

# Pestilence

## **“Sin No More, Lest a Worse Thing Come Upon You”**

### I. SCRIPTURE

Matthew 24:7b–8 **““And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows”.**

### II. FAMINES, PESTILENCES, AND EARTHQUAKES

#### A. FAMINES

Before the “Corona” virus was headline news, I was following the locust plagues in Africa. In a February 9, 2020 article written by the Associated Press, it was predicted that although the Somalian locust crisis “look[s] less ominous than the billion-member swarms that are infesting East Africa [below Somalia] in the worst outbreak some places have seen [there] in 70 years”, but that “their time will come”. They continue...

“Small and wingless, the hopping young locusts are the next wave in the outbreak that threatens more than 10 million people across the region with a severe hunger crisis. And they are growing up in one of the most inaccessible places on the planet. Large parts of Somalia south of this semi-autonomous Puntland region are under threat, or held by, the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group. That makes it difficult or impossible to conduct the aerial spraying of the locusts that experts say is the only effective control. Somalia has declared the outbreak a national emergency. Across the region, according to U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock, ‘it has the potential to be the most devastating plague of locusts in any of our living memories if we don't reduce the problem faster than we're doing at the moment.’”

Now fast forward this locust situation just a few weeks to March 4, 2020... According to a Scientific America article written by Nathaniel Gronewold, “U.N. officials say record numbers of desert locust swarms have spread from the Horn of Africa to the Persian Gulf region—despite efforts to contain the infestation through mass chemical spraying. The outbreak was initially confined mainly to Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, but FAO says it’s now

tracking 15 countries in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia affected by the locusts. The swarms have appeared in a swath hundreds of miles wide, from South Sudan in the west to parts of Pakistan in the east. U.N. officials say the current locust infestation is the worst they've seen in 25 years."

## **B. EARTHQUAKES**

Meanwhile, last July (2019), we had a 7.1 magnitude Ridgecrest earthquake, just a little over 250 miles and 4 hours from where we are today. The largest foreshock of the 2019 Ridgecrest earthquakes was felt in Las Vegas, Nevada and Los Angeles, California. Structural damage and some fires occurred in Ridgecrest, near the epicenter. Around 20 people sustained light injuries. Later, a man was found dead in Nevada, suspected to have been crushed by his car during the quake.

So far this 2020 year, through March 26, according to the USGS, we've had these 41 "significant" earthquakes in various places in our world:

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1. 5.043km W of Mentone, Texas
  2. 7.5219km SSE of Severo-Kuril'sk, Russia
  3. 3.98km NNE of Magna, Utah
  4. 5.43km SW of Kasina, Croatia
  5. 4.56km N of Johnson Lane, Nevada
  6. 5.724km E of Xegar, China
  7. 5.215km W of Petrolia, CA
  8. 4.65km NE of Magna, Utah
  9. 6.2246km S of Kangin, Indonesia
  10. 4.67km NNE of Magna, Utah
  11. 5.76km NNE of Magna, Utah
  12. 6.3298km NE of Raoul Island, New Zealand
  13. 5.869km W of Petrolia, CA
  14. 5.571km SE of Estacion Coahuila, B.C., MX
  15. 6.024km SE of Saray, Turkey
  16. 5.826km ESE of Saray, Turkey
  17. 7.094km ENE of Kuril'sk, Russia
  18. 5.020km SSE of Guanica, Puerto Rico
  19. 5.32km SW of Toride, Japan
  20. 6.155km SE of East End, Cayman Islands

21. 7.7123km NNW of Lucea, Jamaica
22. 6.3102km WNW of Kirakira, Solomon Islands
23. 5.012km SSE of Indios, Puerto Rico
24. 4.623km NNE of Barstow, CA
25. 6.710km NNE of Doganyol, Turkey
26. 5.615km ESE of Kirkagac, Turkey
27. 3.64km NNE of Granada Hills, CA
28. 3.84km ENE of Fincastle, Tennessee
29. 4.53km WSW of South Hutchinson, Kansas
30. 6.086km ENE of Arzak, China
31. 5.26km WSW of Guanica, Puerto Rico
32. 5.911km SSE of Indios, Puerto Rico
33. 5.25km SE of Maria Antonia, Puerto Rico
34. 6.4Chukotskiy Avtonomnyy Okrug, Russia
35. 5.68km SSW of Tallaboa, Puerto Rico
36. 6.413km S of Indios, Puerto Rico
37. 6.314km S of Sinabang, Indonesia
38. 5.89km SE of Indios, Puerto Rico
39. 5.94km N of Ixhuatan, Mexico
40. 4.025km S of Port Hueneme, CA
41. 3.910km ENE of Morgan Hill, CA

### C. PESTILENCE

Are you surprised by today's "corona" virus epidemic? Are you surprised by all the non-related viral sickness that is currently ongoing in our town, and that has kept our local hospital a full capacity over the last few weeks? Is the "corona" virus and the local infection that is plaguing our community a "pestilence"?

