



PANDEMIC



CHURCH



**AND NEW
WORLD ORDER**

•• René Peñalba ••

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PANDEMIC, CHURCH AND NEW WORLD ORDER



René Peñalba

Founding President of the CCI Global Missionary Network, an organization that gathers more than 620 churches and Missionary actions in 31 countries in America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. He is a recognized and successful pastor, author, and mentor with an experience of over 40 years

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Editing: María Sánchez Alvarado
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Foreword

With the arrival of Coronavirus or COVID-19, humanity entered a new era. I use the term 'era' because it is just the word to use in this case. An era is a period of time which starts from a fixed point or an outstanding event. In the case that concerns us now, the outstanding event is the Covid-19 pandemic that did not respect social class differences, races or creeds, and brought to its knees the richest and most powerful nations on the planet. An era also relates to a historical period characterized by great innovation and social and cultural changes in the way of life. These changes can be seen in the Covid-19 pandemic era that has shown its power to modify customs and life norms on the planet. The use of face masks and the imperative need to use disinfectant gels and abundant soap when washing our hands have become a natural and normal conduct. This conduct has lasted the weeks and months since the pandemic started and I am sure, that the face mask, will from now on, be part of the daily attire in the countries of the world. It is already happening in some countries like Japan, China and some others.

Does this pandemic affect the Church? Of course, it does. If it affects mankind, it affects the Church. A church that is not aware of this is so shamefully immersed in its traditions and liturgy that it is unable to realize the scope of the situation mankind is living in. The church that is only waiting for the moment to reopen its doors is deadly wrong and instead should be preparing to make the adjustments for the new world that is emerging with the pandemic; above all, it should be learning how is it going to exercise its ministry in the post-Covid-19 society, which in the end, will be crucial and definitive.

Given that Covid-19 and its devastating effects are somehow new due to its global spread, it caught us all off guard. No one can be blamed; neither governments, nor enterprises nor society in general. However, the way it is handled and managed will bring judgment to governments, and institutions including the Church.

What is the final phase of this pandemic? The establishment of new norms and forms of coexistence. And this, not through democratic consensus, but as a decision of a small circle of the

most powerful nations, which will impose these new measures of coexistence on the rest of the global community. Let us look, at the so-called "social distancing" as a new regulation; even though partial in some countries, it is absolute in most of them and was introduced vertically, abided by the societies of the world without questioning or protest. I am not saying it was wrong to regulate social distancing, but it is amazing to see how, it would have taken a lot of time to agree upon and implement such regulation if the circumstances were different. However, the Coronavirus made it possible in a very short period of time.

All of this indicates one thing: the foundation for the establishment of a New World Order has been set.

What is the New World Order? It is an infrastructure and scaffolding of new evaluations, criteria, and modalities to control human behavior worldwide. The need to control who has been vaccinated - when it is implemented - and who has already been infected, will be the first screws to be tightened by the nations of the world. The wedge that will increase the pressure will be the essential financial aid to the countries, which will be used as a 'bargaining chip' and a conditioning factor to force them to align to the new rules. These new rules involve strong sanitary and migratory control measures at airports and borders, individual control in terms of personal information such as travel destination, financial status, and consumer, and religious preferences.

So, let us prepare as individuals and as a church for the new world emerging in the post-Covid-19 era. It will be a more restrictive world with more norms and procedures, a context in which the figure called "the Antichrist" will emerge.

With these reflections in mind, I invite you to read this book, "Pandemic, Church and New World Order."

First Part
PANDEMIC

CHAPTER 1

God and the Calamities

Where is God? Where exactly can we find God —His will, His designs— during this Coronavirus pandemic?

People usually arrive at four answers when in front of a calamity or tragedy, personal, familiar, or a worldwide emergency like the one we are currently living.

The first response usually comes from an intellectual point of view: God created this world, but God does not intervene in the events of human history. The underlying idea is that everything that happens to humanity concerns and is pertinent only to human beings and not to God.

Another different answer is: "Nature is taking revenge on humankind." This originates from the conclusion that nature is finally acting on the abuse and mistreatment it has been a victim of with the irrational exploitation of resources by humans without regard for ecological destruction. As a consequence, according to this argument, mankind's mismanagement of the planet and its resources is causing the planet to punish human beings for their actions.

A more conservative and spiritual circle may answer: "Satan is guilty of calamities." This opinion is based on the presumption that what is happening is a great attack on part of Satan to mankind and the Church and everything good in this world.

And a last and fourth answer would be: "God is punishing humankind for its sins". A belief that God is disciplining humankind for its evil actions.

These four answers are a general response to the question "Where is God during this Covid-19 pandemic? But, what does the Bible tell us regarding this question?"

About God and Calamities

Let us search in the Bible regarding God and calamities.

God can cause calamities even if we don't like it

Of course, He can! In the Bible, we find that God can cause calamities. Prophet Isaiah states in his book in the Old Testament:

*"That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; **I, the Lord, do all these things.**"*
Isaiah 45:6-7 (NKJV)

I highlight the phrase "*I, the Lord, do all these things*"; because, it most certainly is God who does or provokes all things that occur, including calamities. Evidence of major massive destructions are registered in the Bible; such as the Universal Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt.

We can also find in the Bible the plague sent by God when King David decided to take a census without consulting the Lord. God did not like this action, and released a plague on the people; once King David recognized his mistake and made an altar and sacrificed a burnt offering before God, the plague stopped.

So, it is clear in the Bible that even if we don't like it, God can cause calamities.

God does not wish to punish men with calamities

God can punish the world with calamities; in fact, we just read in the Bible of occasions when He did; but that is not what God seeks, neither what He wishes for mankind.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about God's wish for humankind:

*"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but **to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**"*
1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 (NLV)

This is God's will —a good, pleasing, and perfect will, as described by Paul in his letter to the Romans—. God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God wants all human beings, from all ages, cultures, times, and places to be saved.

