



The Coronavirus: A Biblical Perspective

- A. Divine Judgment
- B. Sign of the end times
- C. Perchance

A. Divine Judgment

1. On Oct. 7, 2001, I preached a sermon on Sunday evening entitled, "The WTC Bombers; Members of a Fringe Group?" The question was whether this was an act of mainline Islam or a few wayward outliers, that is, "a persons...atypical within a particular group" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/outlier>). I contended that they were not outliers but were following the plain statements of the Koran.
2. Whoever they were, they brought America to our knees for a while. It was a gut punch!

3. At the time of this great atrocity on the US, many evangelicals declared that this was an act of judgment by God on America, e.g., Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of Billy Graham, "controversially stated that the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States were God's punishment on the country for transgender, evolution and secularism."
4. Also, Jerry Falwell speaking on the 700 Club, hosted by Pat Robertson, said similar things at the time: "Forty-eight hours after 9/11, Falwell

4. (cont.) said on Pat Robertson's '700 Club' that the attacks were likely evidence that God was judging America and 'probably what we deserve. The ACLU's got to take a lot of blame for this,' Falwell said. 'And, I know that I'll hear from them for this, but throwing God out successfully—with the help of the federal court system—throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent

4. (cont.) babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'" Falwell soon apologized for his insensitivity to hurting people at the time, but shortly before his death, he said that he stood by his comments (cf. <https://ethicsdaily.com/days-before-his-death-falwell-stood-by-controversial-comments-about-9-11-cms-9345/>).

5. We know that the Bible says that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pr. 14:34 NKJV). We also know that God judged many of Israel's enemies in the OT, including the inhabitants of The Promised Land on account of their sin (Gen. 15:16-21), and He also judged Egypt (cf. Exodus & the plagues) and other nations who opposed Him and His people (Joshua & Judges). Further, we presently know that we have a responsibility to judge those who are in the church, but God judges those outside, that is, unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:13).

6. Our problem is that we do not have the mind of God to know whom He is judging and why, e.g., in what way was the collapse of the towers on 9-11 a judgment on the homosexuals, transgender people, the feminists, the evolutionists, and secularists. Did they suffer a particular setback on that day and then turn from their wicked ways?
7. Contrarily, God said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse" (Gen. 12:3). There is simply no question about it, we have blessed Israel in unprecedented ways recently. Please note:

- a. Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement.
- b. He relocated the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- c. He has overlooked Jewish settlement on land claimed by Palestinians and stayed quiet on Netanyahu's plans to claim sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea.
- d. Trump has closed the Palestinian Liberation Organization's de facto embassy in Washington and cut funding from groups that work on Palestinian issues.

- e. Trump has requested 3.3 billion in military aid for Israel for 2020 and halted all aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, according to the Congressional Research Service.
- f. His advisers, including son-in-law Jared Kushner, have drafted a long-promised Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, which critics say will not help Palestinians (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/09/16/donald-trump-israel-election/2333266001/>).

8. During WW II, Germany clearly cursed Israel, murdering more than 6 million Jews. We have greater biblical data for saying that Germany's defeat in WW II was the judgment of God on that nation, but even there we must exercise a degree of caution, it not having been *biblically* addressed.
9. In times of national and international crises, including war, many regrettable and embarrassing things have been stated by evangelicals, e.g., Theodore Epp asserted during WW II that Mussolini was the Antichrist with Epp's understanding of the revived Roman Empire, etc.

B. Sign of the end times?

1. How does all of this conjecture about judgment fit in with our current crisis, which only one week ago would have seemed almost unimaginable?
 - a. Trying to ascertain what this SARS-CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), otherwise known as COVID-19, is all about from a biblical perspective, especially in terms of prophecy, is very likely an exercise in futility. Yet there will be no end of trying.
 - b. There is nothing new in this. Notice this article

b. (cont.) re: the time before WW II, involving missionaries from the U.S., Edith and Ralph Norton (<https://www.neh.gov/divisions/research/featured-project/looking-the-antichrist-sign-the-times-in-rome>) from their interview with Benito Mussolini on Apr. 29, 1932. The Internet Article is entitled "Looking for the Antichrist: A Sign of the Times in Rome." The Nortons said to Mussolini: "'Do you intend to reconstitute the Roman Empire?' It was a simple question, but *Il Duce* did not understand.

The question was posed during a 1932 meeting between the American evangelical missionaries Edith and Ralph Norton and the rising Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, also known as *Il Duce* (The Leader). The Americans explained to Mussolini what many of their evangelical brethren believed: the end was near. According to the Nortons' reading of Biblical prophecy, Jesus' Second Coming would be heralded by the nations of the earth banding together in a global, ungodly confederacy. At the head of the coalition would

rule the figure known only as 'the Antichrist,' a terrible dictator who was destined to be defeated by Jesus in the battle of Armageddon, bringing about a thousand years of peace and joy. When Americans heard about an Italian dictator uniting Italy, some could not help but think that the Roman Empire would return, and with it the end of days.

Il Duce's curiosity was piqued. 'Is that really described in the Bible? Where is it to be found?' The answer, the Americans pointed out, lay in the

book of Daniel, the Hebrew prophet whose visions provide the basis for historical and contemporary Biblical prophecy regarding the Antichrist and Jesus' Second Coming. But the Nortons' plan to deter Mussolini backfired spectacularly; upon being shown the passages, *Il Duce* was apparently much pleased. The role of global dictator was one he would gladly assume. Although an atheist, he wondered if, perhaps, his rise to power truly was foretold. One can only imagine the missionaries' disappointment.

The Nortons, who had founded the Belgian Evangelical Mission in Brussels after World War I, were not alone in their apocalyptic beliefs. From the early nineteenth century to the present, from Billy Sunday to Billy Graham, a strand of Evangelical thought has focused on current events in light of prophecy. Mussolini was not the only suspected Antichrist; during World War I, Kaiser Wilhelm seemed a likely candidate. At other times, it appeared as if he might be a Bolshevik leader. The Nortons and others believed the signs of

Armageddon were there, even if sometimes unclear."

- c. To come to more modern examples of trying to somehow connect Coronavirus to biblical prophecy, see this article (<https://www.christianpost.com/news/anne-graham-lotz-more-concerned-about-fear-mass-panic-covid-19-has-provoked-than-the-virus-235781/>).
- d. Evangelist, Greg Laurie, who is *far* from clear on the gospel, at least had the presence of mind *not* to point to some text indicating that this virus is a crisis marking the Lord's soon return (<https://www.christianpost.com/voices/america-its-time-to-pray.html>).

C. Perchance

1. Synonyms are "conceivably, maybe, mayhap, perhaps, possibly" (Merriam Webster online).
2. We simply do not know what a day will bring forth. It can be calamitous or advantageous. It can be good, bad or indifferent. But whatever happens, it is not, and it cannot be a sign of the coming rapture of the church, a coming that is already imminent. No sign or fulfilled prophecy has to happen before our Lord's return, otherwise He could not have come before that final "sign."

3. I said "perchance," but that does not mean that *God* did not know about it in advance because He knows all things. So, we have great confidence that Rm. 8:28 will happen regardless of current events.
4. That being the case, whence the anxiety? Anxiety is simply the emotion of unbelief. It is in effect saying to God, I do not believe Rm. 8:28. Or Phil. 4:6. Or 1Pt. 5:7. Or Mt. 6:25, 27, 28, 31.