

## God's "Covenant of Salt" (Part 2)

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt."

Colossians 4:6a (ASV)

In the end of part 1 in this sermon, I cited Solomon who said that there is nothing new under the sun. I concluded that this also means pandemics. In the realm of infectious diseases, a pandemic is the worst-case scenario. It means that the sickness is spreading very far in many countries; often worldwide. Unfortunately, our modern mobility contributes to this. Science and medicine are helpful, but still, it is very difficult to control COVID-19.

In human history, we developed from hunters and gatherers to agrarian life. Later, we settled in larger communities and started building villages, cities and kingdoms. For example, the Bible and other ancient sources introduce to us a very unique personality called Nimrod (Genesis 10: 8-10): "Kush fathered Nimrod, who was the first powerful ruler on earth. He was a mighty hunter before Adonai (...) His kingdom began with Babel, Erekh, Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shin'ar." The larger cities and kingdoms grew and the more people travelled on trade routes or went into wars, the more sicknesses like Malaria, Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Influenza or Smallpox spread and could grow into epidemics or pandemics. These are samples of pandemics that changed history by devastating human populations (unfortunately, the data in different sources vary from each other!):<sup>1</sup>

<b>Earliest recorded Pandemics What - Where</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Percentages and Numbers of Deaths</b>
- "Plague of Athens", <sup>2</sup> a suspected typhoid fever - Athens; the kingdom ceased afterwards eventually also Libya, Ethiopia, Egypt	430-426 B.C. (during Peloponnesian War) <sup>3</sup>	75.000-100.000
- "Antonine Plague" <sup>4</sup> , possibly an early appearance of smallpox - Middle Europe, then Roman Empire (spread by troops)	165-180 A.D.	about 7 million <sup>5</sup>
- "Plague of Cyprian" <sup>6</sup> , (named after the famous African bishop of Carthage) - from Ethiopia into the Roman Empire	249-262 A.D.	5.000 people a day
- "Plague of Justinian First", a bubonic plague, named after a Byzantine emperor - from Egypt through Palestine, the Byzantine Empire and throughout the Mediterranean	541-542 A.D.	about 50 million= 26% of known world population deadliest pandemic in history!

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/pandemics-timeline>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plague\\_of\\_Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plague_of_Athens)

<sup>3</sup> The Peloponnesian War. New York: Viking, 2003; a one-volume version of his earlier tetralogy.

<sup>4</sup> H. Haeser's conclusion, in *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Medicin und der epidemischen Krankheiten* III:24–33 (1882), followed by Zinsser in 1935.

<sup>5</sup> "Past pandemics that ravaged Europe", BBC News, 2005

<sup>6</sup> Kyle Harper "Solving the Mystery of an Ancient Roman Plague". *The Atlantic*. Retrieved 2017.

<b>Modern Pandemics</b> <b>What - Where</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Percentages and Numbers of Deaths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Asiatic Cholera”<sup>7</sup>, also called “first Asiatic cholera pandemic”</li> <li>- from near Calcutta throughout South-East Asia to the Middle East, East Africa and the Mediterranean coast (partly through British soldiers)</li> </ul>	1817-‘24	unknown; at least hundreds of thousands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Third Plague” or 3rd major bubonic plague</li> <li>- from China throughout India, Europe and worldwide (spread also by global shipping trade including infected people, rats and fleas)</li> </ul>	1855 (continued over the next few decades)	worldwide more than 12 million

As a Christian, I believe that God can help us in all circumstances of life in which we find ourselves. Unfortunately, people’s beliefs throughout history have not always been of help. Sometimes, assumptions that spirits and gods had inflicted disease and destruction upon those that deserved their wrath led to attitudes, which resulted in more deaths.

The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 killed 50 millions of people.<sup>8</sup> These included President Donald Trump’s grandfather Friedrich who came from the small village Kallstadt, then part of the Kingdom of Bavaria in Germany. Similar like today, the only methods of fighting the pandemic were quarantine, isolation camps, travel restrictions, limiting public gatherings, good hygiene practices and disinfectants.

The famous scientist Sir Isaac Newton also experienced a pandemic while he was a student at the University of Cambridge. In 1665 because of another Bubonic Plague, the university had to close down for two years. As many of us, today, have to work from home, Newton was restricted to it, too. He gave his best to use this time properly, and this way, it became a very productive period in his life. He developed important theories on calculus, optics and gravity.<sup>9</sup> Some years ago, Prof. Dr. Marylyn Addo already successfully defeated Ebola by a vaccine she developed with her team. Today, she is one of the scientists who do their best to fight COVID-19.<sup>10</sup>

Due to nowadays Corona regulations, we find ourselves in different situations concerning our working opportunities: Some of us can continue their work normally, others have to do home-office, and again others have to do short-term work. Many people fear to lose their jobs, and those who run small businesses, are in danger of shut down. What does God say about work? How much does He value it? From the beginning in Scripture when creating the world, God is introduced to us as a worker (Genesis 1 and 2). He wears no ends of occupational hats like strategic planner, designer, civil engineer, real estimate employer, project manager or artist. However, using these skills, all what He created became very good (chapter 1:31). Furthermore, God continues to work (John 5:17), maintaining the creation and providing for the living. Work is important, and it matters to God. Your work has dignity in it. In fact, God created us in His image (Genesis 1: 26.27). Just as He works, so He has created us to work. Anyways, even if you are unemployed for a time or cannot work for some

<sup>7</sup> Hays, JN (2005). Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History. ABC-CLIO. p. 193

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/pandemics-timeline>

<sup>9</sup> <https://historyhustle.com/isaac-newton-worked-from-home-plague/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.express.de/bonn/impfstoff-forschung-sie-besiegte-schon-ebola---rheinlaenderin-sagt-corona-den-kampf-an-36420580>

reason; you matter to God! You are useful in His eyes, and you can be creative to do something for your neighbors and contribute in some way to God's plan of salvation.

Prayer: Dear God, today, we come to you and pray for all people worldwide to receive your help, healing and salvation. Please use us as instruments to bless others in Jesus' mighty name; amen.

Colossians 4, 2-6 (AMP): "Be persistent and devoted to prayer, being alert and focused in your prayer life with an attitude of thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us, too, that God will open a door to us for the word, to proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I should. Conduct yourself with wisdom in your interactions with outsiders, make the most of each opportunity. Let your speech at all times be gracious and pleasant, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer each one."

Greetings and blessings;

Yours Pastor Peter