This passage tells us: "*He dies for us, that, we should live together with Him*". And that is what God wants. God does

not wish to send calamities our way; He can do it, but He does not want to do it. God does not like to send calamities to the human race.

Calamities do not discredit God

Calamities do not discredit God but remind us that He is God, Sovereign, and All-Mighty.

In the book of Job —a book written in the context of calamities—, we read about extremely strange experiences that occurred. Job lost everything, he lost his children, and his possessions intervening phenomena out of the ordinary. We read that God authorized Satan to touch Job in sensitive areas of his life because Satan presented God with a theory that if Job was pressed with trials, he would curse God, which Job never did.

In that book, we read:

*"He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.' **So that everyone He has made may know His work, He stops all people from their labor.** The animals take cover; they remain in their dens. The tempest comes out from its chamber, the cold from the driving winds. The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them. At his direction, they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them. He brings the clouds to punish people, or to water his earth and show his love."*

Job 37: 6-13 (NLT)

"He stops all people from their labor, so that everyone he has made may know His work." This is what is happening today. God made us stop working in this quarantine so that we may contemplate His Power.

The passage describes how nature moves, the rain, the sun, the winter season, lightning. All of these things when out of control, scare us. But God is in control. Everything that is happening around us does not discredit God, on the contrary, it reminds us that He has the control and governs all things.

That is why I do not doubt that this pandemic will stop when it is the right time. Why do I believe this? Because God is in control!

Calamities do not define God

People question why God allows calamities to happen if He is good. They also ask the same thing when they lose a loved one, when they lose money in a business, when an accident happens or when they suffer from sickness.

However, calamities do not define if God is good or bad; calamities do not define God's character. Just look at what Jesus Christ said in the book of Matthew:

*"...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for **He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**"*

Matthew 5:45 (NKJV)

The fact that the sun rises on the evil and the good does not define if God is good or bad; it does not define anything at all; neither does the fact that it rains on the just and the unjust. Let us consider certain areas of the planet where terrible droughts occur while others have plenty of drinking water available. In the case of Honduras, my country of residence, water from the public watering system is available to homes only once a week. In some countries, besides being able to drink it from their kitchen faucet, it is available every day. Let us also think about those countries that enjoy the four seasons in a year while others have only two seasons: a long dry season and a rainy one full of hurricanes. None of these facts define God as either good or bad. Calamities do not define God.

Let's pay closer attention to the passage we read. It describes calamities as happening indiscriminately to good and bad people. God is not thinking that He can send rain to those that are good, and not send it to those who are bad. God does not think that way!

In the book of Ecclesiastes, we are warned:

"...For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so

the sons of men are snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them.”
Ecclesiastes 9:12 (NKJV)

That is correct! The verse is telling us that like a fish caught in a net, bad experiences may happen to human beings. And why did a particular fish get caught in a net and not another? It also tells us that just like a bird came to be entangled in a snare and died, so in the same way, calamities happen to humans. And why did it happen to this particular bird and not to the one next to it?

Difficult times have befallen mankind during the coronavirus pandemic. Churches are closed and life is no longer as we knew it! What should Christians do during these difficult times? Keep trusting in God because He will provide for our every need, heal our every sickness, and protect our lives from every danger. He does not change whether times are good or bad.

Calamities do not take God by surprise

Regarding this, Isaiah tells us the following:

“Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.”
Isaiah 46:9-10 (NLT)

The expression “remember the things I have done in the past” makes us observe the historical evolution of the things that God has been doing. God tells us to review history so that we realize that there is no one like Him: “I am God, and there is no one like me”.

“Only I can tell you the future before it even happens.” Do you think that God did not know about this Coronavirus before the founding of the world? Do you think that calamities and world wars, national and global catastrophes have taken God by surprise? Of course not! He has known and announced it from the beginning.

CHAPTER 2

Calamities and Mankind

Let's focus directly on the context we are currently living in, the Covid-19 pandemic, and how it impacts mankind.

First take in consideration the physical and material impact due to the quarantine. Isolation and lack of work lead us to wonder if money will be enough to pay for food, rent, public services, etcetera. This first reaction can be considered human as it has to do with survival.

However, this quarantine can also have a positive impact by creating important effects such as positive learnings that calamities usually bring human beings. However hard it may seem to believe; lessons are learned during these times.

Not everything happening is entirely bad; even during calamities there are teachings and lessons to be learned, and there is the voice of God to be heard even during bad situations!

Findings resulting from calamities

We must repent from our sins

Whenever we face an emergency, an affliction, a loss, or an alarming situation, the first thing that comes to mind is: — "How am I? Can it be that this situation was caused by my actions, conduct, or attitude? Can it be that I am an accomplice in some way, or am I a factor to make this bad thing happen?"

It is obvious that this Coronavirus was not produced by us and someday a real explanation will be given as to how and why this happened. But there are always factors that promote and enhance calamities, and the question comes up: Can it be that we are a factor? Can it be that mankind has attempted against sacred things —solemn things of God, of His Word, of nature itself meaning the world He gave us as habitat —? Can it be that we did something wrong?"

So, we conclude: — "Maybe..."

The probability is high that we, as humans, are a factor in what is happening with this calamity of Covid-19. And so, that

means that we must examine our condition thoroughly and proceed to repentance if we do not wish to perish.

The Gospel of Luke tells us something in this regard:

"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Luke 13:1-5 (NKJV)

"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." We can observe Pilate's character in this passage. When the crowd accused Jesus Christ and demanded his crucifixion, Pilate washed his hands and let them crucify him; in this case, we read that some individuals offering sacrifice were killed and their blood was mixed with the blood of the animals sacrificed for the holocaust. This was terrible news for the Jews.

