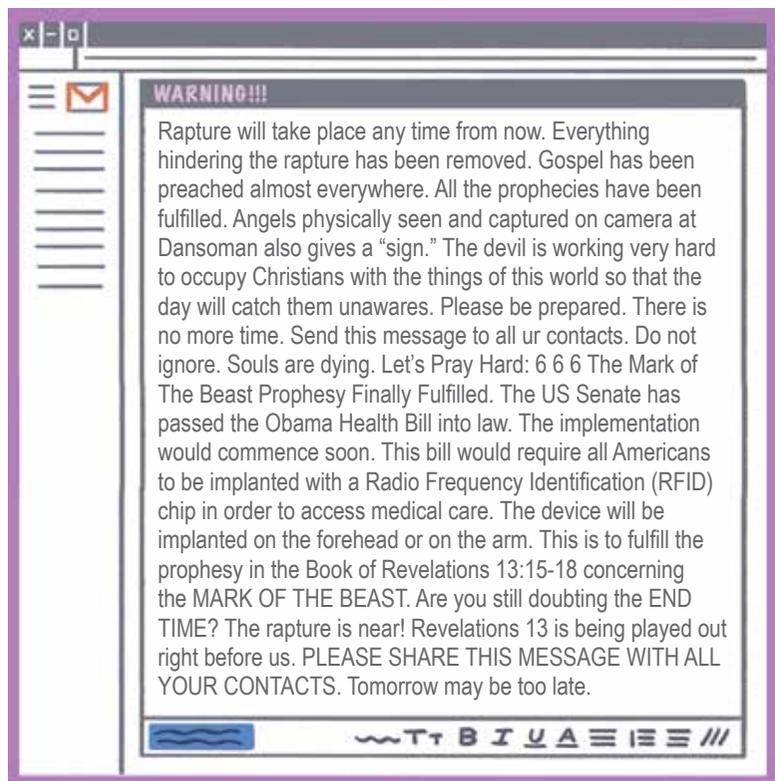
Most viruses are harmful, but some aren’t. There are viruses, in fact, that attack and destroy harmful bacteria. (This may have been their original function prior to the Fall, before things began to go haywire.) Today, however, beneficial viruses are the exception, not the rule. Most viruses are bad news and can cause anything from a simple case of the sniffles to life-threatening pneumonia. This has been the case with the recent COVID-19 virus and its wide range of symptoms and their severity.



THE RISE OF THE INTERNET

Since its advent in 1991, the Internet has proven to be one of the greatest tools for the spread of the Gospel ever devised. However, it has also opened up a whole vista of new opportunities for religious quacks and date-setters. And sure enough, it didn't take long for them to get busy exploiting the worldwide turmoil caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus!

Here are some excerpts from a rather long email that was circulating after the coronavirus hit the news earlier this year. Please overlook the poor grammar and punctuation. We wanted you to see it in as much of its original form as possible (within our space limitations). Chances are, you've seen one like it!



This is a good example of the fraudulent nature of many such “prophetic” emails that make the rounds during or after a major disaster. In this case, note that someone copied and pasted it from an old, Obama-era email (January 2009 to January 2017) and tried to make it relevant to the coronavirus in 2020. So, it’s anachronistic. In retrospect, we now know that no RFID chips were implanted in connection with the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Furthermore, note that the author doesn’t know the difference between the noun “prophecy” and the verb “prophesy”—and he or she thinks John wrote the “Book of Revelations” (plural). The correct title is the “Book of Revelation” (singular). This might seem like minutiae, but it’s hermeneutically necessary to recognize that the 22 chapters of the *Apocalypse* constitute a **single, unified** revelation of God’s glorified Son, Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah. It’s not a patchwork of separate revelations.

And by the way, the mention of angels “physically seen and captured on camera at Dansoman” refers to phony video footage (accessible on YouTube) purporting to show two “angels” flittering around in the clouds over Dansoman, Ghana, in 2015. Closer scrutiny shows that the fuzzy, altered, slow-motion images are actually birds. And the footage itself is from Brazil, not Ghana, and dates back to 2011—four years earlier. So, the angelic “sign” is bogus.