According to Got Questions, "Pestilence" is defined as "a deadly disaster, usually a disease, that affects an entire community. Pestilence is contagious, virulent, and devastating". "In the Bible, pestilence is usually a sign of God's judgment on a nation or people group (Deuteronomy 32:24; 1 Chronicles 21:12; Ezekiel 7:14–15). The God who protects and blesses is also the God who sends disaster and pestilence when it accomplishes His righteous purposes on earth (Isaiah 45:7; Ezekiel 5:16–17; Amos 4:10). Pestilence is promised as part of God's final judgment on the world in Revelation 18:8."

YAHUSHA [Jesus] Himself predicted in His “End Times” discourse, particularly in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, that these events are a “sign of His coming and of the End of the Age” (Matthew 24:3). Before He predicts these and other key events, He says **“see that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass...”** (Matthew 24:6a). He continues, **“but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are [just] the beginning of sorrows.”** (Matthew 24:6b-8)

### III. LOCAL GFAN CHURCH EXPERIENCE

Going into 2020, YAHUAH [God] has led me into the foreknowledge that this year will be a year of “hanging on” for our body. You have heard this from me before in both the mid-week and weekend services. You should know that according to YAHUAH [God]’s holy word, a pastor and teacher’s work is for the “perfecting of His followers, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of MASHIACH [Christ]”: till we *all* come into the unity of the belief, and of the knowledge of the Son of ELOHIYM [God], *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of MASHIACH [Christ]; that we going forward in our lives should no longer be children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of others that lie in wait to deceive; but [instead]..., speaking the Truth in love... (and that is no my truth or your truth, but YAHUAH [God]’s written truth)... so that you may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, even MASHIACH [Christ].” (Ephesians 4:12-15)

#### A. MY SPECIAL PRAYER

In the light of YAHUAH [God]’s mission for me as His pastor and teacher, a couple months ago I asked YAHUAH [God] to help me see into the lives of His followers, to see as YAHUSHA [Jesus] would see into the lives of those that He put in front of me seeking help, so that I could “edify”, to bring each one of one “unto a perfect person” in Him. I was shocked by how He answered my prayer. Shortly afterward and until this time, as I would meet and talk one-on-one with His professed followers, I started seeing the brightest of the brights and the darkest of darks of each individual person’s character who came to meet with me. I was surprised that I could no longer see a middle road within them, a “grey area” in their lives. I was devastated and greatly troubled by the extreme darkness that I have seen; but, I have also been greatly inspired by the brightness that I have experienced in others.

## **B. MY UNIQUE PHYSICAL ILLNESS**

**On Monday, March 2, I fell terribly ill. I was not the first person in our congregation. Some fell terribly ill on March 1 or before. My daughter Rica fell ill prior to me but my wife Hydie, who seldom gets sick, to the best of my memory fell ill about the same time as I did.**

**Never before in my lifetime have I experienced so many different symptoms at one time as I experienced with this particular illness. To name a few, they included extreme fever and chills, vertigo (dizziness), nausea, lack of appetite (zero hunger), multiple simultaneous headaches, body ache including lower back and extreme shoulder pain (not able to raise or move it), tiredness and extreme weakness (no longer able to do my 19 push-ups in the morning, explain the gravity of YAHUAH [God]), weird (but not dark) dreams (explain), unstoppable cough and a reoccurrence of a Bibasilar Crackles-type manifestation in my lungs (explain).**

**One thing that was different with this illness, compared to the others before, was that I had no self-pity, but was able to endure it while remaining in close connection to ELOHIYM (God). I don't think that I grumbled at all through the first twelve (12) days where I experienced the worst of the mentioned symptoms. I kept telling YAHUAH [God] that His will be done with where He would lead me. When I was flat on the floor first thing in the morning before Him and I didn't have the strength to raise myself up, I would simply thank Him for His leading and feel encouraged because I was "flat out" before *Him* and able to praise Him for His wisdom (in lieu of my own), and I knew that He would lift me back up if He willed it.**

**However, sometime within those twelve (12) days, I did ask Him in a slightly joking way, whether He was allowing the demonic forces to afflict me as He allowed Job to be afflicted. I say that I asked him in a "joking" way, as I knew better not to ask Him in a serious way because I did not want to get the same answers that Job got: "Who are you to question Me? Where were you when I did all these mighty things?" I reminded Him that I thought that He had given me a promise that if I lived out my life in accordance with His will, that He would spare me all the sickness and darkness that I had experienced before Him in my life. His answer was quick and clear:**

