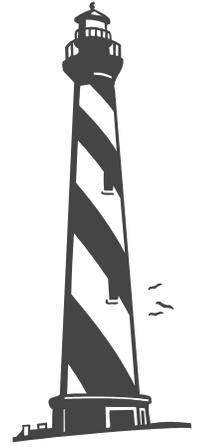


THE BEACON BEAM



April 2020

TRUTH FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

THOUGHTS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

by Greg Barkman

These are sobering, uncertain, and anxiety producing times. I can recall nothing this severe in my life-time. The coronavirus is a danger unlike anything our nation has faced for many decades. Some have likened it to conditions during World War II, and I can well imagine that to be the case. Nearly everyone is concerned about scarcity of supplies as they survey empty store shelves. Many are afraid of sickness and possible death. Others are panicking about the sudden evaporation of their retirement accounts. Fortunes have vanished in a moment. Some fear the breakdown of law and order with rioting and looting. Gun sales have soared over the past several weeks. News report usually begin with pandemic updates along with accusations, finger-pointing, and blame-shifting. As Christians, we need to listen less to the voices around us, and more to the wisdom of God. Thinking Biblically is the best remedy for our fears.

IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR CORONAVIRUS?

That is a most important question, and the answer is, "Yes." This answer does not eliminate secondary causes, but it is important to remind ourselves that ultimately, God is both the author and controller of these momentous events. Some Christians have been taught that Satan is responsible for the "bad things", whereas

As Christians, we need to listen less to the voices around us, and more to the wisdom of God. Thinking Biblically is the best remedy for our fears.

God is the author of everything good. Realistically, we are unable to determine accurately what is good and

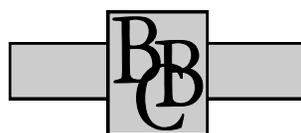
bad. Oftentimes, the things that initially seem bad turn out to be great blessings, and some things that we label good lead to disaster. Who hasn't known someone who was ruined by the sudden acquisition of wealth, and others whose struggle with poverty formed their strong and noble character. But beyond the fact that we don't always know which events are bad and which are good, the most important fact is that God controls everything.

Acknowledging this does not eliminate instruments that God uses to accomplish His sovereign purposes, the secondary causes employed by the First Cause. Is the coronavirus an attack by Satan? Undoubtedly it is, for Jesus said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. He delights in death and destruction, and unleashes it as often as he can, but only as God allows. Ultimately, Satan is merely the unwilling servant of Jehovah. His purpose is to oppose and destroy the people of God, but he

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Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*
 Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*
 Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Families*
 Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9:30 AM
 Sunday School.....11:10 AM
 Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
 IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
 Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

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can never succeed. Satan unleashes his fury and destruction, only to see his actions overruled by our sovereign God to accomplish His wise and eternal purposes. Why doesn't he ever learn that it is impossible to damage God or His people? His hatred is such that he blindly rages on until the day God pronounces final judgment, and casts him forever into the Lake of Fire.

Let's consider a few examples where God takes full responsibility for events that many would consider bad. When Moses balked at God's assignment to confront Pharaoh because he had a speech impediment, God responded, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11). God is the author of physical infirmities.

In the Wilderness, God told Israel, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight...I will put none of the diseases on you which I brought on the Egyptians" (Exodus 15:26). God declares Himself the author of disease, whether cancer or coronavirus.

Listen to this insight from the prophet Amos. "If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" (Amos 3:6). There are additional similar texts, but these should suffice. God is as much responsible for the "bad things" as the good.

WHY HAS GOD ORDAINED CORONAVIRUS?

If God is responsible, our natural inclination is to ask why? What is God's purpose for such devastating calamity? The short answer is that nobody knows. No one can explain God's reason with certainty, because no one but God knows the mind of God. The only way we can know

Did God send coronavirus to arrest the world's attention and cause people to consider their sin before Almighty God? Is this epidemic designed to prepare hearts of repentance for the final Day of Judgment?

God's thoughts is if He reveals them to us. He has not revealed His purposes for COVID-19, no matter what insider information some may falsely claim.

