

# Prophetic Signs of the Times



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of the END?

By: Dr Ed Hindson

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## Is this the Beginning of the End?

The current coronavirus pandemic has the entire world on edge! Many are asking: Is this the judgment of God? Is it the beginning of the Great Tribulation? Will it lead to the end of the world as we know it? Is this a sign of Christ's soon return? Opinions on these matters are flying all over the internet in every conceivable direction. Unfortunately, wild speculation is running out of control faster than the virus itself.

### WHO IS GOD?

Let me challenge all of us to think biblically at a time like this. First, let us consider the nature and character of God.

1. *He is eternal.* He has always existed and always will exist. Psalm 90:2, states that God exists from “everlasting to everlasting.” In Genesis 21:33, He is called El Olam, “God of eternity” or the “eternal God.”
2. *He is omnipotent,* meaning “All Powerful.” He is called “Almighty” 56 times in the Bible. He can do all things that are not contrary to His nature (eg., He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).
3. *He is omniscient* (“all knowing”). He knows everything at once (past, present, future). He knows all about us even before we are born (Psalm 139:16). He knows what His Purpose is in every circumstance.
4. *He is Omnipresent* (“everywhere at once”). Psalm 139:7-11, declares that there is nowhere that God is not present at all times.

In light of these essential attributes of God, *we must ask*:

1. Did God know there would be a coronavirus pandemic? Yes.
2. Is God powerful enough to prevent it? Yes.
3. Did He choose to prevent it? No.
4. Did He cause it? No.
5. Can He ultimately over-rule it? Yes.
6. Will He ultimately use it to fulfill His purpose? Yes.

### **IS THIS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD?**

The worldwide nature of the pandemic causes people to ask if this is God's judgment on a sinful world. Consider these thoughts:

1. The world is *already* under the judgment of God because of sin and human depravity (Psalm 9:7). Romans 8:12, "For we know the whole creation groans and travails in pain until now."
2. God does at times send *specific judgments* on individuals: Pharaoh (Exodus 6:1); groups of people: Egyptians (Exodus 8-12); nations: Edom (Isaiah 63:1-4)
3. However, Jesus clearly stated *not all disasters* are judgments because of sin (Luke 13:1-4). Some tragedies are accidents of human or natural causes.
4. Jesus also warned that in the Last Days there would be earthquakes, famines, **pestilences** (Greek, *loimoi*), fearful sights and **great signs** before His return (Luke 21:11).

5. Jesus urged believers to “look up” in anticipation of His coming when these things **begin** to come to pass (Luke 21:28).

In light of these truths *what can we conclude?*

1. Is our fallen sinful world already under the judgment of God? Yes.
2. Can specific disasters be judgments from God? Yes.
3. Are all disasters judgments of God? No.
4. Is God warning us of a greater future judgment to come? Yes.

### **Is this a Warning From God?**

Thousands of people around the world are dealing with everything from serious health issues to global financial markets. Business, industry and even sports and entertainment have been affected. Gary Hamrick, pastor of Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, VA said: “It feels apocalyptic!” He points out that pestilence (wide-spread disease) is a harbinger or precursor to the End Times. Luke 21:11 (NKJV), states: “And there will be earthquakes in various places, and famines and **pestilences**.”

I believe God is using this natural catastrophe to warn us of worse things to come in the future. In fact, a whole series of natural disasters have occurred in recent years to get our attention- hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes have shaken our planet time and again. Imagine what our world will be like when the Rapture occurs and the Tribulation begins! Global panic will be out of control, resulting in the rise of a global leader who will immediately impose government sanctions on the global economy, so that no one can “buy or sell” without the approval of his mark (Revelation 13:16).

Biblical prophecies that once seemed unimaginable to the unbelieving world now appear imminent and foreboding. Jesus warned there would be “signs” in the Last Days that would cause men’s hearts to fail for fear (Luke 21:25). He urged, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh (Luke 21:28).

Serious students of Bible prophecy have long understood the dual principles of **Rapture** (believers) and **Tribulation** (unbelievers). Believers understand that God is in control of the details of our lives. Whether we live or die, heaven is our destiny. At the Rapture, the “**dead in Christ**” will rise and the living will be “**caught up**” with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). Therefore, we live with confidence in the future because we know Who holds the future.