AVOID BEING BLOWN OFF COURSE

Please don’t misunderstand us here. We most definitely believe in angels. Our problem with all of this is that we think angels have more productive things to do than frolicking in the clouds over Brazil while people on the ground film them. If you’d like to see an angel, dear reader, don’t look up at the clouds. Instead, look around you. The Bible says angelic beings can assume human form (Gen. 18) and some of us have interacted with them on occasion without realizing who (or what) they were (Heb. 13:2).

So, we’re not in any way opposed to angels or their work. Our concern is more about the danger of believers being deceived by phony emails and by every random “wind of doctrine” that comes blowing our way (Eph. 4:14).⁷ We need to learn to stand strong in the faith and not be so easily hoodwinked.



GOD SAYS WE ALL TEST POSITIVE FOR THE “VIRUS” OF SIN

1. Every human being has been infected by something the Bible calls “sin.” It separates us from God.
ISAIAH 59:2; 64:6; PSALM 14:2-3
2. Yeshua the Messiah died on Calvary to redeem us from sin’s destructive consequences and restore us to a relationship with God.
ISAIAH 53:5-6; PSALM 130:7-8
3. His sacrificial death pays for the sins of anyone who will come to Him by faith.
ISAIAH 53:11; HABUKKUK 2:4
4. You can experience God’s *shalom* (“peace”) and forgiveness right now simply by placing your trust in Him.
ISAIAH 38:17; PSALM 130:3-4, 7-8

You can talk to God just like you would talk to a close friend.
We call it “prayer.” You can pray silently or out loud.

Tell Him what is in your heart. He promises to hear and respond:
“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (*Jer. 33:3*).

**For more help or information, please
call 1-800-926-5397 or email info@cjfm.org.**

Yes, of course, we want the Lord to return—and the sooner, the better! But He’ll come when He’s ready and when the time is right. Meanwhile, God’s people are supposed to be busy doing His work, not sitting in front of a computer screen cranking out silly emails with little or no basis in reality! Instead, how about helping the poor and homeless by volunteering at your local food bank or soup kitchen? (We’re talking about when the lockdown and social distancing are over, of course.) Or what about offering to visit the local hospitals with your pastor when he makes his rounds? Or find some attractive and well-written Gospel tracts and distribute them in your neighborhood? The possibilities are endless, and you would be accomplishing something with eternal significance.

The Bible says we’re supposed to be mentally tough and serious about our faith—not silly, superficial, and naïve. Peter wrote, *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Pet. 1:13).



The Fifth Plague of Egypt (Pestilence)
Joseph Mallord William Turner

THE VIRUS SPEAKS

In the Torah, God used a donkey to speak to the Prophet Balaam (Num. 22:28-30). So why can't He use a tiny, microscopic virus to deliver a much-needed message to our world today? Here are some important things the coronavirus could be telling us.

1. God has used pestilence historically to deal with rebels.

The biblical term for an epidemic or pandemic is "plague" or "pestilence." In Hebrew, it's the word *dever* (דבר), which denotes something that destroys, or that causes death.⁸ In the Torah, it signifies a pathogen that wipes out a significant portion of a population (Ex. 9:3; Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:21). God himself sometimes sent plagues upon people and cultures as a form of judgment—and there are clues that at least some of those plagues may have been viral in nature.

Note, for example, Deuteronomy 28:21, where it says, "*The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess.*" Note that this is exactly what a virus does: it "clings" (i.e., attaches itself) to a host. It's a parasite whose very survival depends on it clinging to a host organism.

Sometimes even animals were affected. During the prelude to the Exodus, the Egyptians were warned, "[B]ehold, the hand of the LORD will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence" (Ex. 9:3). This may have been a strain of coronavirus. They can (and do) attach themselves to livestock.

During the Exodus, it was all about God getting the Egyptians' attention. One way of doing that is with sickness. If the COVID-19 coronavirus could speak, it may well say to us, "God is speaking, so pay attention."

2. Modern medical science has limited ability to fight a virulent contagion.

It's encouraging that medical science has made so much progress in the past century or so. Many diseases (like measles, mumps, smallpox, and polio) that had plagued mankind for ages have been virtually eradicated through the introduction of vaccines. However, even with all the remarkable advances, we've all seen how it only takes a tiny, microscopic virus to bring life on Planet Earth to a virtual standstill. The recent coronavirus outbreak has showcased the limitations of modern science in a big way.