But God has revealed His purposes for similar events in the past. What He has given us in the Bible is for our edification, and we can benefit by meditating upon some similar instances. Consider these words of God to Israel. "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God...The Lord will make the plague cling to you...The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever...they shall pursue you until you perish" (Deuteronomy 28:15-22). In Israel's case, God promised severe diseases as judgment for failure to obey His Word. Can anyone rightfully declare that God does not act in a similar fashion today? Although it is foolish and unwarranted to claim to know exactly why God sent the coro-

navirus, it is just as foolish to claim that He did not send it as judgment for sin. How can anyone know that? In truth we do not know, but wisdom counsels us to examine our hearts for unconfessed sin.

Jesus publically evaluated two tragedies that befell the Jews in His day. The first involved Pilot's slaughter of a group of Galileans while offering sacrifices in the Temple, and the second, eighteen men who were crushed to death by the collapse of the Tower of Siloam. The response to both events was the same. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-5). God ordained these two events to provide lessons about repentance and judgment. Temporal judgments are illustrations of the greater eternal judgment to come. Did God send coronavirus to arrest the world's attention and cause people to consider their sin before Almighty God? Is this epidemic designed to prepare hearts of repentance for the final Day of Judgment? It would be wrong to dogmatically assert this as the God-intended purpose, but it would be equally wrong to deny the possibility. Wisdom admonishes us to search our hearts, and to prepare our souls for the day when each one will give account to his Maker. God may have sent coronavirus as a messenger to awaken people to flee from the wrath to come.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR RESPONSE?

In the face of coronavirus, what should we do? First, we should acknowledge and embrace God's sovereign rule of this universe. "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). God is sovereign over everything. All people, all events, all nations, all rulers, all diseases. Some will deny this truth, but

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it is foolish to do so. Others grudgingly acknowledge God's rule, but rail against God for His sovereign decisions, and reject His rule in their lives. This is equally foolish. The only wise course is to embrace His rightful rule. As Creator, He has every right to rule what He made. As righteous judge, He has the right as well as the responsibility to judge sinful rebellion. As gracious Lord, He has given His own Son to redeem those who embrace His rule, and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. That should be our first response to this crisis.

Beyond that, Christians should meditate upon God's many gracious promises to His people. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Christians can

rest peacefully, knowing that whatever God intends for the coronavirus, His purpose for His dear children is good without the slightest mixture of ill. "Nothing moves and nothing harms us while we trust in Him" (Thomas Kelly, 1769-1854). We should pray for our friends and loved ones, our nation, and the world. Pray that God will use this crisis to bring many to Himself. We should also seize this opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to those around us. We can be generous, kind, and helpful to those in need.

Our God reigns! There is no reason for any child of God to fear. God promises to take care of His own. We can rest secure in His loving embrace, and we can look for occasions to minister truth and grace to others. Perhaps, in the goodness of God, He will use coronavirus to bring genuine spiritual revival to America.

Who knows? If so, who would not rejoice and call this virus a great and gracious good!

More Secure Is No One Ever

More secure is no one ever Than the loved ones of the Saviour,
Not yon star on high abiding Nor the bird in home nest hiding.

God His own doth tend and nourish; In His holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things He spares them; In His loving arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth, And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Little flock, to joy then yield thee! Jacob's God will ever shield thee;
Rest secure with this Defender— At His will all foes surrender.

Tho' He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely To preserve them pure and holy.

(Carolina V. Sandell-Berg, 1832-1903)

“In the Beginning...”

by Bob LaTour

In the beginning God created all life forms after their kind on a spec called earth in a universe that is splendid, immense and complex beyond man’s ability to comprehend. And yet this Creator/God, “humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth.” Believe a literal interpretation of Genesis and you are marginalized at best and ridiculed more often than not.

It is refreshing to read that a number of secular scientists are asking questions and casting doubts on the most popular secular speculation of our how universe came into being—The Big Bang theory. One article in Scientific American (April 2019) is entitled, “Cosmology Has Some Big Problems.” The sub-heading reads, “The field (of cosmology) relies on a conceptual framework that has trouble accounting for new observations.” The “conceptual framework” is The Big Bang Theory. The article includes phrases like “the relative lack of empirical evidence,” “an explicitly hypothetical event” and “new discrepancies.”