### C. SEEING OTHERS BETTER

The first thing He asked me in return was “didn’t you pray to Me awhile back asking Me to “help you see into the lives of My professed followers, to see as YAHUSHA [Jesus] would see their lives, so that I could help you ‘edify’ them?” My response was “Oh my! I thought that seeing into the thoughts and spiritual condition of your professed followers was the complete answer to that prayer. It was hard enough to see the mental and spiritual darkness; I’m not sure that I can endure seeing and feeling this new dimension. Then I thought... “Oh my! Now I know that your people are really even more messed up than I realized at first! Not just spiritually, but physically too! At first I first I regretted a little bit that I had prayed my special prayer. But then I quickly changed my mind and asked Him for His added strength instead... so that I would be able to endure what He was showing me, and to be able to apply it in His name for the “healing’ of His people. And now...

I could see and feel in a much deeper way how much He loves each one of you... that He very literally feels your every suffering, both your mental and physical problems, and that He wants to heal you of all your deficiencies, mental and physical, but... He will not tolerate your spiritual disobedience... He wants you to know that you are living our own individual, differing, and ambivalent truths rather than His one great truth, revealed by the RUACH [Spirit] of Truth... that you are arrogant, stubborn, and constantly grumbling about what He is allowing you to go through in your life. He is saying to you now, as He said to the sick man healed on Sabbath at the Pool of Bethesda, **“See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you”** (John 5:14).

### D. SICKNESS & HEALING THROUGH COMMUNION [YAHUSHA’s Supper]

Then, the next thing He asked me in return was “Do you really think, Rich, that you are really living your life now in a way that is totally within My will? He then put three (3) things in my life before me that He expected me to change. I had to immediately confess these, asking Him for His forgiveness and for His strength to overcome those things that I haven’t been able to conquer yet on my own... for which I would definitely need His help. I will not confess to you what the first two (2) issues were, but you may find some connection to the third thing. I was reminded that after the last YAHUSHA [Lord]’s Supper, [i.e. communion] that we did as His body late last December,

that 1) it was poorly attended, and 2) it was also impersonal, not perfectly timed, and disappointing, for many who did attend. And yes, I did witness the grumbling.

I also remember that in preparing for that event, that I had feelings of self-pity, that not even one (1) person had stepped forward to help me with the preparation, as a service to ELOHYM [God]... to help me find and clean the communion supplies, to make sure that we had everything we needed, to prepare the foot-washing basins, to make sure we had enough available warm water, to fill the basins, to be sure we were good with all the emblems, including that the bread was properly prepared, that the linen was clean and ironed, and so forth. Afterward, I promised YAHUAH [God] that I would do better at preparing myself, and everything for the next time. I also agreed that I would fast for 24-hours beforehand. I also had two (2) other people who agreed to fast with me. I wanted to enter the next ceremony in a “holy” way, that even if no one stepped again to help like last time, that I would take adequate measures, even if it had to be done by myself, to be absolutely sure that everything would be ready for a “holy” ceremony, that would be worthy for The King of Kings, in remembrance of Him and His sacrifice for you and me. The date was set: we would have YAHUSHA [Jesus]’s Supper, our next communion, on Sabbath, February 29. It was in print; everyone had a heads up. But...

... by Friday night, February 28, as self-pity kicked in again, that no one had stepped forward again and as I was about to prepare the bread that would represent our righteous King’s body, I realized that I had failed to remember my solemn promise to fast for 24 hours beforehand, to be sure that I was spiritually ready for the holy service. I had failed to remind the two (2) others to join me. By Friday night, I had neither the mental or physical energy to do everything that I should for such an important, holy communion with our Savior. I canceled the service.

We need to remember YAHUAH [God]’s words written down by Paul: “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord [YAHUAH] in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord [YAHUAH]. But let a [person] examine them self, and so let them eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For they who eat and drink in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to them self, not discerning the Lord’s [YAHUAH’s] body. For this reason many are weak and sick among us, and

many (die early). For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord [YAH], that we may not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

#### **E. INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

Now I'm back to Friday, March 13, the 12th day of my illness. Both Hydie and Rica have been praying constantly for my healing, while I have been praying instead for YAHUAH [God]'s will for me regarding my illness. When Rica would ask me what she could do for me to help me, I would say that she should pray and that YAHUAH [God] would make me better. On the 12th day, when I was about 25 or more pounds lighter in weight, Hydie confessed to me that because I wasn't hungry for so long, and I wasn't eating much, that she had started a fast the day before. She made the statement to me that sometimes she feels that YAHUAH [God] doesn't care about our physical problems, but that He only cares about our eternal spiritual soul.