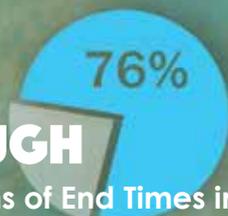
Again, if the virus were to speak, it might say, "Wiggle and squirm all you want, but I'm God's messenger and one way or another, you're going to have to deal with me."

3. God has ways of protecting His people.

God doesn't always protect us from disease. We live in a fallen world, and we inhabit mortal bodies that are subject to illness, as well as the painful processes of age and degeneration. So, more often than not, the Lord allows natural processes (which mostly follow natural laws He himself has ordained) to run their course without His intervention. Yes, we can pray for healing—and we often do. However, it's always God's prerogative to answer those prayers in any one of three ways: "yes," "no," or "not now."

The ideal is for godly faith and medical science to come together to fight illness and cure the sick. One notable example of this was something that happened during the Ebola virus outbreak in Liberia, Africa, in 2014. In those days, Ebola was considered incurable and contracting it was a virtual death sentence.

**THE CORONAVIRUS:
ITS MESSAGE IS
GETTING THROUGH**



According to a new LifeWay Research poll, more than 76 percent of evangelical pastors see current events (like the coronavirus) as a precursor to the fulfillment of end-time prophecies.

"Vast Majority of Pastors See Signs of End Times in Current Events" lifewayresearch.com (April 7, 2020)



Dr. Kent Brantly delivers remarks during an event with American health care workers fighting Ebola, in the East Room of the White House. October 29, 2014.

The White House / Chuck Kennedy

Kent Brantly was a medical doctor on the staff of Samaritan's Purse in Liberia, and he contracted the disease through contact with his Ebola patients. Almost immediately, word went out through prayer networks worldwide about the plight of this brave, young doctor who had been laboring so faithfully on the front lines of the battle against Ebola, but was now infected with the dreaded disease. While thousands of Christians prayed, Dr. Brantly was evacuated from West Africa to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta where he received cutting-edge medical treatment and eventually made a full recovery. Dr. Brantly, and his medical colleagues who helped treat him, shared the honor of being named *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year" for 2014. It's a beautiful story of faith and science working together!

Yes, God has ways of protecting His people!

During the Black Plague, Jewish people were persecuted in Europe—and many thousands were killed—because the non-Jewish population (many of whom didn't like Jews in the first place) noticed that the Jewish community didn't suffer the effects of the Plague to the same extent that everyone else did. Therefore, they concluded, "the Jews" must be responsible for it. Several anti-Semitic conspiracy theories made the rounds at the time, including one that said Jewish operatives were secretly and systematically poisoning wells from which non-Jewish communities drew their water.

Today, of course, everyone knows that the Jewish people had nothing to do with the origins of the Plague that wiped out nearly half of Europe's population. Some scientists believe it resulted from a virus (i.e., hemorrhagic viral fever), but most agree that it was caused by a bacterium that infested black rats migrating (via ships) from Asia.

One reason Jewish communities were largely exempt from the Plague was that they practiced the Torah's hygiene laws. Unlike their non-Jewish neighbors, Jewish people were required to bathe regularly. They had to wash their hands (*netilat yadayim*) many times during a routine day, particularly after using the restroom, as well as before and after meals. These are just a few of the requirements.

Keep in mind that this was during a period in Europe when sanitary practices were extremely primitive.⁹ In those days, a non-Jewish person of the working class might go **for months on end** without bathing or even washing his hands!

The Jewish people, then, were protected from the Plague by obeying their Torah—God's Word—and its traditional interpretations in the Talmud.¹⁰ So maybe this is where the virus would say, "You are wise to listen to the Lord."



An artist's depiction of a massacre of Jewish people in 1349. Royal Library of Belgium manuscript 1376/77. From *Antiquitates Flandriae* by Baptiste Gramaye (1708).

4. More pestilences are coming.

More plagues, whether viral or bacterial, are on the way. The Bible warns us about this. COVID-19 may not be directly prophesied, but it's a forewarning. It shows just how quickly and universally an epidemic can spread and get out of control—and become a global pandemic. Within a matter of a few weeks, a contagion can spread from its local epicenter like an out-of-control wildfire to threaten virtually every human being on Planet Earth.

There are no more doubters. We have all seen the pandemic with our own eyes in our own communities. We now know how this can happen—and **how it can happen very quickly**.

