

## **Plague**

### **International Justice Series**

**Text:** "If you are not careful to obey all the words of this law, which are written in this scroll, by fearing this glorious and awesome name--Yahweh, your God-- He will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, severe and lasting plagues, and terrible and chronic sicknesses. He will afflict you again with all the diseases of Egypt, which you dreaded, and they will cling to you. The LORD will also inflict you with every sickness and plague not recorded in the book of this law, until you are destroyed. Though you were as numerous as the stars of the sky, you will be left with only a few people, because you did not obey the LORD your God. Just as the LORD was glad to cause you to prosper and to multiply you, so He will also be glad to cause you to perish and to destroy you. You will be deported from the land you are entering to possess. - Deuteronomy 28:58-63 HCSB

**Issues:** disease (HIV / AIDS); orphaned children

Today's text is so much on target with our society that it is not even funny! It is, of course a prophetic passage in the sense that God predicted the outcome of a society's sinful ways, so we should not be surprised. However, whenever God nails things with this much detail it is always amazing to frail, weak-minded humans.

I would like to point out a few details of this passage if I may.

#### **Part One**

1. We must be careful in our obedience.
  - a. Our care should be to obey all of the Scriptures.
  - b. Our care should be based on a respectful fear of Yahweh's name.
2. Failure to comply will have consequences not only to us but to our descendants.

Interestingly, God gives these scourges seven separate characteristics, each of which we see clearly in today's struggles. God said the plagues will be multigenerational, severe, lasting, terrible, chronic, "clinging", new.
3. Failure to comply will result in our nation's destruction.
  - a. God predicted the diseases will last until the nation is destroyed.
  - b. God predicted that it would happen regardless of the size of the nation's population.
  - c. God predicted however that he would leave a remnant. This promise of course was made to Israel to whom there was already a promise that destruction would never be total. Such a promise was never made to the Gentile nations so we may not be sure that such a limitation applies to us.
4. God is equally delighted to destroy as He is to prosper us.

Shall we see if this promise has actually been fulfilled?

There was a time when the continent of Africa had some of the most advanced civilizations on earth. When our ancestors were huddling in stone piles in Europe, Africa had huge cultured cities. There was a time when Africa had one of the largest Christian presences on Earth. The famed St. Augustine, for example ministered in Africa. However, the nations on that pitiful continent forsook the ways of God and by and large returned to the polytheistic, animistic ways of their ancestors.

I once lived in one of those nations. It was nominally a Christian nation and had a president who initially claimed to be a Christian. For political reasons, however, he forsook Christianity and led his nation back into the ways of Yondo, a form of devil worship. This type of worship involves, among other things, torture, ritual scarification, the filing of teeth, prolific use of alcohol and drugs, burying people alive and then digging them back up after they've passed out from lack of oxygen, and promiscuous sex.

What has this type of decision brought Africa?

### Image of Coffins for sale sign



- Three thousand Africans, mostly children, die every day of mosquito bites.
- Nine thousand people die every day of a preventable, treatable disease like AIDS.
- Over the last twenty years more than twenty million people have died from AIDS.
- Twenty five million people live with HIV on the continent of Africa.

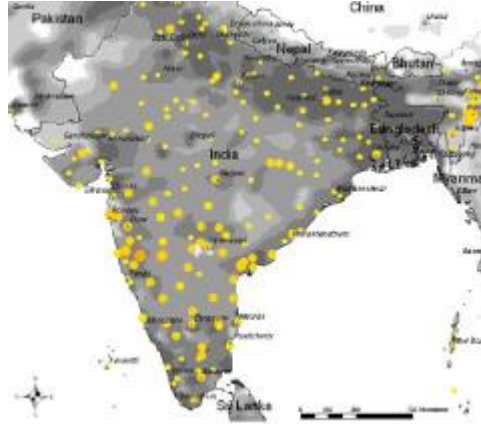
### Image of Ethiopian orphans



- Most African women today are widows caring for children that are not their own. After slaying millions of Africans, HIV/AIDS has left more than fourteen million orphans.
- In many countries so many adults have died of AIDS, Malaria and Hepatitis that nearly 60% of the population is under the age of 14.

The countries found on the continent of Africa are not the only object lessons we may observe. India was once one of the most evangelized nations on earth. Thousands of missionaries from England and the United States have gone there for several hundred years. Nevertheless, India has steadfastly refused the message of the Gospel and has maintained a culture that possesses as many gods as it does humans. The result?

## Image of map showing incidences of HIV breakouts in India



- According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), in India, 5.1 million people are HIV positive – the largest number of people living with HIV outside South Africa.
- There are an estimated 200,000 children with HIV who are under 15 years old in the country, while some 50,000 to 60,000 children are born with HIV each year, despite the fact that drugs now exist to immunize such children.