Bjorn Ekeberg, the author, begins with a question. “What do we really know about our universe?” Born out of a cosmic explosion 13.8 billion years ago, the universe rapidly inflated and then cooled, it is still expanding at an increasing rate and mostly made up of unknown dark matter and dark energy ... right? This well-known story is usually taken as a self-evident scientific fact, despite the relative lack of empirical evidence—and despite a steady crop of discrepancies arising with observations of the distant universe.”

Another article entitled

“There Was No Big Bang Singularity” (Forbes, July 27, 2018) made the following observation: “There may have been a singularity at the very beginning of space and time, with inflation arising after that, but there’s no guarantee. In science, there are the things we can test, measure, predict, and confirm or refute, like an inflationary state giving rise to a hot Big Bang. Everything else? It’s nothing more than speculation.”

Some of the following questions evoke bizarre answers, or no answers at all, from secular scientists. The questions, taken as a whole, paint a picture of wonder that boggles the

New York Times Magazine:

How Beauty Is Making Scientists Rethink Evolution.

“The extravagant splendor of the animal kingdom can’t be explained by natural selection alone—so how did it come to be?”

mind and points to design and not random chance. The specific examples are evidence that faith in the Creator/God of the Bible, Whose handiwork abounds, is a most reasonable faith. I would challenge you to look up the secular answers given for some of these questions.

How could **life** spontaneously come from non-life?

Did the first “simple cell”

contain all of the **new, complex** information necessary for the evolution from one animal kind into a new, more advanced animal kind?

What is the origin of **intelligence** and the human brain that is capable of logic, calculation, speculation, creativity, prediction and consciousness?

How could mankind develop **compositional language** and in what ways would the nearly 6,500 languages facilitate our survival?

How and why did **sexual reproduction** come about that is dependent upon unique but necessarily compatible differences between males and females in all sexually-reproductive life forms? [Females equipped to sustain life within the womb and after birth.]

How did mankind develop a **conscience**, a mechanism unique to humans that functions as a moral guide that can bring about blushing with shame, despondency over guilt or the tranquility of believing that you are in the right?

Don’t the complexities of **flight** (birds, insects, bats) and gliding (squirrels, lizards, snakes, fish, lemurs, frogs, rays, ants, squid) demand design?

How could **metamorphosis** in amphibians, insects and some fish and eels come about by accident?

How does science explain the dramatic, necessary changes necessary for **hibernation** in bears, bats, snakes, and frogs that involves a slow-down in breathing and heart rate, lowering of body temperature and metabolic rate while they are not taking in nourishment?

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How could mutations produce amazing capabilities like **bioluminescence** in fish, bacteria, jellies, fireflies, fungi, glow worms and **bioelectrogenesis** in rays (up to 220 volts), electric catfish (up to 350), and electric eels (up to 600)?

What is the origin of **echolocation** or **bio sonar** in bats, dolphins, porpoises, killer whales, sperm whales, shrews, oilbirds and swiftlets?

How does one explain **migration** in birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and crustaceans that range from a short distance up to 44,000 miles (arctic tern)? What about **multi-generational migration** where the species gives birth to its young and dies in route, leaving them to finish their leg of the journey (Monarch butterfly that takes 4 generations; Painted Lady butterfly that takes 9 generations!)?

How did poison and the ability to inject it into a victim come about in many snakes, newts, dart frogs, spiders, scorpions, 1200 species of fish, blue-ringed octopi, slow lorises, comodo dragons, vampire bats, centipedes, male platypuses, Gila monsters?

What about **defense mechanisms** like *camouflage*, *countershading*, *mimicry* and the particular

capabilities of bombardier beetles, skunks, Texas horned lizards, hag fish, porcupines, cuttlefish, rattlesnakes and mimic octopi? Are these accidental or by choice?