The Book of Revelation is a road map for the future.¹¹ In its inspired pages, the Apostle John tells us about the coming Tribulation Period, known in the Tanakh as “the Day of the LORD” (e.g., Joel 2:31; 3:14; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1) or “the Time of Jacob’s Trouble” (Jer. 30:7).

In Revelation 6, we read about the famous “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” Each one represents an aspect of God’s judgment on this rebellious world during the Tribulation:

The Antichrist will be a false Messiah, a political proxy for the devil. Many prophetic writers see a satanic “trinity” in Revelation: (1) the Antichrist (or Beast), (2) the False Prophet, and (3) the Dragon (or Satan himself). Their collective goal will be to establish an end-time, counterfeit kingdom and put an end to King Yeshua’s plans for a future Davidic Kingdom in fulfillment of the ancient covenant promises.

Those of us who are futurist/pre-Tribulational in our view of eschatology take comfort in the assurance that the Church (*Kehilah*) of Yeshua the Messiah will be removed in the Rapture before these horrors are unleashed on the earth and its hapless inhabitants. However, vast numbers of people will come to faith during those seven perilous years (after the Church is gone) and many of these new believers will be martyred for their faith (7:9-17).

Yeshua himself warned that plagues (“pestilences”) would ravage the earth during the ramp-up to the Great Tribulation: *Then He said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven”* (Luke 21:10-11).

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE (REVELATION 6)

FIRST HORSEMAN	Verse 2	WHITE	Represents Antichrist, False Messiah
SECOND HORSEMAN	Verse 4	RED	Represents war and bloodshed
THIRD HORSEMAN	Verses 5-6	BLACK	Represents famine
FOURTH HORSEMAN	Verse 8	PALE	Represents pestilence and rampant death



Note that the first horseman represents the Antichrist, who’s the satanically inspired pseudo-Messiah and political dictator of Commercial/Political Babylon (Rev. 18) during the Tribulation Period. In Revelation 6, he’s riding a white horse, which represents his ill-fated attempt to insert himself into the role of Yeshua the Messiah, who will also be riding a white horse when He appears (Rev. 19:11). The Antichrist is the leader of the rebels who will come against God during the future Tribulation.

Is COVID-19 “the” pestilence that fulfills prophecy? Not likely. Notice that the word Yeshua uses is plural: “pestilences” (λοιμοί, *loimoi*). There won’t be any single plague that triggers end-time events. Instead, there will be **trends** (e.g., wars, earthquakes, famines, and plagues) that will increase in frequency and intensity (like birth pains) until they reach their zenith during the Tribulation.¹² So, in this instance, the virus could be saying to the world, “I’m just a forerunner of the trouble that lies ahead.” And to believers, it could be saying, “Look up . . . because your redemption draws near” (v. 28).

5. A devastating pandemic has unified the world like nothing else could.

I realize this point has been repeated over and over since the 1960s—perhaps even to the point of tedium. However, it’s nonetheless still true. The prophetic Scriptures portray a one-world system in the end times. The Book of Revelation refers to it as “Babylon” (18:1-3, 10, 21). Commercial/political “Babylon” will be ruled by the Antichrist (also known as “the Beast”; 16:2) and religious “Babylon” will be presided over by the False Prophet (16:13; 19:20).

The coordinated worldwide response to the coronavirus pandemic has shown us that much of the apparatus for this end-time global setup is already in place. The United States, Canada, and much of Europe and Asia are all working in concert to defeat the pandemic. There are instances where nations who have traditionally been at odds are now working in concert to combat the virus.

RELIGIOUS BABYLON (REV. 17)	COMMERCIAL BABYLON (REV. 18)
Known as “Babylon,” a mystery (v. 5)	Also known as “Babylon” (v. 2)
Portrayed as “the Great Prostitute” (v. 1), committing spiritual immorality via a union with the ungodly world-powers	Portrayed as the New York City of ancient times (Babylon), the intersection point of all the world’s business dealings (vv. 1-3)
Associated with Rome (Seven Hills), a center for the global religious system (v. 9)	Associated with all the “kings” and “merchants” of the earth (vv. 9, 11)
Presided over by the False Prophet, an apostate religious leader (16:13; 19:20)	Presided over by the False Messiah (i.e., Antichrist or the Beast; 17:8)
Provides support for the Beast’s war against God and His saints (v. 6)	Makes war with the Lamb and the saints (17:14)
Vanquished by the leader of Commercial Babylon, who turns on her (vv. 16-17)	The False Messiah is defeated by the true Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth (19:11-16)

Unless we’re misreading the many prophetic clues, the Antichrist himself could be alive somewhere in the world today! Perhaps the virus is telling us, “Use your powers of perception and your knowledge of God’s prophetic Word—and don’t be deceived.”

