

## Kingdom Report

Week of 1 February 2020

### Perspectives on Coronavirus, Tragedy and Kobe Bryant

Herewith some of my thoughts on human tragedy and the purposes of God. With some lessons from the current world pandemic....and a story of personal tragedy. A wonderful thing about being a Christian is to have an eternal perspective on life....

It was either Lenin or Stalin who made the remark..."A 100,000 deaths is a statistic, a single death is a tragedy". This last week's news: a world panic about a new pandemic disease and a personal tragedy of a sport superstar's death and his daughter in a tragic helicopter crash.

Let me make some perspective comments about the coronavirus outbreak. Already I am reading prophecy commentators on the theme of 'signs of the end times" and "God's judgment" etc. Here is what I have determined so far....

1. Vioxx killed 500,000 Americans: a toll that could have been reduced by 90% had the FDA issued a timely warning.
2. Pharmaceuticals, correctly and legally prescribed, kill 140,000 Americans each year, yet most people are unaware of their lethality and do not know how to prevent being killed this way.
3. Coronavirus deaths are few, its victims are elderly, and prevention is simple.
4. Media report American flu deaths this season stand at 8200 so far, and that's not newsworthy?
5. 142,000 Americans died due to pharmaceutical drug use in 2016, but that's not news, either neither the 60,000 who died from opioid over dose.
6. But 100 Chinese—mostly born during WWII, malnourished and carrying a heavy disease burden—have died from a novel virus and that's an epidemic?

This year marks the centenary of Spanish flu, the most deadly pandemic in human history. It is estimated that five hundred million people contracted it – a third of the global population in 1918 – and that between fifty and a hundred million of them died. Asians were thirty times more likely to die than Europeans.

Every year it kills hundreds of thousands of people on every inhabited continent while globally, many tens of millions catch the flu bug every year. All these many millions of infected people inoculate others at home, work, schools, places of worship, in travel and in every imaginable public place, spreading their viruses across the planet.

The strain involved in the last flu pandemic, the swine flu outbreak in 2009, was highly infectious, but milder than previous pandemic strains. Of the 61.7 million people living in the UK in 2009, 457 died from it – similar to the usual annual death toll for flu. The 1957 Asian flu and the 1968-69 Hong Kong flu pandemics were more serious; the death toll in each case was estimated at around a million worldwide.

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The mortality rate of 'severe' flu infections worldwide is about 13%—about the same as for 'severe Sars infections. The new virus may be considerably lower.

China's Public Health Service is probably the most efficient on earth, which is why Chinese children will live longer, healthier lives than their American contemporaries. But that's not news, either.

Says Nature: The speed and openness of the scientific response to the coronavirus has been unprecedented. Ten days after it was first reported in people, scientists in China and Australia released the virus's genetic sequence. Within hours, research labs worldwide were putting all hands on deck to understand the disease. "This is one of the first times we're getting to see an outbreak of a new virus and have the scientific community sharing their data almost in real time," says molecular biologist Michael Letko.

David Ho, the HIV/AIDS medical researcher, pointed out that as of late last week, the mortality rate appeared to be around 2.5 percent, which is "about 3-4-fold lower than SARS," adding, "The deaths are occurring in people who are old or those with prior medical conditions. If we were to put the influenza figures next to this new CoV, the absolute case numbers and mortality rates would be much greater [for the regular flu]. But we are rather complacent with flu even though it is quite deadly to the very young, the elderly, and those with underlying medical problems.

No deaths have been reported outside of China, corroborating the relatively low mortality rate from official data in China. New York Times summarizes the latest international infection situation:

Thailand and Hong Kong have each reported eight cases of infection; the United States, Taiwan, Australia and Macau have five each; Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia each have reported four; France has three; Canada and Vietnam have two, and Nepal and Cambodia each have one.

Obviously this will grow with more data coming in and more deaths will be reported.

Here is what we Christians who have a Biblical perspective on life's tragedies and problems need to be careful of:

We create a "binary" cause for life's tragedies. It's the devil...or it is God. Let me give you an example of the problem this creates.

In 1755 a mega large earthquake struck Lisbon, Portugal....a 100,000 people died. This caused religious and moral shock waves across Europe. These were mostly Catholic folks. Religious people who died. The Catholic church was big on a particular message. God does good things for good people and bad things for bad

people. It is good and pleasing to God that you support the church financially...good things will happen to you.

And then 100,000 good Catholics get wiped out by an "act of God". This caused a theological crisis. What happened next was that "enlightenment deists" especially among the strong and growing Masonic lodges of Europe could now move from a position of "yes there is a God but we do not really know who He is" to "if there is a God and He is good, then how could He do this to 100,000 of His faithful followers?" In fact why do we assume there is a God?

This led directly to the rise of atheistic radicals especially among the French intelligentsia and from there to the French revolution of 1789.

Today we have especially among our TV preachers developed a more binary approach of "God does good things, the devil does bad things and this is how you can get God to do good things for you and this is how you can stop the devil from doing bad things to you." One of the most outstanding problems of this theology is that you really need a devil who has the godly attribute of "omnipresence" to be everywhere on earth to be taking personal care to harass and afflict you.

