

The Virus

*of 1918, Today,
and Beyond*



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As always, if we can help you in any way,
please contact the church here at
P.O. Box 68309, Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA

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The Virus of 1918, Today, and Beyond

The Virus of 2020 is a stark reminder that “smart humans” or “wealthy and powerful humans” aren’t really in charge of much. That’s always been true, but it’s easier to remember now that our best plans and dreams can end up back in the stone age in just a matter of days. It’s just happened — making it folly to doubt that fact again in your lifetime.

So, what is a better and more lasting and accurate perspective of the real world, in good times or bad? Apparently, many got it wrong when they were sure they held the keys.

What is happening right now is a pretty good visual aid for true Christians or ANYONE looking for Jesus. It shows the necessity of social disentanglement from questionable humor and worldly compromising choices if you want to be spiritually healthy, rather than sick and useless. I could say, “Well, you just need to pray and read your Bible more. As long as you do an honest day’s work, and are not lying or stealing or cursing—then you are glorifying God, so everything’s fine.” But, you must surely know from experience, that would be a shallow, religious, and unfruitful answer—even if there may be some truth to it. Somehow, it doesn’t get at the root of the issue, does it?

Here’s a discussion from 1999 about how to see the world we live in properly so that we can live for Jesus.

Some Little-Known History

In 1918, a deadly influenza epidemic swept the planet. Soldiers returning from World War I brought the flu virus home with them—though it is thought to have started two years earlier in Kansas, during the burning of some manure. Seemingly, it then spread to Europe and back again, via soldiers coming and going. In less than two years, as many as 30 million people died, over 600,000 in the United States alone. Over half of the inhabitants of the planet were infected by this strange virus. Strangely, most of the victims were active, healthy teens and young adults, often in their 20’s (though millions of children and older adults died as well). In the morning, a person would have a bit of a cough and a fever. By afternoon they were bedridden. By nightfall or lunchtime the next day, almost everyone that inhaled the virus would drown on the eerie blue fluid in their lungs. Supplies

of caskets were guarded by armed watchmen; toe tags, used to identify the dead, were placed on those infected when they checked into the hospitals (if they made it that far); open carts roamed the streets picking up bodies off of the front porches and sidewalks of cities and towns; and mass graves were dug with construction equipment.

This is only the story of the experience in the United States with this mysterious, incurable disease. This mutant virus ravaged the world with fury and an insatiable appetite for human life—particularly the strong and robust of every nation. Its origin was unknown, its cure never found, and its return cannot be ruled out. The virus eventually vanished, not because man had found any antidote or even slowed its advance. The virus sleeps only because it ran out of food. It had ravished every human on the planet that did not have whatever mysterious immunity was required to abate its death grip. The virus was not cured. It killed everyone it could kill, and simply ran out of human fuel on the planet. It starved itself into remission.

Why Did So MANY Lose Their Lives?

Now here is a very important question. Why did so many people allow this virus to spread to infect themselves, their family, and their friends, when its effects were obviously so lethal? This will lead us into the answer to your very serious and important—and common—question. How can we stay close to Jesus in a world living on the adrenaline of greed, fear, lust, ambition, guilt, and pride? It's about the Virus. Stay with me. There were three primary reasons that there was such a broad road leading to death, and that so many were on that road.

Denial

Much of what led to millions of fatalities during the 1918 virus epidemic was due to *denial*. No one wanted to believe that anything was wrong. They were living in a prosperous age, and enjoying the fruits of the new technologies of air transportation and many other breakthroughs. Mail could be delivered from New York to Chicago in a mere ten hours! Babe Ruth had just led the Red Sox* (*not a typo!) to the World Series championship. Times were good, and no one wanted to think about “bad” things. Denial is a common response amongst the human race when tragedy is near. It's in the nature of fallen man to “avoid confrontation at all costs” and to close our eyes and hope all the problems go away. We deeply desire to make excuses for our failures and others', and to imagine that all is not so bad. Just a few years later, when Hitler was beginning his massacre, the leaders of the western world tried to play “make-believe it's all not so bad...” until it was far, far too

late and unimaginably horrible, and now undeniable things had taken place. When it was time to take a stand, cowardice and addiction to the status quo made treaties with the animal that was killing innocents. It was no different twenty years earlier when mankind was faced with this mortal virus. And it is no different today. We would generally rather deny the painful issues of life, “hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil,” than to take them head-on. Such denial allowed the virus of 1918 to kill additional millions...millions who would have lived, if it had been dealt with honestly in the early stages. Denial. Even leaders at every level, in order to keep the masses calm, denied that THEIR jurisdiction had a problem until it was too large to deny any longer, and orphans filled the alleys of life.