At the same time, our hearts go out to unbelievers who will face being left behind in a world under the judgment of the wrath of God. The current crisis is but a glimpse of a far greater disaster that awaits the unbelieving world when multiplied millions will die (Revelation 6:8). In light of the recent events on our planet we are challenged to several biblical responses: 1. **Trust** the grace of God in the details of your life. 2. **Pray** for God to get the attention of unbelievers to draw them to Himself. 3. **Witness** to family and friends who may be more open to the gospel than ever before.

The integrity of sincere and authentic Christianity speaks volumes to a lost world that is desperate for meaning, purpose and security. Do not underestimate the spiritual impact that your testimony has on those who have no answers to the overwhelming problems of life. When we live out our faith with authenticity and boldness, we capture the attention of the watching world.

## IS THIS THE END OF THE WORLD?

Global pandemics and apocalyptic disasters naturally cause people to ask: Is this *the* BIG ONE? My immediate answer is, No. But is it *a* big one, Yes. When something so widespread shakes the entire planet, we must recognize that God is speaking to us (Isaiah 24:18-20). There is something about human nature that causes us to both fear and expect the end. Our fallen nature knows intuitively that we are finite and things of this magnitude cause us to face our human limitations.

In light of Biblical prophecies of the End Times, let me suggest several important matters.

1. *Is this the end of the world?* No, not yet. Jesus warned of many disasters that would come in the future and added: “but the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6). The Bible clearly states the physical world will end by fire, not disease (2 Peter 3:7-12).
2. *Has the Tribulation already begun?* No. The Rapture has not occurred (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). The antichrist has not been revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). The wrath of the Lamb (Christ) has not been poured out in the seal and trumpet judgments (Revelation 6-11) nor the bowls of the wrath of God (Revelation 15-16).
3. *Will believers be protected from suffering prior to the Rapture?* Not necessarily. In the Rapture believers escape the *wrath of God* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Prior to that, God may choose to protect us from the wrath of *Satan* (Luke 22:31), the wrath of *man* (Acts 9:23-25) or the wrath of *nature* (Acts 16:25-34) But he may also choose to allow us to suffer for His sake (Acts 7:54-60). The Apostle Paul, who wrote about the promise of the Rapture, also said: “all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer

persecutions and afflictions” (2 Timothy 3:10-12) prior to the Rapture. The Apostle Peter tells us that we are often “called to suffer” following the example of Christ (1 Peter 2:19-21).

4. *What should we be doing in the meantime?* Jesus’ commission has never changed. This side of the Rapture, we are to “make disciples of all nations” wherever we go. The pandemic is a reminder to us that the world needs Jesus. The clock is ticking and time may well be running out.

## **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO US NOW?**

Based on a proper understanding of the character and nature of God, I believe we can discern His message to believers through the challenges we are all facing right now.

1. God has not changed. He is holy, just, righteous and sovereign (Isaiah 40:25-28).
2. Sinners have violated the holiness of God and deserve His judgment (Romans 3:23).
3. God is also loving, merciful and forgiving. He will see us through this. (Romans 8:18)
4. God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to atone for our sins (1 Peter 3:18).
5. God calls on us to repent (Acts 20:21), believe (Romans 10:9) and call upon Jesus to save us from His ultimate judgment (Romans 10:13).
6. Our eternal salvation is based upon the atoning blood of a sinless Savior-Jesus (Colossians 1:14-20).
7. Our hope of bodily resurrection and eternal life is guaranteed by Jesus’ resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-25).

8. In the meantime, life on earth is often filled with both blessings and challenges (James 5:14-16).
9. God often judges the false gods (idols) of our culture: money, sports, entertainment (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
10. He asks us to be faithful in our witness, steadfast in our lives and confident in our eternal destiny (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

At the same time, I believe God is speaking to seekers and **unbelievers** through this crisis.

1. The things we idolize in place of God can disappear in a moment.
2. All people are created in the image of God and intuitively call out to Him when they are in trouble.
3. If you are fearful, uncertain and worried about the future, call upon the only One who can really help you.
4. Re-evaluate who you are, why you exist, what is your purpose in life. Rearrange your focus and priorities in line with God's purpose for your life.
5. The current crisis is a warning from God of far greater judgments to come in the future.
6. Take this moment seriously, it could be your last opportunity.
7. Trust what God has provided for you in Jesus Christ and call on Him to save you now.
8. In light of eternity, whether you live or die (now or later) do both to the glory of God both now and forever.

God bless you as you find His grace, salvation and purpose for your life.