

Plague Part 1

There is so much talk today of the worldwide pandemic of the Corona Virus; it would be good to have some Biblical background to the subject. Interestingly enough, it is a subject dealt with many times throughout the scriptures.

The modern Hebrew word for virus is NaGiPh נגיף, which is taken from the biblical words NeGePh – נ-ג-פ, and its derivative MaGePhah – מ-ג-פ-ה, which are translated in the Bible as plague or pestilence. The word Negeph appears 57 times in the Old Covenant; and Magepha 26 times.

Here are a few examples:

1. **Exodus 9:14** – As part of the Ten Plagues (Hail), Moses warns Pharaoh of the judgment of God upon his nation.
2. **Exodus 12:13** – The blood of the covenant in the Passover will protect the children of Israel from any plague or disaster.
3. **Exodus 30:12** – God promises to protect from plagues the people who contribute the half shekel to the tabernacle.
4. **Exodus 32:35** – God punishes the people of Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf.
5. **Numbers 14:37** – The people who complained about the Promised Land after the bad report of the spies were killed in a plague.
6. **Numbers 16:46-50** – 14,700 people killed in a plague after rebelling against the priesthood of Aaron and the leadership of Moses. The plague was stopped as Aaron ran into the midst of the dying with his censor of incense.
7. **Numbers 25:8-9** – 24,000 people killed in a plague after the sexual immorality with the Midianite women. The plague was stopped after Phinehas, son of Eliezer, pierced through with a spear the couple who was sinning right in front of the tabernacle.
8. **Deuteronomy 28:7** – God promises to bless with protection from harm those who join the covenant, and to strike their enemies to flee in seven directions.
9. **I Samuel 6:4** – Philistines are struck with plague when they take the Ark of the Covenant. The plague is stopped when they repent, remembering the plagues against Egypt, and they return the Ark to Israel.
10. **II Samuel 24:21-25, I Chronicles 21:17-22** – After David's sin of pride by numbering the people, 70,000 were killed in a plague. The plague was stopped when David offers a sacrifice upon seeing the Angel YHVH above the threshing floor of Araunah.
11. **Isaiah 19:22** – Egypt is struck by a plague for turning against the Lord and against Israel, but is healed as they turn back to the Lord and make peace with Israel.
12. **Zechariah 14:12, 15, 18** – The nations who come against Jerusalem to attack it before the coming of the Lord; and those who refuse to come up to Jerusalem to worship afterwards will be struck with a plague.

In almost every situation that a plague appears, it is in response to human wrongdoing. In almost every situation, God does not deny His sovereign control over the situation. And therefore, there is a basic moral demand and spiritual challenge: "If you turn back to Me, I will remove this plague from you."

The existence of the plague is seen as a painful and difficult (yet necessary) tool in the hand of the Lord for the following purposes:

1. Documented warning to evil people of impending judgment or damnation.
2. Urgent call to sinners to repent and come back to the Lord.
3. Opportunity for the righteous to rise to a higher level of faith and purity.

This does not mean that God "caused" the plague in the sense of desiring it. There will be no plagues in the perfect world to come in the New Creation (**Revelation 21:4**). But He does cause it in the sense that He takes responsibility for His own demand to the human race to repent at all costs.

There is the question of "Why" do these kinds of evil take place. There are two totally opposite meanings to that question, and therefore two totally opposite answers. The first "Why" has to do with the origin of what caused it. The second "Why" has to do with the ultimate purpose.

The origin of all evil in the world is the rebellion of Satan and the sin of Man. God has no evil in Him. Yet the purpose of that evil ultimately from God is to create a perfectly pure people who will live and rule with Him in a perfect world for eternity. God not only allows free will but, in His sovereignty, He demands obedience. He makes moral demands on people as part of His plan to make a perfect world. (This answers the classic theological debate concerning predestination and free will.)

In every trial and temptation, there is the purpose of Satan to destroy you, and at the same time the purpose of God to perfect you. The crisis is both a danger and an opportunity. An omnipotent, holy and loving God, places before us the demand to choose. He calls us toward perfection and warns us against damnation.

It is the most loving thing God could possibly do: to cause horrible suffering to His beloved children in order to keep them back from a much worse eternal damnation. It would be the most unloving thing to do to allow people just to continue on in their evil ways, heading toward disaster, without doing everything to turn them back.

Yeshua made it clear that the fact that some people suffer does not mean they have sinned more than other people. He cites the example of Galileans who were killed by Pilate and the people of Siloam who were killed by a tower falling on them to prove this point (**Luke 13:1-5**). Trouble comes to different people in different situations. The demand is for everyone to repent. The spiritual dynamic is the same for all, since all people have sinned and all people are loved by God.

Yeshua taught that the crisis of plagues will increase in the End Times.

Matthew 24:7 – For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines and plagues and earthquakes in various places.

There will be political and military conflicts. There will be famines (which also means an economic crisis). There will be plagues (which means a health crisis of contagious diseases). There will be earthquakes (which also means a variety of other natural disasters). In Greek the words for famines, plagues and earthquakes are: *limos, loimos, seismos*.

The spiritual conflicts of the End Times will necessarily manifest themselves outwardly in such occurrences as:

1. Political conflicts
2. Military conflicts

3. Economic crises
4. Health crises
5. Natural disasters

In the midst of these conflicts and crises, the New Covenant scriptures dedicate much emphasis to encourage the saints of God through the power of the blood of Yeshua, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the protection of faith, covenant, the seal of God, the help of angels, and the love of the other saints of God.

Despite the difficulties outwardly, God gives us a spirit of victory on the inside. Every single one of the seven congregations of Revelation chapters 2-3, were encouraged to hear what the "Spirit is saying to the Ecclesia" and to "be an overcomer." It will not be easy, but God is with us.