

BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED by DR. AYODEJI AWE

QUESTION 91- PASTOR I'M ASTOUNDED THAT SOME CHURCHES (AS OF END OF AUGUST-2020) HAVE NOT OPENED THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN EVERYBODY GREEN LIGHT. FOR THOSE OPENED, SOME MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT AT RISK WILL NOT EVEN ATTEND CHURCH. PASTOR WHY IS THE CHURCH LOOKING HELPLESS AGAINST COVID-19?

ANSWER- Let me advance a few reasons why I believe Covid-19 has not only made the church look helpless but actually paralyzed part of her.

1. The disease sneaked on the whole world, the church inclusive. All countries and nations were caught flat-footed. To begin with, the non transparency of the Chinese government regarding the origination of the virus exposed the whole world to a higher vulnerability level. The whole cosmos was helpless in the face of a killer virus: Covid-19. In the words of Dana White, president of UFC “No one would have expected the devastation that Covid-19 brought upon us” (RNC Convention, Aug. 27, 2020). Every comment by truthful observers follows the same trend. No one was ready for such a strike by the virus. For instance in the US it was reported that the national medical stock pile was low at the time the virus struck; but thank God for the power of the Emergency Act evoked by the President coupled with the wit and willingness of the private sector marshaled to roll out medical equipments. Companies like My Pillow Inc. (of Mike Lindell) reconfigured their machines and equipments to manufacture needed medical equipments. On the whole, the church as an integral part of the world was blind sighted by this monster of a virus.

2. Covid-19 sneaked on the Church. That singular fact was particularly injurious because if nothing else, the church is expected to be the saving factor in the world dynamics: a light in the midst of darkness (Matt. 5:14-16). We are told in scripture that God never does anything without revealing it to his Prophets (Amos 3:7). In this particular case, it's either God deliberately held back the announcement from the Church or the Church did not play up to the game of enticing the Lord to reveal the impending virus. In as much as we know that the secret things belong to the Lord and that we are only privy to the things he tells or shows or allows us to access (Deut. 29:29), the incidence of Coronavirus places us in a confused junction. In our grace soaked churches with spiritually gifted ministers of today where prophets and seers poured in tons of prophecies for year 2020, that Coronavirus attack slid undetected under the revelatory radar to come in, plundering and embarrassing the church is a near-mystery. Crossing from Rhema to the Logos compartment, matching Covid-19 in biblical prophecy has been so far a mission elusive. None of the popular pointed verses on plagues and pestilences fits the posture (cf. Psa. 91:5-8, Amos 4:10, Rev. 6:8). The question of the century has been that in spite of the unparalleled impact of this

pandemic on the universe, especially on the Church; how come neither Logos nor Rhema has a clue? To say it is baffling is an understatement.

3. As the frailty of the mortality of man due to Covid-19 began to be statistically displayed on television in the form of death count, fear descended and suddenly every Church and almost every pastor balked at church fellowship. The rate of infection is prolific, ferocious and elusive. No wonder the church became confused and highly threatened. Remember this is not the first time that the church was closely threatened. At the beginning of the New Testament Church the Apostles were sternly warned with glaringly spelt grave repercussions attached that they desist from preaching and advancing the gospel; not once or twice but on so many occasions. However, the disciples were able to withstand the fear of the Pharisees and the scribes and the old established church that were vehemently after them (Acts 4:18-22, 5:17-42). Eutychus fell off the third floor window during a church service where Apostle Paul was preaching in the city of Troas. He died instantly. I believe it was an occasion for Satan to intimidate the Church into folding up not just for the night but forever. But thank God for the faith of the church leaders. Paul prayed upon the young man and the Lord restored his life. The service continued for the next about six hours (Acts 20:7-12). That was exemplary and emulation worthy.