Imagine losing 8,500 people a day – every day and to know that the very same long, slow lingering and painful death awaits you around every corner. Imagine watching the gradual collapse of your nation because so many people have died that no one is left to maintain the most basic of infrastructures.

It is so bad that recently when a CEO of a multinational corporation visited employees in South Africa and asked them what they would like from their company, their response was a hearse! They had so many hundreds of their family members dying of AIDS that a hearse to carry the bodies to grave sites was their number one priority!

AIDS has slain adults and children alike with complete indifference. It has crippled the workforce, decreased life expectancy by two decades, reduced economic growth, weakened the government, disrupted marginal infrastructures, halted productivity, undermined national security, dissolved families, invited armed conflict and impeded the health and educational development necessary to rise above extreme poverty.

All these numbers...it may seem overwhelming, mind-numbing. My contention is that one death is too many. One life snuffed out because of a preventable disease is a tragedy.

But our country has a history of turning a blind eye to tragedy.

## Image of Gold Star Mothers



In September of 1940 The America First Committee was created. While a war was brewing in Europe that would eventually result in 165 million deaths of mostly Africans, Asians, and Europeans, six million “Gold Star Mothers”, many wearing fine clothing and living comfortable, safe lives protested not only participating in the war but even rendering aid to the victims. The leaders of the AFC claimed they were motivated by concern for American lives. For some, this was no doubt true. However, the evolution of the America First movement in the eighteen months of debate preceding Pearl Harbor revealed xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiment both within the AFC leadership, and among its supporters.

The study of the history of the America First Committee is thus a cautionary tale. It is a reminder that anti-war movements are not always, or entirely, the humanitarian movements their supporters claim them to be. It is also a moral tale, asking an important question in international relations - that of what one nation owes another in times of mortal danger.

What are we to do about the proliferation of these plagues?

## Part Two

1. **Teaching missionaries.** We need teaching missionaries who will live among the people and teach classes on community development, sanitation and hygiene to nations in the developing world.
2. **A message emphasizing abstinence.** We need to spread the word that condoms are not the answer to the AIDS pandemic. Moral living is the answer to the continuous spread of sexually transmitted diseases. AIDS has claimed many innocent victims. There are children who are born HIV positive. There are adults who have innocently contracted these plagues through blood transfusions or through intercourse with their unfaithful spouses. But these are collateral damage. One never sins alone and the sins of hundreds of thousands of their country mates have condemned them to a slow lingering and painful death. Abstinence is not the only solution – but if adhered to it could be by far the single greatest tool in getting control of this pandemic.

### Image of John 9:1-4

John 9:1-4 HCSB As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples questioned Him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. 4 We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work.

We cannot allow our abhorrence of sexual immorality to harden our hearts against those who are suffering its consequences. The man born blind could easily be replaced by the child born HIV positive. He did not wrong. His role in life is to be the demonstration of God's mercy. We are to do the works of our Master the Great Physician.

### Image of James 1:27

James 1:27 HCSB Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Does anyone see an exception clause to this passage? Does it say to look after only those who are orphaned and widowed due to car wrecks? Was I wrong to adopt five children who were orphaned due to addiction and neglect? Just because HIV is largely the result of sin, when has sin and its consequences ever been an obstacle to God's church? When is that ever supposed to stop us from reaching out our hands into the darkness and pulling another hand into the light?

3. **Mitigation of the suffering.** Some of the Ransomed who are particularly blessed with the gift of mercy and compassion should go and establish centers where those so afflicted can find a place to find ease for their suffering or at the very least a dignified death.
4. **Creation of doctors.**
5. **Finance studies into these and “orphan” diseases.**
6. **Sacrificially love each sufferer we meet.**

## **Conclusion**

### **Image of Proverbs 24:10-12**

Proverbs 24:10-12 HCSB If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. 11 Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we didn't know about this," won't He who weighs hearts consider it? Won't He who protects your life know? Won't He repay a person according to his work?

We dare not hold back. We dare not hesitate. We dare not stand idle in the face of the ongoing slaughter of millions of fellow human beings. If we do these same plagues will overrun us. In an age of international flights and mass migrations we are not isolated. We are not immune. In fact we are beginning already to see these super viruses rear their ugly heads in our own country.

Dealing with these folks will be risky.

### **Image of John 15:13**

John 15:13 HCSB No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.

What better way can you imagine to illustrate to others the love that Christ had for us? He became one of us, becoming subject to our weaknesses, our frailties, our diseases, our suffering and even death – and He did this while we were still sinners!

What a great Master! My challenge to you this morning is can be found in

### **Image of John 14:12-15**

John 14:12-15 HCSB "I assure you: The one who believes in Me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.” – William Carrey

Ask Him what your part should be in combating these terrible scourges. Pray for solutions. Pray for healing. Pray for opportunities to demonstrate Christ’s love to the sick and dying. Keep His commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself. Even the one with AIDS.