But let us examine the answer given by Jesus: *"Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish"*. And He repeats the same expression again at the end: *"No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

What is Jesus teaching us? That those infected with coronavirus are not worse sinners than those who haven't; that line of thought would be a mistake!

In the context of this passage from the Bible, we see that, in the time of Jesus and even today, many believe that disasters and sudden death are evidence of God's displeasure for a certain type of sin. So, if someone suffers from a certain type of sickness, it must be due to some curse or punishment

from heaven. However, Jesus' answer shows us that approach is definitely wrong.

In people's minds, there is a connection between calamity and iniquity, in other words, there is calamity because there is sin! Jesus' response back then, which also applies today, is that calamity is not the way God separates the wicked to subject them to death, but rather that calamity serves as a warning that we all need to repent.

We are definitely not better than those infected in the hospitals or have died because of Covid-19. All of us, regardless of our situation, need to repent from our sins!

We must examine our hearts, search within our conscience, and given that there is a possibility that we are a participating and active factor in all this, we must repent from all those sins of which we are aware. This is a lesson we learn during calamities!

We must reflect on the fidelity of God

The pandemic is a global tragedy but it is also true that every day we see God's fidelity amid everything that is happening. The number of people infected could be a thousand times higher, and the pandemic could be a thousand times more aggravated.

In the middle of this calamity, we can see the fidelity of God. As stated in the Lord's Prayer, He continues to provide miraculously for our daily bread even after two months of not going to work. So, we must see God's fidelity despite bad things.

In the book of Lamentations written by the prophet Jeremiah we read:

"Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me. This I recall to my mind; therefore, I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."
Lamentations 3:19-23 (NKJV)

In this passage, we see a man asking God to remember him; to remember his affliction, his dejection, his sadness, the wormwood, and the gall that he carries in his heart due to the

situation he is living and the calamity he is going through; but when he reconsiders, he decides to wait on the mercy of God and ends up highlighting God's fidelity.

Without a doubt, during these days of the pandemic, we have thanked God for our lives more than ever before. Before the pandemic, we might not have been grateful to God for our life because we took for granted the right to be alive. By the way, I don't understand why humans have the idea that being alive is a right that can be taken for granted. We wake up and go to sleep every day without thanking God, and every day we keep living without being conscious that we owe our lives to God and that He is not obligated to grant it to us. So, the days, weeks, months, and years go by and we never thank God for the life He gives us.

During this pandemic, as we have been cornered into a type of household arrest, we start to notice the importance of being alive. We start to value and revalue the things just as they are. All our priorities have been rearranged to take their correct order. Now we thank God for life, we thank God for our children, for our spouse; we do not want to fight our husband or wife anymore because that person is the only thing we have now; it makes no sense to keep crushing the peace between us.

We have learned all these things during this pandemic and our time under lockdown. In a certain way, we have been forced to take time to learn, to reflect, and to value the fidelity of God. And although this situation is regrettable and seems somewhat close to a divine judgment, the truth of the Goodness of God, according to His pacts and promises, is always present every day. The same happened during Jeremiah's time and is happening again during this pandemic.

We must remember the promise of God

Human life is not enjoyable anymore by far. For example, when I was a boy growing up in my country, we did not face so many problems as we do today; there was no organized crime, and there was no stimulant substance consumption, at least not at the levels seen today. Families were closer to one another, neighbors got along just fine and Sundays were for cooking something special and sharing; we walked alone safely and confidently to school and came back home the same way, something not advisable today. Teachers were our parents

away from home. It was a different world, completely different, and better!

So, as the years go by, life is less and less enjoyable. It has become stressful and oppressive. But this makes us value the Promise of God - and I want to refer to it as the "Promise of Promises" - because it is the promise of the total and final fulfillment that those of us who believe in God and His word, expect. We read it in the book of Revelation in the words of Apostle John:

*"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of **God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*** Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:3-5 (NKJV)

This verse contains the promise of new heavens and a new earth, where justice prevails, and goodness reigns; there will be no more death, no more sickness, no more wars, no more weapons, no more fights, no more struggles, no more bitterness, and no more resentment. As it was always meant to be for mankind, only a state of communion will remain until the day when Jesus Christ returns.

That is why I believe this pandemic is a reminder of the Promise of God to The Church, rather than one of the signs mentioned in Matthew 24 - that during the Great Tribulation will be seen by those who are not redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

We are currently living the era of the Church, which ends with the rapture and the taking of all Christians to be with the Lord. Because the coming of Jesus Christ will happen in two episodes: His coming in the clouds, when Christians will be taken and those who are dead will be resurrected and also taken - literally as the Bible says- "to receive the Lord in the clouds". And then, the Lord will come back to earth surrounded

by His saints. Then the era of the Church will be over and the Great Tribulation will start. In the book of Revelation 4:19, the Church is mentioned, and it is not mentioned again until chapter 19 when Jesus Christ comes with His Church.

The scenario described in this passage of the book of Revelation is the picture of the new heavens and a new earth where everything will be restored; then the Great Tribulation, which ends with the War of Armageddon, is the final hecatomb and the new millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ will be established. His Kingdom will last one thousand years, after which time, some nations, still led by Satan, will rebel but will be subdued, and then the Final Judgement day will come.

Christians will have a different and wonderful ending: "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, *"Behold, the tabernacle of **God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.**"* This describes the intimate and uninterrupted communion we shall have with God.

And how will that communion be? It is described in the same passage: "**God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**" Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

From this, we must not only remember but desire the Promise of God, that He will give us new heavens and a new earth for the former things have passed away.

CHAPTER 3

Things Movable be Moved

What is the definition of something “movable”? Something that is just laid on top of a surface and not sown in the land. Superficial things in our lives have no roots and any small movement can make them fall from the place they are laid upon. A tree that has roots going deep into the ground, on the contrary, will stay firm even in the middle of a big storm.

Things that are “movable” include things that have no foundation. These are things in our lives that look pretty but have no roots and are practically supported by their own weight.