Lack of Understanding

Another part of the equation that led to the death of millions—a huge percentage of the human race—in just eighteen months, was just plain ol’ *lack of understanding*. In general, people had no idea what the problem was, or what any solutions might be. Photographs and film taken from this period show children wearing little gauze masks when they were playing outside, rolling wheels with sticks. Policemen and factory workers, at the height of the epidemic, finally took the radical step of wearing cotton masks and bandanas over their faces. Most were convinced that this was an “extreme measure” to stop the spread of disease, and were pleased with their efforts. They were wrong. Masks are futile in stopping the spread of a virus. There was no real protection in this. It was only good to make their fears go away, but it was no *real* solution. The influenza could only be seen with an electron microscope, which would not be invented until years later. The masks were no more effective in straining out the germs “than catching dust with chicken wire.” People would hang camphor bags around their necks, and drink sugar and turpentine as home-made “remedies.” Religious speakers made a fortune in both money and popularity by their dramatic appeals, and prophecies of the end of the world. Superstitious religious or medical activity was the most common response of those that were even willing to consider the perils of their day. The dangers of the invisible disease were far beyond their understanding, and the measures taken against it were little more than placebos. The facts and history bear this out.

Misplaced Priorities

Another huge factor in the spread of this fatal disease, however, was the *misplaced priorities* of so many. Parents continued to send their children to schools, parties, and ball games—into crowds teeming with the infection. “Education is important,” the reasoning went. “Recreation and a social life are essential to the well being of young people. We don’t want them to miss

out on life. Everything will be all right. I love my child *too much* to deprive them of these life experiences and fun.” Does this sound familiar *at all*? Yet what good are education and social events when a child dies a hideous and gruesome death? And multiplied thousands did die, in great pain, coughing up blood. All within 36 hours of getting sick from the invisible fiendish disease, *carried by infected friends*. False priorities had exposed them to an invisible danger they shouldn’t have had to face.

The Plague is REAL, and is NOW!

The point? Remember our question: “How can you be close to Jesus or find Jesus in the middle of demanding days in this high-tech info age? How can you do what you need to do and still have enough energy to serve God at the end of a day?”

This deadly flu epidemic is very much a picture of how God views our planet and its treasured inhabitants. There is another, even more deadly, invisible plague going on, RIGHT NOW. This one actually kills 100% of those that it touches, that don’t have the Cure. The virus of sin has infected every last member of the human race. This contagion absolutely saturates our environment in this world. And, although Jesus paid the highest price imaginable to free us from this fatal illness, to deliver us from this virus of sin, few will receive His cure. “Few will be those who find it,” according to Jesus Himself. He has laid down the odds. HE said that MOST will perish. Most will choose to die, coughing up blood, and be buried in a grave where “the fire is not quenched.”

Do you see this world clearly? Are you willing to believe Jesus when He says there is an unseen realm? Do you accept His diagnosis that sin has doomed men and women to destruction? Do you realize what’s really at stake in our present daily lives? *Do you believe in a VIRUS that you can’t see with your naked eye?*

Denial

Most folk, throughout history, live in denial, unfortunately. It’s always struck me that Jesus spoke more of the hideous death of the Virus, hell, than all of the prophets and apostles put together. No one could have understood it as well as He, as our Creator and Messiah. And He was incredibly serious in His short time here, about letting us know of the very real existence of a very real devil (along with an army of demons), and a very real hell. He also went to great lengths to tell us how to conquer these foes, as well as equipping the Apostles and giving His People a Weapon, His Church, against which the

gates of hell could not prevail. And yet man has lived in denial and revised Jesus' goals. Now christianity and church are primarily about going to Heaven, and having nice friendly relationships a couple of times each week, staying out of trouble, and studying the Bible essentially (though unspoken) as an end in itself.

The real thing, that which Jesus brought to earth to “destroy the devil’s works,” involves some pain and courage. It comes “with much tribulation.” If we don’t want to face up to what Jesus said life and death and LIFE (“with a capital L”) are all about, then we’re going to make many wrong decisions, as our friends in 1918 did. We can’t avoid the conflict and making changes and self-sacrifice—and still avoid the plague. Instead of taking action, we’ll have the anguish of seeing many that we care about learn to “love the world, and become enemies of God.” If we fail our brothers and our parents and our friends by blindly allowing the weeds of “the cares and worries of this world, and the deceitfulness of materialism” to kill them, we are in denial of the realities Jesus spoke of.