6. God is still on His throne.

The last thing the coronavirus might say to us if it had the faculty of speech (and the intelligence to use it) is this: “As dangerous and disruptive as I am, I am no match for your God.”

These are troubling and uncertain times, especially for people who don’t know the Lord. For believers, however, He is still “the Rock of our salvation” (Psalm 95:1). Because He is indestructible and unmovable, we have nothing to fear! Here’s how the Apostle John closed the Book of Revelation in AD 95:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him **the plagues** that are written in this book;

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:18-20.



*Dr. Gary Hedrick
is president of
CJF Ministries.*

¹ You can read Gary’s comments about huge evolutionary timescales in his “Bible Questions & Answers” column in the Jan.-Feb. 2019 issue of *Messianic Perspectives*, available for online viewing in our archives at cjfm.org.

² Roughly 75 to 200 million people are believed to have died in the 14th century from the Black Death. A little-known fact is that it also struck down the mighty, legendary Vikings. When the Plague ravaged Greenland, the much-feared Norsemen were forced to halt their exploration of North America.

³ “Not All Viruses Are Bad for You” by Cynthia Mathew in *The Conversation* at the Science Alert blog (August 10, 2019) at sciencealert.com.

⁴ Some researchers have illustrated the scale of size by suggesting that you could easily fit 10,000 polioviruses on a single grain of salt. See “What Are Viruses?” by Aparna Vidyasagar in *LiveScience* (January 6, 2016). Accessed in March 2020 at livescience.com.

⁵ Viruses don’t really “die” in a medical sense because they’re technically not alive. They don’t meet the scientific criteria for a living organism: (1) free-standing (independent) existence and (2) the ability to reproduce.

⁶ Note the important difference between “preventable” and “curable.” Immunizations prevent diseases but don’t cure them once the patient is experiencing symptoms.

⁷ Ephesians 4:14 says, [T]hat we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning

craftiness of deceitful plotting. The Apostle Paul knew what the “wind” can do. His missionary journeys took him across much of the Roman Empire in the first century. He often traveled by ship (2 Cor. 11:25), so he was acutely aware of the perils of being blown off-course by contrary winds on the Mediterranean Sea.

⁸ The Septuagint (LXX) translates the Hebrew *dever* with the Greek *thanatos* (lit., “death”).

⁹ Incredibly, historians tell us that hygienic practices in medieval Europe were much more primitive than they had been in ancient Rome some 1,500 years earlier!

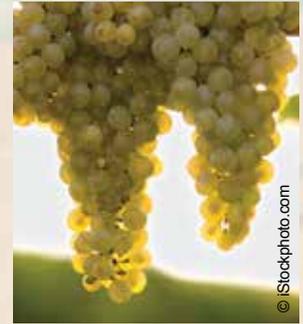
¹⁰ For examples of Jewish hygiene laws, see *Shabbat* 62b and *Sotah* 4b in the Babylonian Talmud (*Bavli*).

¹¹ The Apostle John’s outline of the Book of Revelation (in Greek, the *Apocalypse*) is found in 1:19, where he says he’s describing past, present (first century), and future events (“things that will take place after this”).

¹² In Matthew 24:8, Yeshua mentions wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes—and then He says, “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” The word “sorrows” here (the Greek *odin*) literally means “birth pains.” His Second Coming, then, follows a period of prolonged and painful “labor” (consisting of cataclysmic events on the earth) which finally ends with the birth of a New World—the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