What is the origin of **predatory** capabilities in spiders, frogfish, glowworms, pistol shrimp, velvet worms, archer fish, angler fish? Is the incredible development of **night vision** in cats, raccoons, night monkeys, opossums, owls, tarsiers, sharks, crocodiles, and horses simply due to adaptation? The choice that one makes between beliefs concerning “in the beginning” makes an impact for time and for eternity. Did something come from nothing for no known reason and in a millisecond of time expand into a universe of incomprehensible size. Did life spring spontaneously from an unknown source and through blind, random evolution diversify dramatically and exponentially in number and complexity over millions of years? [“The current estimates for the number of species on Earth range between 5.3 million and 1 trillion.”] Humans occupy the topper on the evolutionary tree.

Or, did an eternal Spirit of unlimited intelligence, power and creativity purposefully form the universe and create life-forms after their kind with humans being the capstone formed in the image of their Creator and en-

dowed with language, creativity, complex emotion, self-consciousness, holiness, rational intelligence and immortality?

For me, I gladly and gratefully embrace “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...!*”

If God were aiming at the happiness of his people here in this world, he would never allow such pain, loss or affliction to come upon them. It often troubles God’s people why, if he loves them, he allows them to go through pain and loss. Some Christians who are not very well taught say things like this: ‘It is not our heavenly Father’s will that we should suffer illness or trouble.’ Some would even go a little further and say that it is the will of God that in this life, as Christians, we should be always happy. That is, as I have said, to misunderstand the intention of God.

It is true that God is aiming at our happiness in the end. But even then we must say that our happiness is in subordination to the glory of God. God is first of all aiming at his own glory in everything, and then he aims at his people’s good in everything. But that is not the same as saying that in this life he aims at his people’s happiness. Certainly, he does not aim at that first of all. Consequently, in this life we must accustom ourselves to suffering, hardship, disappointment and troubles of many kinds.

Maurice Roberts, *The Great Transformation*

On The Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

Here we are, welcoming April! As I think back, it seems a year since we were anticipating the month of March. As the first day of that month approached, just weeks from the vernal equinox and the beginning of spring, thoughts of what lay ahead began to trouble me. The VIRUS? No No! We didn't even know about it! It was YARD WORK! Our strangely warm and wet winter produced a legendary crop of weeds in the planted beds (my domain), and herculean efforts to clear areas of woody perimeter had made little difference come spring. Unfinished projects had patiently waited out the winter. One tree had been taken down a couple months ago and that area needed rethinking and replanting, my beautiful crab apple tree had slumped over, the trunk now nearly parallel to the ground. That would have to come down. I had wished out loud that I had two months to do nothing but work in the yard. It sounded like a heavenly prospect! You may have been thinking of similar issues about that same time, and wondering, as was I, where you would find the time in your already packed schedule to accomplish that spring-time spiff-up that our mothers and grandmothers before us considered an essential. We didn't wish for an event, just some extra time.

It is an event. In the ten days or so before its arrival, talk of the virus in China began to filter into small talk and casual conversations. Troubling, yes, but it was still 'over there' and we'd heard about pandemics and they were 'back then' and had been overcome. And then on March 13 it all changed, rapidly. Life as we knew it...where we were pretty much in charge of our daily decisions...came to a halt. Between that date, and the date on which I write, only eleven days have passed. It seems like six

months. Question marks hang over some of the most serious issues of our lives. Normalcy seems like luxury.

And those springtime tasks? In the light of a pandemic? No longer a problem! Compared to life and death issues, they seem a pleasant diversion from weightier troubles. And...some of us now have that extra time to address them! 'Sheltered in place' is the new norm at the time of this writing, and where we are sheltered is the place where most of these projects can be done.

What do we do when we have extra time? All the things we say we can't get done, the ones we say we'd do if only we had the time? This is a reality check. Think of the tasks on our 'to do' list that never get checked off. Maybe we should put them at the top on a day when we can't do what we'd normally do. And do them first. And what about the tasks that never make the list? In her column in last Friday's Times News, Lori Borgman wrote about this matter of list-making. Someone had challenged her to make, not a 'to do' list, but a 'TO BE' list. What a great challenge! Think about it: When we work at being who we should be, we will more likely be doing what we should do.