The Master said MANY would say, “Lord, Lord” and do works in fine, christian fashion, and still be on the broad road to destruction. Why? Because they “didn’t DO the Will of My Father.” They knew stuff, were religious enough, but still maintained control of their own lives. And catch this: Even if a person is somewhat interested in going all the way with Jesus, they will become “hardened and deceived by sin” (Heb. 3:12-14) because of poor daily building practices. If the denominational and house church worlds won’t get out and deal with human lives one on one for Jesus (as in the Scripture just mentioned), the massacre will continue. It doesn’t take a Ph.D. statistician to go through these groups (whether in religious facilities or homes) and demonstrate that the problem is very serious. The singing and clapping and creative programming and “children’s church” and “youth groups” and “marriage counseling” and new buildings, or new carpeting and a new guitar in a living room...aren’t going to solve the dilemma of the Virus that is destroying lives. That will take personal involvement, on a daily basis, of a “Kingdom of Priests” representing Jesus and His Word personally to one another and those around them, “as if God were making His Appeal through you.” “In the race ALL the runners run.” No spectators or cheerleaders. This will take courage for you, at 5 o’clock in the evening. You’ll have to see the Virus for what it is, and rise to the call to “admonish one another daily, so that NONE are hardened and deceived!” “See to it, brothers!”

Avoiding conflict may pad pockets and egos, and fill the pews, and make many unsaved feel content and saved, but it will not deliver us from the Virus. The Teaching of Jesus, the Master, and the Apostles is very clear.

It is also very different from 50% of what is **taught** today—and 98% of what is **practiced** in Christendom today. We really need Understanding of *what GOD says a Christian is, what GOD says a Church is, and what GOD says a leader is*. Or we shall feel destruction “in every home,” as our relatives in 1918 felt. Lack of Understanding and lack of Seeing (revelation) cause God’s People to perish, according to the Scriptures. Needless deaths of multitudes of teens, and marriages, and regular churchgoers *that never gave their lives to Jesus* are occurring at a massive rate in christendom. This is NOT what Jesus said, when He promised that His Church would not allow the Gates of hell to prevail.

Will this cost you? As Jesus said, DO “count the cost” of building His Way. Of course, any direction other than the cookie cutter version of today’s state-approved religion will be met with opposition—primarily by dear religious folks that are lukewarm, and love the world, and their sins. Jesus said it would be so. He promised that no one could ever be good enough, or loving enough, or wise enough to not be hated and lied about, and ultimately framed and murdered in one way or another. “NO one,” He promised, “is above their Master. If they did it to Me, (and *if* you are representing Me well), they WILL do it to you, too.” Avoiding conflict isn’t part of the Plan, while the dragon is seeking to kill the Woman and her Offspring. Only be concerned if you are NOT facing the cost of rejection and high-tech lies and slander and threats. Jesus said it would be so, IF we are representing Him accurately. It’s a supernatural issue, and inescapable for true disciples, according to Jesus.

Understanding

Jesus and the Apostles wanted so desperately to give us Understanding, so that we wouldn’t go on blindly not believing in what we can’t see—even with an electron microscope. They knew that we could never avoid the virus’ ugly death if we continue in denial, and in lack of understanding with all of its superstitious religiously programmatic placebo solutions. If we cling to the traditions and hierarchies and gimmicks of men, and peer pressure of religious culture’s “only way to do it”... we’ll continue to yield their results. “Cotton masks” of small groups and other programs and non-programs don’t save men from a microscopic virus. Clearly, we’re in dire need of a cure that institutional religion, and make-believe dress-up, and flesh-catering to build “churches” will never provide.

The Way Jesus lived, and taught the disciples to live, and then the entire Church of several THOUSAND lived (“ALL” of them! Acts 2:42-47, etc., etc.), is the Way from Heaven that not only cleanses the Virus, but also inoculates and protects us from most future exposure, or death! God laid out the Blueprints for His

House, “the Pillar and Foundation of Truth,” the Church that “makes known the manifold Wisdom of God to the principalities and powers” and overcomes the very gates of hell. But we have continued over generations to build out of faulty materials, using man-made plans, borrowed from the world system.

God’s Word and Spirit “are not far from you”! We can correct our course in these days. And I am convinced that there is that cry, “The Emperor has no clothes!” worldwide, right now—in many languages and cultures. Many are looking for Understanding of *how to build God’s way*, so that we can see God’s Results of “from the least to the greatest, they *all* know Him!” in a “batch without leaven.” Sound impossible? It is, the way men build. But He came to bring us Understanding. ☺

Priorities: SEEING IT RIGHT

So, “How do I have energy left over from my busy days with work—or with children and their education and housekeeping? How can I seek Jesus and ‘seek first the Kingdom’ when my life is tied in a Gordian knot of occupation, and obligations and debts and hobbies and relationships?”

