



Another Investigation into the Origins of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This paper posits the possibility of COVID as a kind of "divine plague", a pandemic with religious origins placed into the human population as punishment for contemporary human behavior, including war, violence, and discrimination, all elements that would incur God's wrath, as understood by reference to the Old Testament. Our analysis means to show that God is possibly involved, using COVID to restore nature back to its order.

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease spread by human interaction. The first known case was identified in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China, and since then it has spread worldwide, making COVID-19 an ongoing pandemic. About eight thousand people have died from the virus every day since the outbreak began. Societies around the world are trying to grasp why the virus emerged. Some blame irresponsible governments; others believe COVID was created intentionally by parties that would somehow benefit from a complete global shutdown. Many take interest in the theological context of the virus - how does religion explain its emergence, did God create the virus on purpose, and if so, why? There is a strong argument to be made for a virus created intentionally by God. Analyzing the details of the pandemic as well as religious scripture shows how COVID-19 could be interpreted as a punishment by God for the continuous sins perpetrated by humanity and our inability to learn from our mistakes.

ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

The positive environmental changes that followed COVID-19 shed light on the harm that humans have been causing the planet over the past several decades. The lessening of human intrusion to the natural habitat as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns shows that humans were the primary agents of harm inflicted on Earth. With the beginning of COVID-19, cities across the globe saw major reductions of waste - one notable example was the reappearance of fish in the canals of Venice.¹ Quarantine forced people to avoid long-distance

1 Julia Jacobo, "Venice Canals Are Clear Enough to See Fish as Coronavirus Halts Tourism in the City," *ABC News Network*, March 19, 2020 <https://abcnews.go.com/International/venice-canals-clear-fish-coronavirus-halts-tourism-city/story?id=69662690>.

travel, and thus most came to rely on bicycles or walking as their primary modes of transportation, which resulted in decreased carbon dioxide emissions.² The fact that there is some connection between COVID and the environment is undeniable.

The refusal of humans to do something about the damage they have been causing to the planet is a perfect example of negligence of the word of God. According to many religious texts, the planet is beautiful and God's gift to the world, which ought to be protected. Cutting down forests and filling it with toxins is the opposite of protecting the planet. Killing animals for profit and luxury clothing goes against the tenets of religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, as well as the principles of kindness promoted in religions worldwide. Considering that many religions, particularly Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, encourage adherents to care about the poor, it does not make sense that rich countries have been continuing to burn fossil fuels, even though poorer countries have been experiencing floods and other adverse effects of global warming. The course taken by humanity over the past few decades, when we were well-informed about the gravity of our actions with regard to the environment, is unforgivable, and perhaps COVID-19 is here to serve as a reminder of our obligation to take care of our shared home.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination has been a major vice of our planet, plaguing societies for centuries. God first alluded to discrimination in 1 Samuel 16:7, ordering that humans "Do not judge from his

2 Julia Jacobo, "How coronavirus impacts climate change with emissions reductions," *ABC News Network*, March 5, 2020 <https://abcnews.go.com/International/severe-reduction-emissions-coronavirus-mitigate-climate-change-long/story?id=69334246>.



appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the Heart.”³ God makes it explicitly clear that humans should not categorize people based on their race or gender, but to instead make their decisions based on their behaviour and their personalities. Yet while it seems that the world has made a lot of progress over the years in combatting discrimination, that is not entirely accurate.

As recent events have shown, discrimination is alive and well in our planet. George Floyd was ruthlessly killed by a police officer who had a history of violence and who represents a far deeper problem in the United States, which is racism in the police force.⁴ Anti-Asian violence which surged in major cities across the world showed how many people harbor hatred against other groups of people.⁵ The laws that countries like France create which make it difficult for Muslims to follow their religion, the incessant anti-Semitism that Jews have to endure, and the United States electing a president who on many occasions used anti-Asian, anti-Mexican, and anti-Muslim rhetoric, is more than enough evidence that entire populations of millions of people subscribe to discriminatory ideas. And things get better only nominally. The statue of George Floyd, which was supposed to represent an acknowledgement in the United States that there is a problem that needs to be fixed, was vandalized soon after it was erected.⁶ Even with all the protests, the amount of reform in the U.S. has been minimal and unsatisfactory.⁷ The recent upheavals, all in all, have resulted in very little change.