Things ‘movable’ are things that do not relate to knowledge but are pure emotion. And emotions have no roots. Emotions are fast-growing seeds that rise rapidly in the shallow ground but soon wither under the heat of the sun and die. Jesus explained it in “The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:5-6). We need to grow in knowledge.

The topic of this chapter is that things that are movable be removed from our lives. There are two meanings for the word movable. One is to soften, to be moved or touched emotionally. The text that we are going to read next, in the book of Hebrews, will show us the other meaning of this word. Moved also means to disturb, to alter, and to move strongly.

God is dealing with the nations of the world and also with the Church; In a way, God is disturbing us. He disturbed our routines and everything natural to us, our likes and dislikes; in other words, he disturbed our comfort zone. He has also troubled our spirits and strongly unsettled the platforms on which our life is supported.

This has all brought up disarray even in the Church. But all this disorder is so that we might notice the things we have been overlooking. We have arranged our life according to our liking and interests but it was necessary that God disturbed our comfort zone and unsettled our life scenario.

The book of Hebrews tells us:

"When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." This means that all of creation will be

*shaken and removed so that **only unshakable things will remain.***

Hebrews 12:26-27 (NLT)

This is a powerful word! It is a passage that breaks the hardest, most hostile and indifferent attitude.

During this quarantine provoked by the Coronavirus, God is 'moving' things in our lives, so only the unshakable things remain. All that is superficial and not sown in our lives must fall!

It is the power of God shaking the tree so that all dead leaves fall; so that all dried branches break and also fall. His only purpose is the well-being and spiritual health of His People.

Three things 'movable' that will be shaken

Base on the passage read I find three movable things that will be removed from our lives.

First,

Dependency on money as if it were a god

This sick and enslaving bond must be removed and 'shaken'.

On a certain occasion I heard a man of God, whom I admire and respect, even though I did not approve of his opinion, say that without money, you cannot do God's work.

I said No! God's work is done with divine help and divine strategies. The money will be provided if money is needed. We cannot circumscribe the work of God to money because money is not all you need to do it.

Jesus expressed it this way, according to the Gospel of Matthew:

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:24 (NKJV)

I think the reason many believers have not affirmed and consecrated their life to God is because of money, possessions, and material things in their lives. They are running a crazy race where money and riches are a priority and end up away from God and without His blessing.

But God is shaking that faith in money. A few days ago, I found an interesting testimony on social media that stated: The President of Bank Santander died of Coronavirus. His daughter expressed: "We are a millionaire family, but my father died alone and suffocated, looking for something as simple as air. The money stayed at home." Such a deep reflection!

We struggle and focus our lives in search of money and spend our time, lose our health, family, and even our relationship with God, going after money! And when we die - such as the case of this banker- money cannot help us for absolutely anything.

Second,

Trust in humanity usurps trust in God

Trust in humanity that usurps our trust in God has to be removed; it has to be 'shaken' from our lives.

The prophet Jeremiah expressed it like this:

*"This is what the Lord says: **"Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted **along a riverbank**, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit."***

Jeremiah 17:5-8 (NLT)

Here we have bad and good news. The bad news is that many people put their trust in mere humans and trust in humans must not supersede our trust in God because we will be like stunted shrubs in the desert that will be rickety, flimsy,

feeble, without fruit, and in a cursed condition. The good news on the other side is that those who trust the Lord are like trees planted along a riverbank that stands fearless when heat and drought come, which leaves stay green, and will not cease from yielding fruit.

God is moving our trust away from the money we have in our pocket, what we have earned and saved, as well as the rest of our possessions. All of a sudden, after some time in quarantine and with social distancing in place, we begin to worry, become anguished, and question what will happen if this situation lasts much longer? We only have enough money to cover expenses for one and a half months or maybe two which allows worry to nest in our hearts.

But during this pandemic, the time has come to 'shake' our false trust in the human element; it is time to trust the Lord. He has promised He won't abandon us because He loves us, and He will be with us if we let Him. He will be with you if you allow him to be!

Third, Self-sufficiency, pride, and vanity

In the book of the prophet Daniel, we find an example: King Nebuchadnezzar who considered himself self-sufficient, was also very proud and full of vanity. Let's see what happens to him because of these attitudes:

*"And because of the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages **trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Highest God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses."***

Daniel 5:19-21 (RV60)

Let us analyze the attitudes of this man caused by exaltation: all people of all nations and languages trembled and feared before him. He executed whomever he wished, and he also decided whom to keep alive. He acted as if he were God!

However, when his heart was lifted, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. His mind was made like the beasts, and he started to live like them and with them.

This is what God does with self-sufficiency, pride, and vanity; He removes them from our lives regardless of what we have to go through to recognize that the Lord Almighty rules over mankind.

King Nebuchadnezzar is just an example among many rich and powerful men in this world to whom the Lord has bereft of their self-sufficient ways, pride, and vanity. But this not only applies to them, but it also applies to the common people like you and me, because without even knowing it, we may be immersed in pride, self-sufficiency, and vanity.

CHAPTER 4

Things lost and won

Without a doubt, there are things we have lost in this quarantine, but there are also things we have won. It may be true that it is unknown to us as a life experience, but it is also true that it has allowed us to find things we have lost in the way, or made us remember important things that were not even included in our list of priorities. Also, there are those new things that God has brought into our lives during this time.

We can read in the Letter to the Hebrews:

*"Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," **indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.**"*

Hebrews 12:26-27 (NKJV)

The neo-testamentary author is telling us that as a part of God's plan, the removal of things that are considered "movable" from certain chapters and passages of our lives, is necessary. God wants to remove those things from our lives so that only the ones which cannot be shaken remain.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that things 'movable' are those that are just laid on top of something, superficial things without foundation set upon some surface in our lives.

