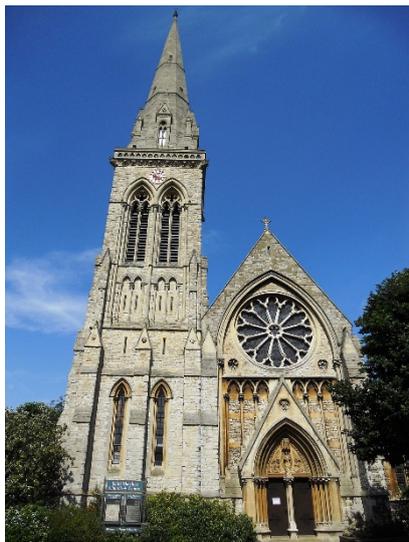


## What Is God doing through the Coronavirus?

*Based on the book by John Piper Coronavirus and Christ*

The fact that all misery, sickness and disease is a result of the fall does not mean that all individual suffering is a specific judgment for personal sins. For example, Job's suffering was not owing to his particular sins, the very first sentence of that book makes this clear where Job is described as blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil. So we shouldn't presume to know why God is allowing this pandemic but instead we can look at what He is doing through it.



### **1. The church is being refined in this season**

What is God doing? Well he is certainly refining his church. As it says in 1 Peter 4:17-18, God will judge us for our actions and this will begin *at the household of God*. For us "the household of God," this judgment from him is purifying, not a punishment."

So this season of difficulty and trouble is one that God will allow to purify and refine his bride, The Church. Over this season we as a church have had many prophetic words which in essence say a similar thing – God strengthening the body so that it can carry its mission out well, the pressing and crushing of the grapes in The Vine to make new wine, the picture of God raking up the grass of our hearts and removing debris as preparation for the next season, blades being sharpened on a whetstone with oil anointing it and the picture of flour - us being called to be pure flour, not filled with substitutes or impurities - to resist temptation to withhold of our best through this season but instead to steward ourselves well in this time.

All these words in some vein or other speak of preparation in ourselves and as a body. This season is making us ready for things that are to come. We shall be sharper and more refined if we allow God through this season to make us so. Consequently, this should result in more power as we are honed to be more like Jesus, as God reveals the things that need burning up, stripping away and dying to. We choose how we respond to his revelation. In this season, will we count the cost and chose to press into Jesus?



It is important to remember that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). It is discipline, not destruction, that our Father is doing in us. "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6). What a

privilege that you and I, in the midst of this, knows our Father loves us and desires the best for us.

## **2. Awakening us for the second Coming**

What else is God doing? Well through the history of the church there have been failed predictions of the end of the world, the Bible tells us that no one knows the hour yet Jesus tells us that we will experience the birth pains (including the coronavirus) as reminders and alerts that he is coming and we need to be ready. “You . . . must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:44).

Jesus says it clearly again and again: “Be on your guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. . . . Stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come. . . . And what I say to you, I say to all: Stay awake” (Mark 13:33–37).



The message is clear. Stay awake!

Be alert! Be ready! For Jesus will be coming back and the church needs to be awake and ready. This season, where the coronavirus seems to be running rampage, it is like a birthing pain, a merciful wake-up call – be ready.

How do we get ready? What does it mean for us to wake up? The way to be ready is to come to Jesus Christ, receive forgiveness for sins, and walk in his light. Then we will be those who are not in darkness for that day to surprise us like a thief. Instead we will be ready and awake to live with him.

### **Reflective questions**

1. What does it mean for you to be prepared by God in this time?
2. Are there areas in your life that God is revealing you need to change in some way?
3. What do you think the challenge to wake up and be ready means for you?

### **Prayer**

Pray that we would allow God to refine us in this season and prepare us for the time to come. Also pray that we would be alert and awake with courage to share the gospel with those who need to know Christ.