Segregation, while seemingly a thing of the past, is still not something society has gotten rid of. American cities are still incredibly segregated by neighborhood.⁸ Not only that, but

3 1 Sam. 16:7 (NRSV)

4 Evan Hill, “How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody,” *The New York Times*, June 1, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>.

5 Sam Cabral, “Covid ‘Hate Crimes’ against Asian Americans on Rise,” *BBC News*, 21, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56218684>.

6 News 12 Staff. “George Floyd statue in Brooklyn defaced with graffiti, suspects on the loose,” *News12 Booklyn*, June 25, 2021. https://brooklyn.news12.com/george-floyd-statue-in-brooklyn-defaced-with-graffiti-suspects-on-the-loose?fbclid=IwAR0H1pchnNJz9z-zavaNYPzMF5dg46YvFJe p4hPTbodrnXgkPidQlu4_-8.

7 Becky Sullivan, “With Slow Progress On Federal Level, Police Reform Remains Patchwork Across U.S.” *NPR*, April 27, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/27/990580272/with-slow-progress-on-federal-level-police-reform-remains-patchwork-across-u-s>.

8 Alexander Kent and Frohlich C. Thomas. “The 9 Most Segregated Cities In America.” *HuffPost*, August 27, 2015. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-9-most-segregated-cities-in-america_n_55df53e9e4b0e7117ba92d7f

this segregation continues into educational institutions, with white people predominantly going to private schools and black people primarily going to public schools, with an anticipated difference in the quality of education.⁹ While it is not the legalized segregation that existed before the Fair Housing Act, the realities of it are not that different.

It may be tempting to say that at least slavery is no longer a problem in our planet, but even that arguably is not true. With anti-slavery legislation around the world, slavery has still persisted into the modern era. Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, and around 24.9 million people are currently enslaved, particularly women.¹⁰ What irates God is the fact that even with all of the surveillance technology available and the resources at our disposal, humanity has not made it a top priority to end human trafficking. What makes it even worse is that child trafficking is one of the most common forms of human trafficking, and children being sinless likely only heightens God’s wrath.

This would not be the first time that God punished humans for their immoral acts. The Hebrew Bible has many examples of God sending death upon humanity as a reminder of its duties to follow God’s rules. In the Book of Exodus, the Bible presents a story of God punishing the citizens of Egypt with the Ten Plagues because of their enslavement of the Jews.¹¹ While COVID primarily targets the elderly, the final plague that hit Egypt targeted “Every firstborn in the land of Egypt ... from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the slave-girl who is at the hand mill, as well as all the firstborn of the animals.”¹² Perhaps COVID-19 is only the start of a series of plagues which will follow if humanity does not learn its lesson early enough.

WAR AND VIOLENCE

Considering that humanity has witnessed the destructive capabilities of war over and over again over the course of its history, it is remarkably disappointing how it continues this terrible practice. Since the start of the 21st century, Afghanistan has been plagued by war which is continuing still, as of June 2021. Over forty thousand Afghan civilians and sixty thousand Afghan security forces have been killed over the past few decades, with several hundred killed in

9 “Fast Facts: Public and Private School Comparison,” *National Center for Education Statistics*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=55>

10 “About Human Trafficking,” *U.S. Department of State*, January 10, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/>.

11 Olivia B. Waxman, “Did the 10 Plagues of Egypt Really Happen? Here Are 3 Theories,” *TIME*, March 2, 2020. <https://time.com/5561441/passover-10-plagues-real-history/>.