These things must be removed, not necessarily destroyed, but removed so, that only the unshakable things remain.

Let us ask ourselves the following question, under these criteria:

What have we lost during this quarantine?

What is it exactly that we have lost? We don't have to be too bright to answer that question.

**One,
Freedom of movement**

We can no longer go about as we please. Freedom of movement has been greatly restricted and now we can only go out on certain days, at certain hours, and to certain places. We have lost our freedom of movement.

**Two,
Freedom to do our normal activities**

We can no longer do what we want. Maybe we were used to doing a certain type of activities according to our particular interests like going to work every morning, watching the Champions League of European Football, or running in the neighborhood park to exercise. However, we have lost that freedom to do these things because now those activities have limitations. We can no longer do as we wish, in the time and manner that we wish.

**Three,
Freedom for routines and habits**

Routines and many habits acquired over the years have been lost during this quarantine. Now, we must organize our daily activities in new different ways making adjustments to our agenda and priorities.

As an example, praying is now a higher priority than it was before; it has become relevant after we discovered its importance in our survival. Survival is not just wearing a face mask, washing our hands as many times as possible with lots of water and soap, or using hand gel; now we know that prayer can also protect us.

**Four,
Freedom to interact socially**

Nowadays we are subjected to new rules of social distancing to avoid being infected.

This social distancing means that we no longer can visit or be visited by whomever we want. We can no longer interact with others in person.

What have we won during this quarantine?

I have the pleasant sensation that we will be attuned as if by God when next we meet. Maybe humbler, more dependent on God, having a higher sense of value regarding our pastors, fraternal relationships with other Christians, time spend in church serving the Lord, and the freedom of attending a Sunday service.

I think this quarantine is improving many aspects of our life. I hope it is! And I hope that this transformation goes beyond this quarantine and lasts for the rest of our lives.

Specifically, what have we won during this quarantine? Let's see:

One,

The need to return to God's ways

Even those of us who serve and love the Lord have had a reencounter with Him. It has been an opportunity to renew our commitment and form a new pact with Him.

We have been able to review our life during this confinement and bring before God everything that looks bad in our lives. This, of course, is a result of understanding the need we have of God and to return to his path.

Two,

The need to live in the fear of God

Without a doubt, we often ask ourselves during a pandemic, if God is punishing mankind, or disciplining his church. Everyone wonders. You don't have to be a religious fanatic or a superstitious person, to wonder about this.

We read it in the Bible. When God was angry at certain cities and nations, bad things happened such as the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah where it rained sulfur and fire from heaven, or the time when the Lord sent Jonah as a last resort to Nineveh to preach repentance before destruction.

And in addition to what the Lord does, nature is avenging itself against the human race. We have abused the planet so much that there is revenge on the part of nature, which is punishing us with a violent reaction in the form of an ecological disorder without precedence in our planet.

Strange things are happening on the planet; out of the ordinary events that we are not even aware of because our

main focus is learning about coronavirus. Weird things that take us to live in the fear of God as we wonder what He is doing with the planet right now.

That fear makes us understand life is not something to play with! Sin is not something to play with! Laws and the commandments of God, and principles of the Word of God cannot be played with either! And so, this turns out to be one of the things we have won during this quarantine.

Three, Realizing that everything has an end

With this pandemic, we have acquired a consciousness that everything has an end.

You can lose your job in the blink of an eye! A company can close operations in a minute regardless of its size; on the contrary, the larger the company the larger the financial disaster. A loved one can suddenly die. Everything as we know it has an end. Everything expires!

And this pandemic is showing us that everything comes to an end. Freedom, comforts, and luxury have come to an end. The car of the year is parked in your garage, maybe even with a full tank, but where can you go? There is no place to go.

So now we are aware of the fact that everything ends; so, we look for the one thing that has no end: God! The eternal God that has no end; the God whose promises do not expire either.

Four, Realizing the human frailty

Humans are frail creatures. A small virus has put on its knees the most powerful nations of the planet. It's not about being rich or poor -the way other situations are handled in the world-. This virus hits people of all social and economic levels: the rich and the poor die just the same, the rich and the poor fear just the same, the servant and the patron are both afraid just the same and the ignorant, and the renowned scientist does not know how to handle the crisis just the same.

All of this is evidence of human frailty. People can die regardless of their life scenario. The coronavirus pandemic has shown us how fragile humans are.

CHAPTER 5

Reconsider and Wait

The Bible has a message for every opportunity and every situation we are living in. It is wonderful!

It seems illogical that a book with the name "Lamentations" even exists in the Bible. We may even argue: "if the Word of God is hope, life, forgiveness, restoration, and healing, why is there a book with that title?"

I think God created a space, a slot in his word, to insert this book. And the reason may be that He wants us to know that we may find a prophetic word in our time of grief, loss, worry, and anguish. That is why this book is in the Bible!

What are the things that move us? Two things: the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the Prophetic Word that comes alive during our life experience.

So, after this brief explanation, I will read something from the book of Lamentations:

"This shall go down into my heart; therefore, I shall wait."

Lamentations 3:21 (JUB)

We can notice that there is a certain process here; short but still a process: first, reconsider in your heart, and then wait.

So, "waiting" is not an emotional response to life, to problems, or complexities; a person manages to wait, if among other conditions, that person can reconsider things. If we want to learn to wait in God, we first need to learn to reconsider things.

Let's review those two words: Reconsider and wait

"Reconsider"

"Reconsider" originates from the Hebrew word "*shûb*", which is a primitive root translated as "going back" in its first direct translation; in other words, walk backward not necessarily to return to the point where you started. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word "*shûb*"? To go back, to back away from something and observe and rethink, not necessarily to go back

to the same opinion or the same point of view. These all imply that after going back, we are not referring to physical activity, we can start the process of observing things and life problems with a new mindset.

