



WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, who took on human form to save us from sin. He could heal and do miracles because He was the Creator (John 1). We are all afflicted by disease and suffering, but it's not because of what we do so much as it is who we've sinned against—our Creator!

THE FINAL WORD

We should consider what will happen if we get the virus. We might die. But we might also die in a car accident or from next year's flu. If Jesus is the Creator, He has the power over life and death. He proved this by rising from the dead. No other religion claims that. Yet, he also promised those who follow Him that they, too, will rise from death, to enjoy eternal life with him in a recreated paradise where there will be no death, no suffering, and no viral diseases! That's why it is important to become a Christian today. We don't know what tomorrow may bring.



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THE CORONAVIRUS CATASTROPHE

AM I GOING TO DIE?

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WHAT ARE VIRUSES?

Essentially every species of life on earth, from bacteria to people, can be infected with little replication machines called viruses. They are not alive, in the traditional sense, but they are capable of hijacking the cellular machinery of living things and forcing them to make copies of the virus. It takes a surprisingly small number of genes to do this. Viruses are microscopic. They consist of a protein coat, a small piece of DNA or RNA, and have differing mechanisms that allow them to attach to and enter the cell.

ARE THEY ALL BAD?

Most viruses are good! They are beneficial to us and to entire ecosystems. For example, have you heard that there are more bacteria in your body than there are cells in your body? That is true, and you have over 60 *trillion* cells. Yet, you carry even more viruses than bacteria, with perhaps 10 to 100 viruses per bacterium. And those viruses are playing a vital role, regulating the number and species of bacteria in your gut. The same is true in the ocean. Wind, waves, and evaporation tend to waft these viruses into the air, to the point where it is estimated that about 100 *million* viruses rain down on every square meter of earth, every day.¹ Clearly, most viruses are harmless!

SO WHERE DO BAD VIRUSES COME FROM?

When God created this world, everything had a good original function. But when man rebelled against

God (Genesis 3), suffering and death entered the once 'very good' creation. Now everything is subject to decay and corruption. As part of creation, viruses have not escaped this process.

Bad viruses can arise several ways. First, mutations (copying mistakes in the RNA/DNA) in either the virus or the host might allow the virus to escape a normal regulatory control mechanism in the host. Second, mutation in the virus might make it more virulent. Viruses have different ways of getting into cells. Some of those are more effective than others, and sometimes a small change to a protein receptor can make a big difference. Third, and this is the most important, viruses can occasionally jump to a new host species. When this occurs, the new host species can be hit very hard because they might have no way of controlling the virus as they have no specific immunity because they have not been previously exposed to it. In humans, for example, antibodies are passed through the placenta and through breast milk, so babies are given antibodies to the bacterial and viral diseases the mother had been exposed to. This is impossible when a virus first arrives. A virus that jumps between species is called a 'zoonotic'. Coronaviruses are notorious zoonotics.

HOW DID WE GET THIS NEW CORONAVIRUS?

All of the evidence collected to date indicates that this virus jumped to humans in November of 2019, in Wuhan China. Bats appear to be the host species

as this virus is highly similar to other known coronaviruses found in bats. There is no evidence that it was genetically modified. This is not the first time something like this has happened. SARS (sudden acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome) were both caused by zoonotic coronaviruses.

SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

This virus is a serious matter. It is highly contagious, and many people die when they catch it, despite the best efforts of our doctors. The exact death rate is difficult to calculate, but even if it is as low as 1% this is not something you would want to take lightly. Imagine if one out of every 100 people died in car accidents every year. Nobody would dare to drive!

HOW SHOULD WE BEHAVE DURING THE CRISIS?

Jesus Christ is an excellent example of how we should respond to people in need. He healed many people, and they blessed Him in return. Christians, that is, 'Christ followers', are encouraged to do their part, when called to, because Christ was merciful, loving and sacrificial. Thus, we encourage all people to protect themselves from infection, so that we can be merciful to others during this terrible crisis. There are many vulnerable members in our societies who need love and help.

1. Reche, I. et al. Deposition rates of viruses and bacteria above the atmospheric boundary layer. ISME J 12(4):1145-1162, 2018; doi:10.1038/s41396-017-0042-4.