

2020—what a calamitous year for the world!

The greatest pandemic

by Rex Morgan

The COVID-19 coronavirus has rampaged across the planet, and seems to have hijacked us and taken our lives captive.

Millions have been infected. Hundreds of thousands have died. Companies too many to number have gone bankrupt, with multiple jobs lost, schools closed, and

countless people left impoverished and grieving. Most nations have been sealed off from the rest of the world. Who would have believed it was possible just a year ago?

But as catastrophic as it has been, COVID-19 is not the greatest pandemic of all time. There have been other immensely destructive ones, including HIV/AIDS, SARS, Cholera and Ebola. The 1918 influenza pandemic killed around 50 million people. The Black Death,

also known as the Plague, killed an estimated 75 to 200 million in the 14th century, about half the population of Europe at that time.

But these dreadful diseases shrink into insignificance when compared with another noxious infection that has been storming across the globe for millennia. This vicious virus has been caught by everybody on earth today, and in fact has infected every single person who has ever lived! One hundred percent of all people



Pandemics are nothing new. This engraving of the devastation of the Black Plague pandemic in Naples in 1656 was created by Micco Spadaro, an eyewitness to its horrors.

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have tested positive for this deadly plague—the virus of sin.

Sin is a spiritual rather than a physical virus, but it has had terrible physical consequences. It has brought nations to their knees, filled multiple jails with prisoners and hospitals with patients, and ruined countless marriages and families. It has wreaked far more havoc around the world than any other disease.

What is this virus called sin? Sin is usually thought of in a religious context, referring to disobedience against the laws of God. But you don't need to know any of those laws to recognise what sin is. Most people naturally understand that behaviours like stealing, lying, murder, jealousy, and hatred are bad, harmful, and reprehensible actions that cause pain and difficulty for ourselves and others.

Even in a secular setting sin is defined as “an act regarded as a serious or regrettable fault, offence, or omission”.¹ But although we acknowledge that actions of this type are wrong, all of us have indulged in them at times, and most of us rather frequently, resulting in untold hurt and pain.

The Bible records that sin began right back with the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. It traces the disease down to the very first infection, the “patient zero” at the origin of a cluster that has multiplied relentlessly all the way down through history until today—a gigantic cluster, encircling all of humanity! The Bible declares that everyone has sinned,² and that sin has caused death to come upon us all.³

If there is a loving God, it is fair to ask the question: “Why doesn't he prevent this?” God knows very well that it's happening, of course, or he wouldn't be God. And he vehemently dislikes it! But he has reluctantly permitted the presence of sin because he is working out an ultimate purpose through it all.



A stained glass depiction of Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise for their sin against God.

It is natural to assume that if there is a God, he is the one in charge of all that happens in the world. But how can that be reconciled with the perilous state the world is in: the poverty, crime, wars, and disasters that abound? The Bible's answer is that God does not control everything that occurs on earth at this time, but has given permission to an adversary, called in the Bible Satan the devil, to have temporary authority over the planet.

The Bible reveals that this Satan is a powerful spirit being originally created as an angel, who became resentful of God's authority and eventually rebelled against his maker.⁴ God exiled Satan to the earth, where he has allowed him a short time of dominion.⁵

Satan is described variously in the Bible as "the God of this world",⁶ "the prince of the power of the air",⁷ and "the prince of this world".⁸ We are told that he has taken humanity captive to do his will,⁹ and the whole world lies under his sway.¹⁰

The Bible makes the startling statement that "Satan has deceived the whole world".¹¹ This is the ultimate cause explaining the evil and suffering abounding all over our beleaguered planet.

Most people are totally oblivious to this situation, and don't have a clue they are deceived. Of course, by definition, if they did know it, they would no longer be deceived!

When you come to think of it, it is obvious that God isn't controlling things on earth because human beings and governments clearly aren't following his way of showing nothing but love to ourselves and our neighbours in everything we do. Rather, God allows us the capacity for free choice and we humans have used that to decide for ourselves how to conduct our lives. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do, ever since he encouraged Adam and Eve to take the fruit from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil"

The images of the coronavirus show it as a furry ball, covered with prickly spikes or nodules that can be compared to the deadly tentacles of sin—hatred, lust, pride, jealousy, and greed—that latch onto our minds and drag us into evil.



forbidden to them by God. By this act they demonstrated that they were taking for themselves the choice of what was right and wrong, as Satan had deceived them to do.

So the world is clearly following the ways of Satan at this time, and accordingly is subject to the massive pandemic of sin, a disease that has many similarities with the physical coronavirus, an organism that is microscopically tiny, invisible to the human eye.

When they begin, sins are tiny too, and invisible. They can start as a passing evil or negative thought in our mind, but that can take hold and grow quickly until they turn into actions. A fleeting desire to obtain for ourselves something we set our eyes on can quickly mature into an act of stealing. A thought of dislike can develop into an attitude of hatred which later manifests itself as an act of murder. The virus incubates secretly in our minds until the fact that we have it eventually becomes visible to all.

We're all familiar with the images of the coronavirus that show it as a furry ball covered with prickly spikes or nodules. Those spikes can be compared to the deadly tentacles of sin—like hatred, lust, pride, jealousy, and greed—impulses that latch onto our minds and drag us into evil.