12 Exod. 11:5 (NRSV)

just May of 2021.¹³ The United States alone has dropped over sixty thousand bombs in Afghanistan.¹⁴ And the conflict in Afghanistan is not the only one to flare up this year: wars in Central Asia, Africa, the Caucasus, and Latin America have seen activity in 2020 and 2021. The Mexican Drug War has had tens of thousands of casualties since 2006, and the conflict is ongoing.¹⁵ More deadly statistics have been reported from another war in Yemen: around one million people are currently living in unplanned camps, and five million people are at risk of famine.¹⁶ A similar situation also appears in Ethiopia: as a result of the Tigray conflict, 2.6 million children and adults need humanitarian aid in order to survive, and an estimated 62,255 fled their homes in search of shelter in Sudan.¹⁷ All of these statistics point to the fact that violent conflict is widespread around the world, and people have not learned to coexist without murder and vandalism.

Rape is another violent act that is as rampant in our world as ever. Even in a country that is not affected by war such as the United States, every 73 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted. Every 9 minutes, that victim is a child.¹⁸ Given how horribly people treat each other, is it at all surprising that God would send a disease that kills two people every 60 seconds? Is it unreasonable to assume that COVID is a punishment for the rape that occurs every 73 seconds, as well as the murder, warfare, and destruction that humans perpetrate?

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE

While the fact that God has good reason to punish humanity is beyond arguing, COVID could also be seen as an opportunity for redemption. There have been very few instances in history when all parts of the world were simultaneously affected by the same problem; there were even fewer when all countries had the responsibility to work together in order to resolve that problem. The virus which is currently crippling the

13 Fatima Faizi, Fahim Abed, and Najim Rahim, "Afghan War Casualty Report: May 2021," *The New York Times*, May 6, 2021.

14 Niall McCarthy, "Infographic: Key Numbers Behind The War In Afghanistan," *Statista*, March 2, 2020. <https://www.statista.com/chart/20995/data-about-the-conflict-in-afghanistan/>.

15 "Mexico Drug War Fast Facts," *Cable News Network*, April 12, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/index.html>.

16 Roald Høvring, "Ten Facts about the Deadly Crisis in Yemen," *Norwegian Refugee Council*, March 2, 2021. <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2021/ten-facts-about-the-deadly-crisis-in-yemen/>.

17 Sevil Omer, "Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help," *World Vision*, May 17, 2021. <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-facts>.

18 "Statistics," *RAINN*, <https://www.rainn.org/statistics>.

world is testing the willingness of humans to abandon their conflicts and focus on working together on finding ways to combat COVID. This part of the story gives hope: thousands of scientists around the world have been sharing information with each other to be able to learn more about the virus and diminish its negative effects.¹⁹

God is also testing the willingness of humans to abandon their malevolent practices. Will they cease fire during the global pandemic in order to leave room available in hospitals for those affected by the virus? Will governments realize how harmful certain industries were to the environment and regulate them more strictly after the lockdowns? Will people forego their selfish desire to be outside, or at bars, or at parties, for the sake of keeping those around them safe? Humanity is being tested, and depending on how it proceeds it could end up on a much more positive trajectory than it was before.

Whether God created COVID-19 as a punishment or as a way for us to redeem ourselves by showing a better side of our character during this time, or both, it is clear that the disease was created by God. The Bible constantly reminds us about the sins that we as humans commit, and the resistance to self-improvement as a society has been keeping us from fulfilling God's will. In the perilous moment that our planet is in right now, the most essential task for all nations is to work together to get us out of this crisis and possibly set a precedent of cooperation and mutual aid. As countries around the world are raising money to support COVID research worldwide, as hundreds of thousands of masks are being sent to countries as aid,²⁰ and as millions of people work selflessly to ensure the safety and convenience of others during the most challenging moment of the 21st century, there is a chance that humanity will lean into its more benevolent traits and begin to change for the better. Just as COVID initially sent the world into a state of despair, light seems to now be appearing at the end of the tunnel, and there is a hope that our conduct will change for the better.

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