This short root can also be translated as going back to reconsider, to provoke an answer, and achieve a new perspective. This reminds me of the parable of the Prodigal Son in the book of Luke chapter 15: he is on a pig's farm, and in that place, he withdraws, remembers his father's home, and analyzes his situation: "...how many of my father's hired servants have enough bread and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father..." What happened in this case? The son reconsidered his situation. We read it in the parable: "But when he came to himself..." However, for anyone to come to his or her senses, that person must stop to reconsider, which means, going back a little in your mind, observe your situation, and then weigh out your options, not necessarily to go back to the place you initially started at. So, we can say that reconsidering is going back to provoke a new answer.

"*Shûb*" can also be translated as an upgrade. When we reconsider our situation, we are upgrading ourselves. It works similarly with a machine or device, by doing an upgrade, the machine will function more efficiently. Sometimes we need an upgrade to correct erroneous perceptions; and when we start to reconsider, we withdraw a little to bring on a new perspective. Another translation is "reverse", and "set up again". "Reconsider" is basically to set up again, to reset the mind, and heart.

"Wait"

We read in the book of Lamentations: "This shall go down into my heart; therefore, I shall wait." Let's study this other word closely. It translates from the original Hebrew word "*yâchal*". By implication, "*yâchal*" means "to be patient" and "cause, have and make hope."

Well now! The action of waiting is not something we ask and receive just by saying: "God, give me your power to wait, your Spirit to wait, your anointment to wait." No! To be able to wait in God, we have to walk close to Him and in His presence; we have to know his Word, and we have to know His Holy Spirit.

When we are waiting in God, then, fear, anger, anguish cannot consume our thoughts; instead, we must have hope, make hope, and cause hope. We have to accept that we are supporters of hope: we can build hope, we can cause hope, we can plant hope. This is something we must be aware of and accept as a responsibility in our lives.

These two words together, as we read in the Biblical text, are powerful and provide strength and vigor to our spirit. "Reconsider and wait" show us a process to follow.

As a conclusion and in the context of this quarantine, we can say that this is an opportunity to embrace these two words of advice: "reconsider" and "wait".

What is the worst thing that can happen to us after this quarantine? Going back to being the same person we were before, returning to normal ways of life previous to the pandemic. Therefore, I propose we "reconsider" setting out from where we were and not going back to being the same people we were before. So, let's withdraw a little. Maybe God has allowed us to spend some time in lockdown, to cause another way of seeing and feeling things in our lives, and to cause, have, and make hope.

CHAPTER 6

Changing Habits

During this time of quarantine, we may find that we spent many hours with the Lord and that our family relations and spiritual life have improved. We have created new habits during this time of isolation. But if we do not prepare a Discipline Guideline and the time to return to our daily bustle arrives, we may get tangled again in the old habits.

How do we continue to do the good things that we are doing now when we return to our normal daily activities of the past? How can our new habits become permanent?

The good things that we have been doing during this lockdown are being done in replacement of other activities we used to do. Maybe some of those activities were a waste of time, mindless pastimes that did not improve our lives in any way.

Speaking of habits, Prophet Isaiah admonishes us as follows:

*"For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are **filled with eastern ways**; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are **pleased with the children of foreigners.**"*

Isaiah 2:6 (NKJV)

In the New Living Translation of the Bible, the words used are "how they filled their land with 'practices' from foreign lands". These practices the prophet refers to are practices that we have embraced and adopted in our lives that have become attached to us.

Customs or practices that originated in the orient in the example of the passage; it mentions doomsayers like the Philistines; and also, that they made pacts with the children of foreigners." How does this apply to us?

I will give you a brief example: Sometimes we get so involved with the movies we watch that we turn into fans of actors and actresses to the point of admiring their lifestyle and what is worse, frequently justifying and defending their wrongdoings.

All of this clearly indicates that the binding ties that God wants to remove from our lives do not necessarily always come from people that we daily and physically interact with, but also from all those things that are a tendency regarding culture, fashion, and identity. Some of those things, God may want to modify or discard completely from our lives.

Let me give you a personal example: I am a true connoisseur of jazz music. I have been a collector for many years, and in my country, Honduras, hardly anyone knows more about jazz than me regarding genres, recordings, and artists, etc. But since this lockdown started God took away this pastime from me; He said: "you are not going to listen to this type of music anymore." Hence, during the quarantine the Lord has kept me restful listening to Christian music; and given that I am not very attached to the Latin culture and its style, I have been listening to old traditional classical hymns. So, every day, I turn on the radio first thing in the morning and listen to Christian music until I go to bed. I feel this blesses my spirit and my home environment. This is a habit in my life, that God changed and of course, it does not have to be the same for everyone.

The Prophet Jeremiah points out the following regarding customs:

*"For the customs of the peoples **are vanity**: for one cut a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax."
Jeremiah 10:3 (NKJV)*

The passage tells us that "the customs of the people **are vanity**" Well! that is a hard blow to the face. Generally, we fight tooth and nail to defend our customs or other people's customs we like; we defend the things we copy from others because they seem good in our own opinion. We are not able to understand that many of these customs "are vanity" just as referred to by the Prophet Jeremiah.

Many customs we have adopted throughout the years are attached to our lives and we consider them our own, but these are just bad habits. We must ask the Lord if He wants to remove these habits from our lives, and then we must think about acquiring new habits and customs.

How to change habits in this quarantine?

Examine ourselves!

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, advises Christians as follows:

*"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."
1 Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)*

Paul is telling us that when celebrating the Last Supper in remembrance of the Lord, we must first examine our inner self to understand and identify those things that have gotten attached to our lives and are not from God; things that we have allowed to enter our hearts but need to be removed.

This self-examination is required not only before celebrating the Last Supper but also in all our daily walk with the Lord. We must take advantage of this time of lockdown to examine ourselves and review if everything we do, think, and have allowed inside our hearts agrees with our actual situation today. Maybe some things were not bad or negative in the past before this pandemic but we must reexamine ourselves again before we face our return to normality.