The coronavirus spreads rapidly. It just takes one person to cough or sneeze or touch a few surfaces and it can race like wildfire through a community. And sin is just like that. One person with thoughts of hatred can share them with others and incite them to join in committing all sorts of dastardly deeds.

Just as there is a test for COVID-19, so there is one for sin. You may have taken the COVID test, but have you done the sin test?

The test for sin is to look into the Bible and see how you measure up to the righteousness of God. Just like the nasal swab test for COVID, this test is somewhat unpleasant. Sadly, everyone who takes the spiritual test comes out positive for sin.

So what can we do about the spiritual virus of sin? Washing our hands thoroughly using soap or hand sanitiser is important in fighting COVID-19, and so it is spiritually.

The Bible counsels us to “Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”.¹² This is a reference to spiritual, or metaphorical, hands and hearts, representing the inner sources of our thoughts and emotions.

We need to wash our spiritual “hands” of sin by using the spiritual sanitiser or soap of God’s cleansing word. Studying the Bible and applying what it says is the way to do that kind of inner or “deep cleaning”. We can be cleaned up by the water of God’s word, as we look at it, think

about it and let it wash around in our minds and purify our hearts.¹³

Quarantine and self-isolation are important in combatting the coronavirus too, and on a spiritual level it’s important to keep away from anyone who would lead us into sin. The Bible warns us about this danger, telling us to avoid certain people and ideas that might lead us astray. We need to be scrupulously careful about the company we keep, and the books, movies, and media we view, because there is a lot of spiritual error in the world around us, and it is contagious.

Another vital measure in combatting the physical virus is the wearing of face masks. The spiritual counterpart here is to take up the “shield of faith”,

which the biblical writer Paul urges us to do in order to “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”.¹⁴ He goes on to describe other protective equipment such as “the belt of truth”, “the breastplate of righteousness”, and “the helmet of salvation”,¹⁵ in other words, encouraging us to put on what we could call our full “spiritual PPE gear”.

Paul explains the reason we need this protection: we are struggling “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”.¹⁶ Here is another confirmation that Satan holds authority over planet earth at this time.



This African man is wearing personal protective equipment—mask, goggles, face shield, and suit—to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For Christians the “spiritual PPE gear” includes the shield of faith, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation.



Washing hands, wearing masks, and self-isolating are important, but the ultimate solution the world is looking for is a vaccine. The race is on, with thousands of scientists searching for the elusive vaccine to cure COVID-19.

Thankfully the good news for the world is that the cure for the sin virus has already been found! There is a tested and proven vaccine that is 100% effective. That life-giving vaccine is none other than the blood of Jesus Christ! Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”.¹⁷

It is important for vaccines to go through rigorous testing before they can be put into general use. Ultimately they have to be tested in humans to prove their effectiveness. Jesus came as a human and went through severe testing. The scriptures describe him as being “our high priest who has been tested in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin”.¹⁸

In the same way that physical vaccines are injected into us, Jesus enters into our spiritual heart to protect us from sin.¹⁹ The Bible confirms that an inoculation of his

blood is the cure for the virus of sin, stating that “the blood of Jesus the Son purifies us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.²⁰

So God is not currently exercising hands-on control of everything that happens on earth. Rather, he has permitted Satan to have temporary dominion over the planet, and the devil has used this opportunity to deceive all of humanity into thinking it is best that we “do it our way” rather than following God’s ways. But God has a grand purpose behind all of this, and eventually we will all come to realise we can’t successfully “do it ourselves”, but need God’s grace and direction in our lives.²¹ Many Christians have already come to that understanding, and have taken the vaccine to neutralise the sin virus. If you would like to join them, why not visit a Bible-believing church in your neighbourhood next Sunday?

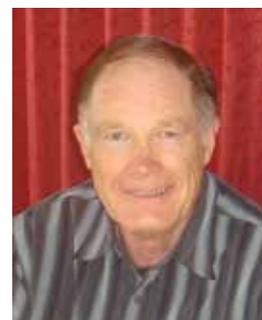
As the world continues to fight the deadly coronavirus, it is important to be alert and aware of our personal fight against the virus of sin, the greatest pandemic the world has ever seen. Thankfully we have the sure solution—we can take the

life-saving vaccine of the blood of Jesus Christ into our lives, thereby overpowering sin.

What’s more, by God’s grace we can look forward to a future time when God promises total elimination of the sin virus from all lives forever. The closing chapters of the Bible show that a time is coming when God “will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”.²²

NOTES

- ¹ Oxford English Dictionary (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/sin>).
- ² Romans 3:23.
- ³ Romans 5:12.
- ⁴ Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:13–17.
- ⁵ Revelation 12:7–9.
- ⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:3–4.
- ⁷ Ephesians 2:2.
- ⁸ John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.
- ⁹ 2 Timothy 2:26.
- ¹⁰ 1 John 5:19.
- ¹¹ Revelation 12:9.
- ¹² James 4:8.
- ¹³ Ephesians 5:26.
- ¹⁴ Ephesians 6:16.
- ¹⁵ Ephesians 6:10–17.
- ¹⁶ Ephesians 6:12.
- ¹⁷ John 1:29.
- ¹⁸ Hebrews 4:15.
- ¹⁹ Ephesians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 13:5.
- ²⁰ John 1:7–9.
- ²¹ Romans 11:32.
- ²² Revelation 21:4.



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