

COVID 19 — is the Bible Still Relevant Today?

By Moses George, ThD

Abstract

The devastating effect of the coronavirus on humanity and its potential to cause even more destruction has put the world on edge. As the virus continues to ravage the world, the question of how to overcome this plague becomes paramount in the minds of everyone.

This paper takes a brief look at the situation, focusing on the response of the scientific community and the community of faith — the Church.

Introduction

While it is true that there is age-long friction between faith and science, the Church being the community of faith has often yielded to and applied advice that emanates from scientific desks as in the case of the precautionary measures (of personal hygiene and social distancing) put forward to check the further spread of the coronavirus.

Presently, the whole world (including the Church) is eagerly waiting for the scientific community to come up with a cure for this virus. If this plague is from God, won't it be contradictory for the Church to claim that it is looking up to God for help to overcome it? At the same time, its 'body language' suggests that it is waiting for the scientific community to provide solutions.

The above submission may be justified in the context of what may be termed as the 'warfare' theory of faith's relationship to science. If that be the case, shouldn't faith and science find a meeting point and become dialoguing partners, especially in a situation like the coronavirus pandemic?

Since the outbreak of this virus, the Church's response has been weak. This has caused some form of confusion, and even hopelessness among so many Christians, especially in Africa. The disposition of the Church over the coronavirus crisis has led many to ask: is the Bible still relevant today?

The Scientific Community

Coronavirus broke out in Wuhan – China, In December 2019. It was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, and it was recognized as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

From that time, the virus has infected and claimed thousands of lives across several nations of the world. Expectedly, the effect of this virus, *"have generated a formidable response by the scientific community."*¹

¹ Tamlyn Oliver, www.biocompare.com

As the infection and mortality rate continues to soar, *"scientists around the world are working at breakneck speed to figure out how to detect, treat, and control the new coronavirus."*¹

This pandemic has brought along with it unprecedented fears, doubts, and uncertainties, even among Christians. However, reports that the scientific community is working round the clock to overcome this universal challenge has brought some glimmer of hope to many.

Considering the fact that science and technology have solved several human problems in the past, it is not out of place for the world to look up to the people of science this time around for solutions to this crisis.

Among other things, this hope is borne out of the fact that *"what was thought to be beyond comprehension a generation ago is now quite readily dealt with by observation, experimentation, hypothesis, and proof. What was formally feared to be a visitation of God's wrath, as an epidemic, an earthquake, an eclipse, is now known to be due to natural causes."*²

¹ Soumya Swaminathan, *The Lancet* (24 February 2020)

² E. Everette Pelly, The Limitation of Science, *Sunrise Magazine*, December 1953

It appears that science is pushing the sphere of the supernatural further and further back through natural explanations. If there is any possibility, will science be able to create or prolong life? Will it one day be able to uncover or give us more insight into the mystery of existence and what is beyond this life, etc.?

Perhaps Jenkins was right in his submission that *"science is a wonderful arena of truth and understanding truth. It is an amazing tool that can help humans to flourish. We just believe it can't address all truth that exists."*¹

As faith continues to be squeezed into smaller jurisdictions by science, it is realistic and reasonable to place equal emphasis on its limitations. If coronavirus is a plague from God, will science be able to contain it?

Is Bible Still Relevant Today?

For some people, the answer is NO! However, for so many others, the answer is YES! This question becomes imperative in view of the inability of the Church to come out with a coherent theological response to the coronavirus pandemic that has brought the whole world on its knees.

For those who think that the Bible is not relevant today; their conclusion stems from a weak understanding that the Bible is an ancient book whose

¹D.J Jenkins, Pastor of Anthology Church, Studio City California

The writing was started about 35 centuries ago and was completed about 2000 years. Such people believe that it is hopelessly outdated and does not offer useful guidance for today's world.

The feeble response of the Church over the coronavirus pandemic and other related issues has further consolidated the perception of skeptics about the relevance of the Bible today. It is a paradox that the Church, which is equipped with the Bible as a potent tool for solving human problems among other things, is at crossroads on how to respond or what to do in a crisis situation like the one the world is presently experiencing. This shortcoming seems to be more pronounced across Africa!

The relevance of the Bible

As old as it is, the Bible is relevant enough to provide guidance to life's situations because it conveys counsels that are timeless. Because of its divine origin, it can never become obsolete since it was meant to be for all times. The counsel of the Bible is beneficial for teaching reproof and setting things straight (2 Timothy 3:16).

Conclusion

Therefore, as the world stands still in fear of this ravaging virus, the Church should do the needful by responding and taking actions that are based on divine counsel as enshrined in the Bible — the inspired word of God.

The Church, as the household of faith, cannot afford to be deficient in what actions to take. It should not just fold its arms and watch from the sidelines as the community of science, governments, and various institutions are taking proactive measures, not only to curb the virus and find a cure but also to proffer solutions to social and economic problems caused by this crisis.