Mardi Gras Evangelism

Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans), and volunteers take to the streets every year to evangelize during Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Metairie. They hand out pamphlets and ask individuals to respond to a six-question survey. Following the survey, the person is asked if he or she knows what the Good News is. Michelle writes: “They usually say that they don’t, so we ask, ‘May I share the Good News with you?’ This gives us the opportunity to share the Gospel with them.” During Mardi Gras 2019, Michelle was privileged to pray with a woman to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Recently, Michelle received a phone call from the woman’s mother telling her that she needed a Bible and was hoping that Michelle could send her one just like the one she had sent her daughter after she prayed to receive the Lord. Michelle ordered the Bible, and then the woman called the following week again to ask when the Bible would be delivered. She also told Michelle that she had begun attending church with her daughter. Michelle adds: “A long conversation ensued, and, at the end of the conversation, she also gave her heart to the Lord. Now both mother and daughter have a living, loving relationship with Jesus. It does not get any better than that!” Michelle also mailed her discipleship materials, and they are now doing a discipleship Bible study via telephone. Please pray for these two ladies and their walk with the Lord.

“God is Not Dead” on College Campuses

CJFM Representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH) leads campus ministries at Ohio State University (OSU) and Columbus State Community College (CSCC). He and his team had several witnessing encounters with a Mormon student, who eventually transferred to another college. However, he contacted Eric to let him know that he “recently felt compelled to give his life to the Messiah and has left the Mormon church. He is now looking for a new church in his area.” Eric asks that we please pray for him to get rooted in a strong, Bible-teaching church. While doing outreach at CSCC, Eric had an opportunity to explain the Gospel to a female student who had been reared in a church but had never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. She repented and trusted the Lord for her salvation, and Eric is helping her find a new church in the area. Eric also hosts speakers and arranged for Dr. James Tour, a Jewish believer and world-leading organic chemist, to lecture at OSU. He invited a student who was not a believer to attend. Recently, this student told Eric that he is now attending a Bible study and considering becoming a follower of Messiah Jesus. Eric writes: “We do believe God planted a seed in this student’s heart. Please pray for him to truly trust the Lord and make a commitment to follow Him.”

Next Year in Japan, Again!

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), and his wife, Oanh, returned recently from a speaking tour in Japan. Richard taught on the “Pre-Trib Rapture” (from his book, *Israel in Prophecy: A Chronology*) and they both gave their testimonies at three separate conferences in Osaka, Tokyo, and Kanazawa. Richard adds: “A total of 1,100 people attended, and 13 individuals gave their hearts to Jesus. They were also touched by Oanh’s testimony on how God blessed Oanh, who is Vietnamese, and her family and protected them as they escaped even though they were not believers at the time.” Richard and Oanh were invited back to Japan in 2020. Richard’s messages will be on “Yeshua’s Second Coming.” Please pray for another fruitful trip.

Uber

CJFM Representative Diann Parkas (New Jersey) recently hired Uber for a trip to the airport, which is an hour away. Her driver was a Muslim man from India, who lives in her area. Following the usual friendly topics, the conversation turned to spiritual matters. Diann shared her personal testimony with him and gave him reasons why she believed the Bible is the Word of God: “I explained that the Bible teaches that we are all sinners in need of a Savior, that we cannot save ourselves, and that’s why Jesus came—because we cannot be good enough to earn our salvation. Salvation can only be achieved by God’s grace through faith. His belief is that one garners favor with God through good deeds. Please pray that God will bring to mind what he heard and give him the grace to believe.” *Answer to prayer:* The Jewish woman Diann witnessed to in a nursing home recently prayed to receive Yeshua (Jesus) as her personal Savior. Diann is now teaching her how to live out her life in Messiah. Please pray for her spiritual growth.

Other Drivers

CJFM Representative and Staff Writer Violette Berger (Phoenix) usually takes the Airport Shuttle to the airport, but unfortunately, that shuttle service went out of business. Someone highly recommended a private driver. He was wonderful—just as she said—professional, articulate, and punctual. Violette and her grandson, Austin, had a great conversation with the driver on their trip to the airport, but had an extraordinary one on the return trip. It focused mainly on “religion.” He had left Catholicism and was now an advocate for “social justice.” However, he also shared some personal struggles he has had in the past, recognizing that it was God who spared his life. This gave Violette an opportunity to share the Gospel and point out the difference between religion and a personal relationship with Jesus—and our need for a Savior. He asked some very interesting questions and would like to continue their spiritual discussion over the phone. Austin will also be hiring him again for a future trip. Please pray for C’s salvation. 🙏

Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

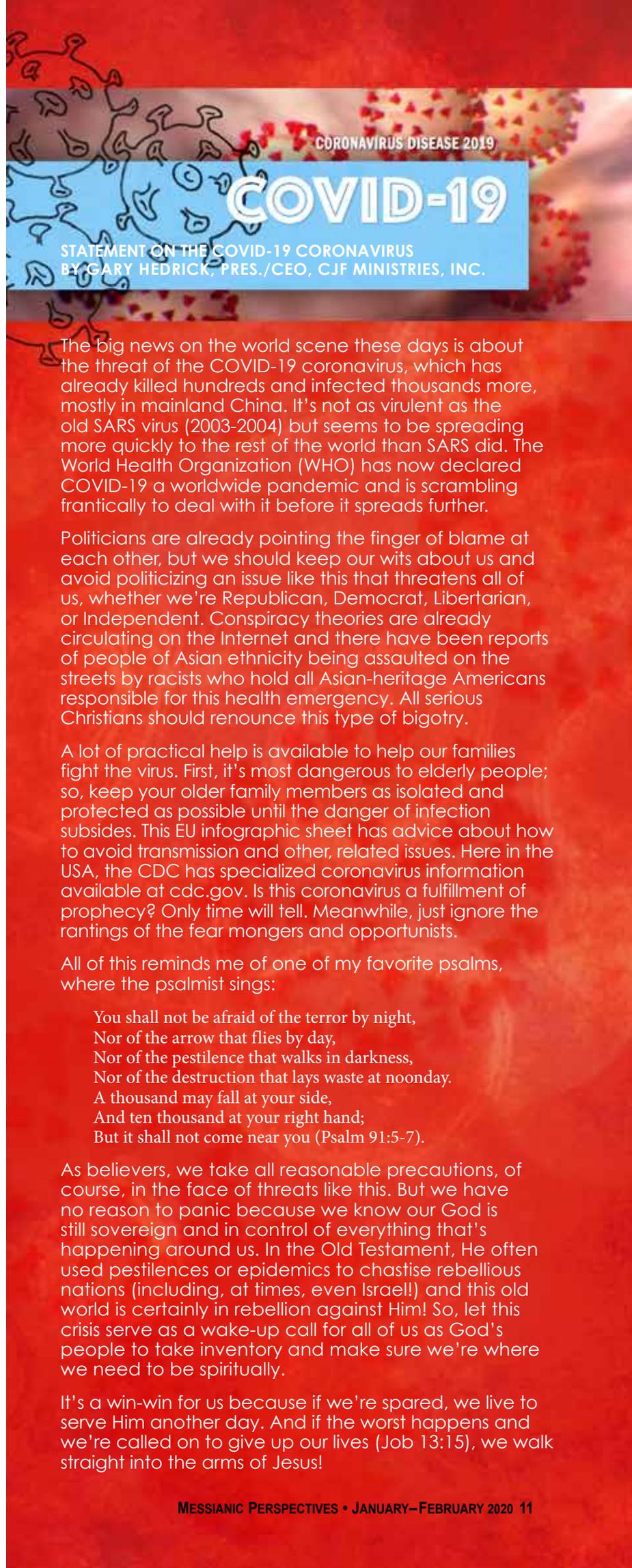
QUESTION: *You've said on the radio that water baptism is purely symbolic and doesn't save anyone. Doesn't this conflict with God's Word in 1 Peter 3:21, where it says, "The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (emphasis mine). How could it be any clearer?*

ANSWER: Yes, that's exactly what I've said. I've also said repeatedly that a text taken out of its context becomes a pretext—and that's the case here. The Bible nowhere states that the act of being immersed in water saves anyone. The verse you quoted from the old 1769 King James Version reads like this in the updated New King James Version: *There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).*

Notice the context. This verse comes right after Peter's discussion of the Noahic Flood, where he refers to a type (that is, an OT symbol) and an antitype (the OT symbol's NT fulfillment). He says that Noah and his family were brought safely through the floodwaters of God's judgment by boarding the Ark (v. 20); so there's a certain irony here in the fact that the floodwaters saved them, rather than drowned them, by bearing the Ark up and away from God's judgment. That's the OT typology. In the NT fulfillment, the Lord Jesus (the Resurrected One, according to Peter) is our "Ark" of safety. The waters of baptism "save" us in the same sense that the floodwaters saved Noah and his family; that is, by bearing us up in the Ark away from the consequences of God's judgment. So, what exactly does this mean?