Set Limits on our habits

Going back to the personal example of my taste for Jazz music, I could defend myself and say "but Jazz music does not harm anyone"; however, that is not the point. The point is if God wants me to occupy myself with something else and not if it hurts anyone.

During this quarantine, we must do what God tells us to do. If God tells us to change our habit of prayer, the place, and the time when we pray, we must listen and change.

This means "putting limits on our habits". The author of the book of Hebrews explains:

*"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He, Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)*

When the word of God exhorts us by saying: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have...", it is not talking about money or material things but about how we must act without avarice and with contentment.

Avarice implies greed. Greed is anxiety and lust to satisfy an internal desire, be it false or real. And if this desire is not valid for this time of quarantine, then we must set a limit to it.

Break free from harmful relationships

We must be clear that not all relationships are always healthy. Among other things that may be harmful are certain activities that we do, the type of movies we watch, and topics of conversation we talk about. Sometimes without realizing it, we criticize our pastor, brother, or sister, which ultimately results in an unhealthy communion.

We need to break away from certain relationships that are harmful. We must take advantage of the fact that we are executing a depuration in our routines, in this time of lockdown and social isolation, and initiate a sanctifying process in our lives.

Apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 15 verse 33:

"Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV)

Sometimes a bad conversation or a casual talk with someone with the wrong attitude can make us change our opinion or become prejudiced about someone else, and that is not fair. We should never modify our attitudes or relationships as a result of an unhealthy conversation.

The advice of Apostle Paul is valuable in this time of lockdown:

"Do not be deceived: "evil company corrupts good habits."

A plan must be put into action to counteract certain bad habits we have adopted to guarantee that we change and start doing what God wants us to do.

CHAPTER 7

Lift your eyes

During times of calamity, we usually ask ourselves: "Where will I go for help?" Usually, when we look for security during hard times, we look for things such as our savings accounts, and our jobs as we feel these are sources of financial support whether we are businessmen or employees. We might also look towards someone with an important financial position that could help us during a situation of calamity.

The truth is that there are many places where we can look for security; but what does the word of God tell us about this? What does the Bible say?

The book of Psalms tells us:

*"I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth
He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.
The Lord shall preserve your going out and
your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore"*
Psalms 121:1-8 (NKJV)

Let's take a closer look at each sentence of this wonderful psalm, which once served as an inspiration to pilgrims who went up to the Holy City of Jerusalem, the city where the temple of God was:

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills— from whence comes my help?"

Why does the author of this Psalm lift his eyes to a higher and prominent place such as a hill? We could say he is looking for security. His purpose is not to take a good picture or to observe beauty to create lyrics to a poem. He is looking for security during a moment of urgency.

In times of difficulty, the first thing we do is to look for someone or something that can give us security, maybe our job, business, money, savings, friends, car, house, etc. So, we ask ourselves: What things can give me the security I need? Where are those "hills" to lift my eyes to? But we fool ourselves because even though we believe in God, and love Him, we have a "hill" of preference where we run to find security.

It is important to ask ourselves: What are my options when in need of security? Maybe the job that allowed us to buy the house we dreamed of and where we live, or the money that allowed us to buy that nice car we have—even though in this pandemic it is parked with a full tank in the garage because we cannot go anywhere—.

Where have we placed our trust and dependence? What has become our prominent goal when planning our future, or where is our shelter when we need to take refuge? Do we plan our future according to God's promises or depending on the job we have? Do we plan our future depending on the position we hold in a company, the salary we earn, the resources we have accumulated through the years, or based on faith and trust in God, our provider?

Be careful! Do not make the mistake of planning your future based on things you see as the "hill" of security in your life. Watch out! Do not look for security in those fleeting and false "hills", during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Remember that now, in this pandemic, educational degrees are no longer important, as are not the brand or year of your car, or the neighborhood you live in, or the gourmet restaurant you used to visit, or your lifestyle. We are all under lockdown; rich or poor, literate or illiterate, people of all backgrounds, of all social, economic, intellectual, or spiritual classes. We are all the same!

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought all human beings to the same level. We are all praying as the psalmist in the Bible: *"I will lift my eyes to the hills— from whence comes my help?"*

because the first thing mankind tries to do during difficult times is to look for the "hills" that have protected them all through their life.

Who is that person to whom we should lift our eyes to find security and help in this time of pandemic? Let's interpret the scripture.

"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

After we lift our eyes to the hills – to the "hills" of money, job, business, friends, lifestyle – and realize that none of those "hills" are being helpful because they are not providing the security we need, the author of this psalm proposes a direction to turn our eyes to. He tells us, *"My help comes from the Lord..."* and defines our Lord's power by saying: *"who made heaven and earth."*

What is he saying? He is saying that God earned the position of being our protector on His own right because He is the creator of everything that exists! Which position is that? He is the Supreme God over any hill! He made heaven and earth, and everything belongs to Him.

There is no one more powerful than God, or anything higher than His Name! God earned by His own right, the highest position so that we search for Him and make Him our priority in our quest for security. God must hold the first position in our lives! not the second or third position. Those are not enough for Him.

There are nothing and no one that can look after our needs today, in a day we did not imagine even in our worst nightmares. Only God can provide for our needs; only He can bring the timely relief we need.

And the psalmist continues:

"He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night."

Is there anything else we could add to the description provided by the psalmist about how this help will come from

the Lord? No, there is not! Everything is clear. God will not let us stumble because He will take care of us; He never sleeps and is always vigilant; he doesn't slumber or nod overpowered by sleep or fatigue. His care and protection guarantee that we do not fall because He is attentive to keep and hold us.