These days are so very strange, unlike any of our lifetime. That rare snow storm in North Carolina that shuts us down for a few days, a week at the most, is the closest in our experience, but the snow melts, and schools open, electricity is back on and life returns to normal. I love a good snow experience, the days when no one can go anywhere and we make soup or hot chocolate and read by the fire. I love it because I know it will end and we will all go out again soon. This is entirely different. Unlike being snowed in, we don't know when the virus will disappear, how badly it will affect us, how well we will be

able to bounce back from the devastation. So much we don't know.

In a recent issue of WORLD Magazine, Janie Cheaney, writing about right to life vs. choice issues, quotes a woman who had an abortion as a teenager. "If I hadn't (had an abortion) my life would have been ruined." Cheaney's response included this, "I could argue that abortion always ruins at least one life. But that concern may seem impossibly abstract when compared with a pregnant woman's terror of the unknown. To her *it looks like an entire future derailed. (But) to a Christian, life can't be ruined. Carefully constructed futures that work out as planned don't teach anything but what we already know...*"

We know the Author of this story. Just as He wrote March 13 as the day COVID 19 would be known to arrive here, he has written the last chapter of this saga. Is He big enough, powerful enough, wise enough, loving enough, for me to trust Him?

Take heart! God is still on his throne and He reigns! Let's honor this great God by trusting Him!

How the Coronavirus Pandemic Preaches the Gospel

by Paul Tripp

1. This pandemic confronts the delusion of human independence and self-sufficiency.

We like to think, as human beings, that we are so advanced and capable. But look around - all it takes is a single virus to shut down the entire world. Let this time remind you that you were created to be dependent on the Creator.

The development of spiritual maturity is a move from independence to greater dependence on God. Exposing our delusion of self-sufficiency is a painful thing, but a good thing.

2. This pandemic makes God's sovereign power and amazing grace shine even brighter.

In moments where our helplessness is on full display, isn't it amazing that God remains in careful control of his world? He is not confused or surprised by any of this.

It's okay for us not to be able to reconcile what is happening. But there is One who is not afraid at this moment. We won't always know why he does what he does, but we know who he is, and we know what he has promised to his children.

3. This pandemic reminds us that there is a greater, darker, and more dangerous pandemic - sin.

Not everyone will test positive for the coronavirus, but everyone has been infected by sin, from birth. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5, ESV).

Sin is eternally more destructive than the coronavirus will ever be, but there is a known cure. God looked at his world in awesome mercy and love and decided he would not let us perish from this disease (John 3:16).

4. This pandemic reminds us that nothing in all of creation can separate us from God and his boundless love (Romans 8:31-39).

On Sunday, Luella and I had to attend church from our little television room. It was sad. We couldn't greet our brothers and sisters, hug them warmly, hear their voice in song, and remind each other of the grace of the gospel. We're all feeling the effect of social distancing.

But know this: Your greatest friend, your deepest lover, and your sweetest companion knows no distance between him and you. He draws especially near to the lonely and the broken-hearted in times like this.

Edited from *Paul Tripp Devotional* at PaulTripp.com

THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN) 9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA) 10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA) 10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WBAG 105.9 FM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC) 10:00 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA) 7:15 a.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC) 9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA) 10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 9:30 p.m.
1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)
WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)
8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV) 10:05 a.m.
10:05 p.m.

BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR APRIL

CALENDAR

Due to the present COVID-19 crisis, our calendar is subject to change. We encourage you to follow our announcements on our Beacon website: www.beaconbaptist.com

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 Alice Marley
02 Kevin Isley
04 Bonnie Kooy
Paul Nance
Ann Rose
10 Daniel Freeman
11 Jamie Hinshaw
12 Don Boudreault
14 Pam Atkins
17 Emily Lewis
18 Dean Via
19 Jay Lowe
20 Brenda Yelverton
21 Gayle Davis
23 Daniel Hinshaw
24 Judy Caldwell
25 Angela Boyd
27 Ed Bradshaw
Carl Hinshaw
Rob McDorman
28 Greg Barkman
Barbara Coble
Joe Moody
30 Lori Craig

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

01 Cathy Payne
03 Joshua Jensen
27 Trevor Johnson
29 Steve Worth

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the families of:

Mark Campbell
Marcel Delorge
Michael Ennis
Ed Owen
Mildred Petry
Bobby Riley
Sybil Tyre

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