If we see reality clearly, we’ll *definitely* keep our priorities straight. ***You’ll find a way to make the right decisions about what kind of job you’ll take, where you’ll live, and a thousand other subjects.*** You WILL find a way, IF you See Life clearly!

If someone asked you to stack twenty-five coins, alternating heads and tails in chronological order by the year minted on them, and offered to pay you for it, you might do it. But, if you heard your 9 year-old daughter outside the window screaming in agonized pain, I dare say you would forget the coin stacking! It wouldn’t be important, and you wouldn’t say, “Well, just let me finish this task first. I’m almost done stacking these coins. I’ll go take care of her in just a minute.” What a ridiculous thought! But why is that ridiculous? *Because you know the Reality of Life to that extent, and would never have your priorities that far out of focus!*

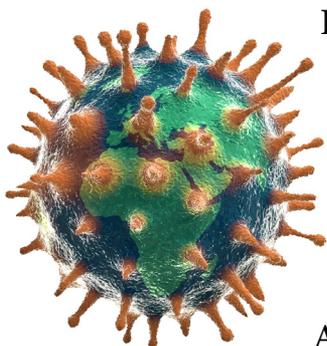
To solve the problem of too little energy for Jesus, should you set a time to get up early and read more and pray more? Oh, I don’t know. Maybe. That is not the real problem though. If you don’t do that a lot anyway, you just don’t really believe in the virus! You’re not seeing the world as it really is, if you’re not *passionate* about serving Jesus in your workplace, your neighborhood, and amongst the Saints on a DEEP DAILY basis. If we’re not about the Father’s Business, we’re just not seeing life as it really is! (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28-29; 1Cor. 15:10; Heb. 3:12-14; Jas. 5:20; Jude 21-23).

We'll focus our energies and passions on what really matters to us. If your main focus right now is on your work, or entertainment, or social life—if you are allowing those things to drain away your Life and Love and time and energy and money—then you are not seeing the world from God's perspective.

Misplaced priorities cause millions to find themselves “stuck” in so-called commitments. These “commitments” then take on a life of their own—eliminating the ability to choose something better because we are already “committed.” “I'd love to, but we've got to go here,” or “I know I should, but I already committed to...” So, we march ourselves and those we love diligently, year by year, into death camps because we chose “good” over God. “Education”... “social graces”... “making good money”... “advancing and achieving in the work place”... “living in the right neighborhood, near the right school district”... “playing sports well to expand the character”... “experiencing life in a college dorm”... “traveling the world to see the sights”... “eating health food and cloistering with your physical family”... and the like: if you consider these to be of much TRUE value, and make your decisions and practices out of these with no consideration of the fatal Virus, then you suffer from one or all three of the problems listed above. Either denial, or lack of understanding, or misplaced priorities have you disoriented and headed for trouble. These blinding errors will expose you, your children and loved ones to the lethal plague! It's REAL. Don't wait until it's too late to wake up to the reality of what the world is, where the Answer lies, and the holy abandonment He calls you to, okay?

Of course there are practical things we can do to keep our focus straight. We can make time for concentrated conversation with God. We can read the Scriptures often. We can spend much time with people who love God and genuinely care about what He cares about. But the most important single thing we can do for starters is to *adopt God's point of view about this world*—which will set our priorities accordingly. If your priorities are straight, you'll be able to put in a good day's work without letting it drain all of your energy and passion *for the real reason you're alive*. And you'll be willing to come home from work early to spend time with Jesus and His People—even if that project isn't done. You'll put in the effort and take the risks to offer the Cure to others, too. You'll do what it takes, very naturally, as Jesus did.

Will you have the courage to see the world as it is? Will you do whatever it takes to respond to the certainty of the death plague that closes in daily on you, the world around you, and those you love? By His Grace and Spirit, for the Lamb and His Chosen? For real?



...
In 1918, why did so many people allow the virus to spread, infecting themselves, their family, and their friends, when its effects were obviously so lethal? THAT answer will lead us into THE ANSWER to the more serious and important question:

How can we get close to Jesus and stay close to Him in a world living on the adrenaline of greed, fear, lust, ambition, guilt, and pride?

What is a better and more lasting and accurate perspective of the real world, in good times or bad?



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HOPE@1918VIRUS.COM