In Peter's type/antitype relationship, the Ark is the type and Yeshua the Messiah is the antitype. Keep that in mind because it's important! The vehicle of salvation in Noah's day was the Ark itself (which corresponds to the Lord Jesus), not the water. The water was a type or symbol of God's judgment, not a type of salvation. Noah and his family were saved from the water, not by the water.

Peter makes it even clearer by adding this qualifier: "not the removal of the filth of the flesh" (v. 21). Peter was Jewish and knew well that one purpose of the ancient *mikveh* (ritual immersion) was physical purification and cleansing. So, he wants everyone to know that he's not talking here about anything that can be accomplished with literal H₂O. It's like Peter was anticipating that someone might come along someday and say, "See? We're saved by the waters of baptism!" Adding the qualifier makes it clear that water baptism symbolizes the spiritual cleansing (from sin) that's available through Messiah's work on Calvary for anyone who believes in Him (John 3:16-17). ✎



The big news on the world scene these days is about the threat of the COVID-19 coronavirus, which has already killed hundreds and infected thousands more, mostly in mainland China. It's not as virulent as the old SARS virus (2003-2004) but seems to be spreading more quickly to the rest of the world than SARS did. The World Health Organization (WHO) has now declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic and is scrambling frantically to deal with it before it spreads further.

Politicians are already pointing the finger of blame at each other, but we should keep our wits about us and avoid politicizing an issue like this that threatens all of us, whether we're Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or Independent. Conspiracy theories are already circulating on the Internet and there have been reports of people of Asian ethnicity being assaulted on the streets by racists who hold all Asian-heritage Americans responsible for this health emergency. All serious Christians should renounce this type of bigotry.

A lot of practical help is available to help our families fight the virus. First, it's most dangerous to elderly people; so, keep your older family members as isolated and protected as possible until the danger of infection subsides. This EU infographic sheet has advice about how to avoid transmission and other, related issues. Here in the USA, the CDC has specialized coronavirus information available at cdc.gov. Is this coronavirus a fulfillment of prophecy? Only time will tell. Meanwhile, just ignore the rantings of the fear mongers and opportunists.

All of this reminds me of one of my favorite psalms, where the psalmist sings:

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you (Psalm 91:5-7).

As believers, we take all reasonable precautions, of course, in the face of threats like this. But we have no reason to panic because we know our God is still sovereign and in control of everything that's happening around us. In the Old Testament, He often used pestilences or epidemics to chastise rebellious nations (including, at times, even Israel!) and this old world is certainly in rebellion against Him! So, let this crisis serve as a wake-up call for all of us as God's people to take inventory and make sure we're where we need to be spiritually.

It's a win-win for us because if we're spared, we live to serve Him another day. And if the worst happens and we're called on to give up our lives (Job 13:15), we walk straight into the arms of Jesus!

IN THIS ISSUE

Did The Coronavirus Bring Us a Message?

by Dr. Gary Hedrick
Page 1

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger
Page 10

Bible Questions & Answers

"Is Baptism Symbolic?"
Page 11

CJFM Covid-19 Response

Page 11

CJF Ministries®

Post Office Box 345

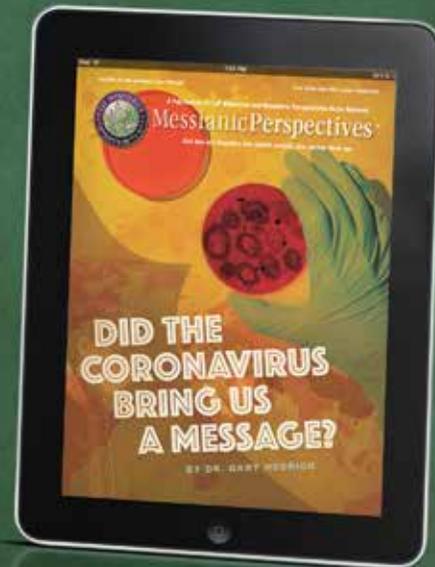
San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345

DID YOU KNOW?

YOU CAN ACCESS THIS COPY OF

*MESSIANIC
PERSPECTIVES*

AS WELL AS OUR ARCHIVE
OF PREVIOUS ISSUES.



VISIT CJFM.ORG/PAPER ON ANY COMPUTER OR TABLET.