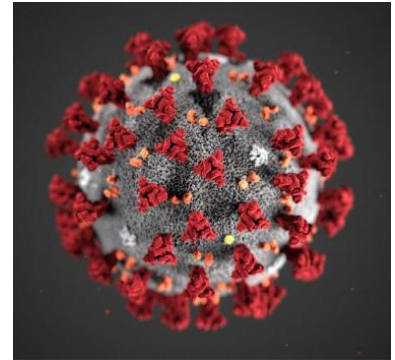


STATEMENT ON THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

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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. The EU infographic on the reverse side of this sheet has advice about how to avoid transmission and other, related issues. Here in the USA, the CDC has specialized coronavirus information available at www.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!