Unfortunately it appears the church of today is unable to fight back the spirit of fear which emphatically is non-aligned with God (2Tim.1:7). Many churches interpolated the possibilities of dire consequences of opening and became afraid. Fears such as of stigma or of people going after them for possible infections and deaths are not to be easily dispelled. And not playing undue sanctity, these are legitimate excuses for fear but on the other hand the church cannot fold or go into a roll-over mode when we are faced with situations that are very scary and appears to have our numbers. The Lord would want us to be courageous in these circumstances (Josh.1:7, Psa. 34:19, John 6:33).

4. Discouragement and weakness. The impact of the virus plus the continuing effects, with the sometimes unsubstantiated forecasts of second and subsequent dreaded waves could only cause discouragement in the mind and ultimate weakening of the body. This type of effect is not an aberration. For instance following the arrest of Jesus, Peter first exhibited fear as he was identified for being a follower. As the situation got worse, weakness and discouragement set in. When he was emphatically identified to be one of the followers of Jesus and confronted, he flatly denied and declared that he never knew Jesus. Then the cock crowed and he remembered the master's warning and how low he had sunken. He thereafter cried bitterly (Luke 22:54-62). However, not giving up, he later became the head of the New Testament Church. Another example was Elijah when threatened with death by Jezebel following his massive victory over the prophets of Baal. He became exhausted and simply gave up in discouragement. He

demanded that God take his life (1Kg.19). Thank goodness it was to God he was expressive and he received help.

Yes, it is human regardless of spiritual status to experience weakness and discouragement when we are exposed to the devastations the type Covid-19 has wrecked upon humanity but we must learn from the above referenced patriarchs and also from Jesus as he refused to succumb to stoppages when he verbally reminded himself that for the purpose of saving the earth he has been sent (Mark 1:38). "...For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.." (Heb. 12:1-5). It wasn't hard to spot resiliency and purposefulness placarded in his declaration and subsequent actions as he continued to do what he has been called to do in spite of disturbances, threats, discouragement and resultant weakness. The pastors and the church cannot afford to operate less forceful. We must refuse to be swept by fear and discouragement.

5. The habit of not attending church has formatted in many in the church because for some time they had not attended church. At the onset may be for caution but now they are used to not attending church for reasons they could no longer justifiably articulate. Their body and soul have gotten comfortable with this that may have become a vice; the reason why I believe God condemned it in the epistle to the Hebrews: "...Do not forsake the assembly of God's people as is the manner of some..." (10:19-25). It is very disturbing that many Christians today are now very comfortable not going to church despite the fact that they are able to find ways to go to other essential places like work, food stores, doctor's office and others.

In conclusion I want to encourage believers and the church: it is time to resume church services. The hospitals and frontline medical personnel have plateaued and the pressure has declined. Thanks to God death rate has dropped with better treatment at disposal. The race for developing a vaccine is rapidly progressing under operation 'Warp Speed' (Moderna Inc., Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson are leading the charge); looking like it's going to break the record. Almost all segments of the populace lives are open. Sports world is rolling. Therefore I propose that there is no reason for the church not to open. I want to encourage members whose churches are yet to open to call their pastors. Some of the pastors have retreated because they don't have the full confidence of the members. It is very important for the parishioners to call their pastors and encourage them that they are willing and ready to come back to church. Some of them want to be assured that members are on board in good faith. Churches with larger members could break up services. I know it is extra work but I pray you be rewarded for your extra labor. And by the way no one rewards better than the Lord. Put health advisories into play so people can feel comfortable coming to fellowship. It is high time the church gets back on the swing. There is nothing profitable in churches being closed. Such continuous closure can no longer be blamed on Covid-19. Rather, it is highly inexpedient and a vice which negative windfalls must be checkmated. Because it is for

most part an unseen enemy, we believers and the church have access to the power to deal a final and lasting blow on Coronavirus. Let's universally get back to work.

For prayers, counseling, fellowshiping in church/online/UTube or to have your Bible or Christian life questions answered, contact us at:

BQA @ Our Savior's Church, 7070 W. Orem Dr., Houston Tx 77085

713-8947832 * jumie888@yahoo.com * www.oursaviorschurch-houston.org

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