That night, Hydie and Rica came to me after I went to bed early. Rica was crying for me, as she had been for several days. She said, "Dad, I don't know what I can do to help you." I responded that she should pray to YAHUAH [God] and that He would make be better... although I never asked Him Myself specifically to heal me, but that His will be accomplished in me. Rica responded, "Yeah, but I don't know what else I can do because you aren't getting any better." I realized then, that as Hydie, that she was starting to doubt that YAHUAH [God] would answer her many prayers for my recovery. The next morning, on Sabbath and early on the 13th day, I realized that I needed to recover to reestablish Rica and Hydie's faith in YAHUAH [God]. As I was preparing for the Sabbath service as I usually do very early in on Saturday morning, I was overwhelmed by the RUACH HA'QODESH [Holy Spirit] and told by Him that He would start my physical recovery. And, from that day until today, He has steadily led me to recovery... with a healthy mental clarity (crisp and clear) and a physical condition (25 to 30 lbs lighter) that I haven't had in years. And Dear (Hydie), I know absolutely now that YAHUAH [God], that YAHUSHA [Jesus], and that the RUACH HA'QODESH [Holy Spirit] does know very well and deeply experiences all our physical, mental, and spiritual sickness, and longs to heal us... much in this life, but ultimately 100% in our new life ahead within Him.

## **F. THE 13TH DAY – A DAY OF NEW BEGINNINGS**

After the Israelites crossed over the Jordan river, they were faced with the obstacle of The Battle of Jericho. This is recorded in the Book of Joshua, being the first battle fought by the Israelites in the course of the conquest of Canaan. According to Joshua 6:1–27, the walls of Jericho fell after the Israelites marched every day once for six days around the city and seven times on the seventh day, a total of thirteen (13) times around, then blew their trumpets. Now, YAHUAH [God] had given them their first deliverance, on their trip to possessing the promised land, at peace, free from the enemy. This would be a day of new beginnings for them, if they would allow YAHUAH [God] to lead them each day, each step of the way to Canaan, the land of milk and honey.

Similarly, on Sabbath, on the 13th day after my sickness began, I found a new beginning in my renewed commitment to YAHUAH [God], to YAHUSHA [Jesus]. Will you find yours, too? Will you allow yourself to be pulled by YAHUSHA [Christ], totally, no less than 100%, out of your physical, your mental, and your spiritual bondage... as the Israelite were pulled out of their 400 years of bondage in Egypt?

Remember the special promises that YAHUAH [God] specifically made to the Israelites:

### **Positive Promise:**

1. “And YAHUAH [the LORD] will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay *them* on all those who hate you” (Deuteronomy 7:15).

### **Negative Promise:**

2. “If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, YAHUAH ELOHAYKA [The Lord your God], then YAHUAH [the LORD] will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues — great and prolonged plagues — and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will YAHUAH [the LORD] bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the

voice of YAHUAH ELOHAYKA [the LORD your God]. And it shall be, that just as YAHUAH [the LORD] rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so YAHUAH [the LORD] will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess.” (Deuteronomy 28:58-63)

(Mention of the many rules and procedures set up for the Israelites to avoid disease during their wandering in the wilderness. Compare “clean” meats to the meats in the wet markets of China)

#### IV. CONCLUSION

So, I ask you again dear brothers and sisters in MESSIAH [Christ], “Will you find your new beginning in YAHUSHA [Jesus] today? Will you allow yourself to be pulled completely out of the mire of sin... out of your physical, your mental, and your spiritual bondage... as the Israelite were pulled out of their 400 years of bondage in Egypt?

Of by default, will you be plagued with the diseases of your prior bondage?

My hope and prayer now is that you will choose a new beginning today in YAHUSHA [Jesus]... that you lay down before our Father YAHUAH [God], and give Him 100% of your sickness... and ask for and receive His RUACH HA’QODESH [Holy Spirit] now.

Amen.

#### Credits:

- 1 “What is the meaning of *pestilence* in the Bible?”, Got Questions; <https://www.gotquestions.org/pestilence-in-the-Bible.html>
- 2 “Most Devastating Plague of Locusts in Recent History Could Come Within Weeks, U.N. Warns”, February 9, 2020, Associated Press; <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/most-devastating-plague-locusts-recent-history-could-come-within-weeks-n1133171>
- 3 “Desert Locust Swarms Continue to Spread in Africa, Middle East”, Nathaniel Gronewold, Scientific American, March 4, 2020; <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/desert-locust-swarms-continue-to-spread-in-africa-middle-east/>
- 4 “Significant Earthquakes 2020”, USGS, March 28, 2020; <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/browse/significant.php>
- 5 “List of earthquakes in 2019”, Wikipedia; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_earthquakes\\_in\\_2019](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_earthquakes_in_2019)
- 6 “Pestilence” definition, Bible Study Tools dictionary; <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/pestilence/>
- 7 “Battle of Jericho”, Wikipedia; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Jericho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jericho)