Now don't get me wrong I believe we need to destroy all the works of Satan and his demonic influences. But let me add two more causes to human tragedy to make a list of 4 reasons for why things happen....

Cause 3) People do stupid things.....

Cause 4) That's just the way things are....

Which brings me to Kobe Bryant. You don't go up in a helicopter with your young daughter when the whole of Los Angeles is in a thick fog and all other helicopters have been grounded till the fog clears. It isn't God, it isn't the devil...its just plain foolish. There is a whole book in the Bible which hardly ever gets preached that is devoted to give you advice in life on how to avoid doing stupid things...it's the book of Proverbs. It has 31 chapters and to inoculate yourself against foolishness try a chapter a day for a month and see if that won't cure the worst of your foolish impulses.

If you think I am wrong here try this scripture in John 7:1 which I guarantee you have not heard a sermon on....

***"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry (i.e. Judea) because the Jews sought to kill him."***

Just wrap your head around that piece of wisdom for a moment....Jesus is God, He made all things, He has 12 legions of angels at His call....but he kept out of harms way from people wanting to kill Him! Like Jesus when He was walking on earth in frail human body avoid circumstances, places or behaviors that can kill you....avoid them!

People do stupid things. For instance God advises His people in the Torah, watch out what you eat. There is such a thing as good food and bad food. Apparently in Wuhan food market in China people are eating, snakes, bats, bears, dogs....all disease carrying animals. In Africa they were eating infected monkey meat that cause an outbreak of

Ebola and many years ago HIV virus. Are we surprised new and strange viruses are jumping from animals to people?

Then there is Cause 4) That's just the way things are....

Try these scriptures out for a new perspective:

***Isaiah 45:6-7 "I am the Lord and there is none else: I form the light and create the darkness. I make peace and create evil." Amos 3:6 "and shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?" Jer. 4:6 "I the Lord will bring evil from the north and great destruction."***

Let's be clear: God does not create or cause "sin evil". What the prophets record here is that the world that God created has a lot of good things and bad things, light and darkness, cuddly kuala bears and malaria carrying mosquitoes, good things and bad things. He purposely made it that way. That is just the way things are....purposely so. You will die. You were not made to live for eternity on this world. You were made to die at some point. This world has a 1001 ways to kill you. You have severe limitations placed on your body you inhabit...it is extremely fragile. From your mid-20's you have reached your peak of health and from then on your body and strength is declining.

As a Christian you are not exempt from these "evils". The rain falls on the just and the unjust. God made it so. It is here in this realm for this brief time that you learn character from choices you must make, you develop your unique personality. Your personality and character can only be developed here in a dangerous world where you need others to survive where you can make critical choices in limited time in privacy. You need others to learn to depend on and work with others to produce enough to eat and house and clothe yourself. You must work in this world to survive. In work there is discipleship. Work means transformation of a world of abundant raw materials into useful final products you need. It develops your character and your creative personality without the constant intrusion of being able to look in the spirit realm and realize there are a thousand angels around you looking at you all the time.

And that's just the way things are in this world.

Now I want to help you with what seems to be very unfair about how God made this world and placed you in a very dangerous place seemingly all alone. Deuteronomy 22:8 and Exodus 21:33 says if you build a house put a parapet on top so nobody can fall and hurt themselves, if you dig a pit keep it covered so nobody falls in it and hurt themselves. If they do fall and hurt themselves....you are responsible for their hurt and must recompense them. That is the law of God.

God has built a world filled with dangers where you will fall and hurt yourself. But here is the wonderful truth of the gospel. The Bible tells us that all things were made by Christ and for Him. He made a dangerous world full of uncovered pits to fall in., Jesus knows that. He also knows as creator of this world He takes responsibility for its hurts and falls. That is why He came to pay the penalties of our sin for us when we cannot.

1 John 2:2 "***And he is the propitiation for our sins and not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world.***"

You say but why must I die, why could God not have made a body for me that has no pain, no sickness, why must I struggle, why flies and viruses and bacteria and locusts and a devil and demons and why am I lonely and depressed and why must I endure hardship and lack. He is God...could He not have made a better world?

Actually yes He could have made a better world, in fact He did make a better world. That is what Jesus meant when He said 'In my Father's house are many dwelling places....I go to prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also'. King David knew about that place called home...."goodness and mercy follows me all the days of my life...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Yes God has prepared a wonderful place for us. Kobe Bryant may have done a foolish thing in flying that foggy day in his helicopter. But he and his daughter did a very wise thing before boarding that flight.....

That morning before the flight they went to church and had communion. I expect to see Kobe and his daughter in our Father's house for ever. And none of his wealth here on earth or his Hollywood mansions can compare with the dwelling place that Jesus has prepared for him. And he is home with the rest of God's family. And his daughter who seemingly died before reaching her full potential....the Lord has a wonderful eternal life of new experiences and joys and fulfilment for her as with all children who die before their time...because of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Don't do foolish things. Walk in wisdom, resist the devil and he will flee from you and keep your eternal perspective. You don't want to spend eternity here on earth in this feeble body. you don't want to spend one more day here than what you have to. But make every day you have here on this earth counts for eternity.