The psalmist also describes how God is our shade at our right hand; meaning that He will be next to us like a protecting shadow - the same way a shadow can't be separated from the object casting it -. His protection will be such that neither the sun nor the moon can harm us during day or night. Nothing that happens to us can bring fatigue or mental, physical, or spiritual weariness because He will be our rock.

God will do all these things when we lift our eyes to Him for help and security during our times of calamity!

"The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore."

The psalmist announces that the Lord will keep us safe from evil, plagues, epidemics, and pandemics such as the Coronavirus. He will also take care of our souls and our lives completely ensuring we are well provided for, satisfied, and without worries.

And he finishes the psalm by telling us that if we have to go out of our homes, in our case due to dispositions of the lockdown only once a week, we can trust that He will safeguard our going out and our coming in at all times and everywhere. So, if we must go to the supermarket, the gas station, the drugstore, or some other place for reasons of necessity, we can lift our eyes and look for the protection of our Lord, and trust that He will keep us healthy and we will return home free from Coronavirus.

CHAPTER 8

God is our Refuge and Strength

Do you think there is an answer or an end to this Coronavirus pandemic or on the contrary that mankind will be swallowed by the dense waters of this disease?

There is help, an answer, and a way out of this planetary tragedy. Next, I quote a powerful portion of the scriptures that contains extraordinary declarations about God as our refuge and strength and our exodus from this world crisis.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged; the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

*Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah
Psalms 46 (NKJV)*

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

"**God is...**" I like that short phrase because it reminds us that God is not just an idea or a hollow and meaningless

philosophy; God is not a religion lost in the unknown without connection to reality, on this side of eternity. "God is..."

And the psalmist states: "**our refuge and strength, our very present help in trouble...**" I highlight these words because of their meaning and implication: "Refuge" is protection, cover, shelter in the storm. "Strength" is force, defense, barrier; it is the divine potency of God working in our favor. And the words "very present" indicate that God is never late.

These last words I am referring to "very present" remind me of a case in which a man in a situation of great emergency begged Jesus earnestly to go with him to his house and heal his daughter who was seriously ill at the point of death; when suddenly some men came from his house who said, your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further? The man thought it was too late for Jesus to go and heal his only daughter, since she had already died and he tried to leave but Jesus told him: do not be afraid, only believe. So, they went to the house, and even though the girl had already died, Jesus raised her from the dead. This is one of the most extraordinary miracles of Jesus Christ registered in the gospels because of what it represents: a challenge to the laws of nature by giving back life to a girl already dead.

The same will happen to us today. Jesus is our "very present help" in this time of Coronavirus pandemic. He will be on time, and He will visit us to revert the terrifying forecasts of death and desolation disturbing the whole world.

"Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling."

"Therefore..."

I like this word! It has a certain connotation of legal force. When we see the word "therefore" in legal documents, it adds a force and authority that makes the rest of the statements following it, indisputable and conclusive.

Just as well, we read in this passage, "Therefore...", if God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, "therefore, we will not fear when earthquakes come and the

mountains crumble into the sea.” (NLT). Notice it is not saying these disasters will not occur, it is not saying that the earth won’t be moved by earthquakes, or that the mountains won’t tumble into the depths of the sea; or that there won’t be any seaquakes; it is saying that, even though all these things may happen, we must not fear because God himself will be by our side as a fortress and saving force.

“There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Highest.”

Here the mood of what the psalmist is describing changes, and he moves to another stage and says: *“From the river whose streams shall make glad the city of God...”* It’s like an interlude in which the picture of earthquakes and rough seas stops, and the joy that comes like a river to the city of God is announced. The city of God is referring to us, His people, His church, the sacred place where God dwells.

“God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.”

After that, the psalmist speaks of the People of God and what they are going through amidst this whole commotion but: *“God is in the midst of her...”* I like it! The fact that God is in the midst of the city means that *“it shall not be moved”* That is so powerful! He finishes by saying that *“God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.”*

This teaches us that, despite this pandemic, God is among us and we will not be moved; that after the night, the light of day and the midday sun will shine; after the tribulation and calamity, peace will come.

“The nations raged; the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.”

Once the interlude closes, the psalmist goes back to the first scenario where *“The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumbled!” (NLT). This describes the global picture and the situation we are currently living in such as worldwide chaos, bewilderment, and grief in the nations. However, before this scenario, he adds...*

"The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge"

At this point, the psalmist announces who is with us and by our side: "The Lord of Heaven's Armies" (NLT). He refers to God by this name which has connotations of powerful, majestic, in charge of the combat forces against evil, favoring God's people, The Church.

Bluntly the psalmist announces God as "our refuge". From whom or from what do we need protection in this hour of calamity? Who is after us? If worry, anguish, fear, and anxiety haunt us, there is Someone powerful to whom we can go to find shelter and protection: God is our refuge! With him, we will be able to escape from insecurity, fear, panic, depression, anguish, and even death... God is and will be our refuge and hiding place in this cruel hour that humanity lives.

And then the psalmist adds the word "Selah"; proposing a pause to consider the things we are living and how God is our refuge and strength.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire."

This is an invitation to observe and understand that God is testing the nations of the earth.

God has laid desolation on earth with the Coronavirus pandemic, but curiously God's desolation silenced the war attempts and the political wars between nations. Today no country is interested in fighting; nations that a few months ago were threatening to drop bombs are now quiet, worried only about how to get out of the crisis, how to reactivate their economic systems, and how to find the long-awaited vaccine to stop it. Why? Because God has laid desolation on earth; and while doing so, He has caused wars to end throughout the earth.

He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He has put a stop to all human hostility, military or political, and every threat among the powerful nations. Everything is silent because God has laid desolation on earth.

God is the author doing all this to demonstrate that this planet is still His. He created it and owns it, the same way that

He owns humanity. He controls every microorganism and macro organization in this planet... His Planet.

Without a doubt we are living tribulations and adversities that did not exist before; and we are also witnessing God's strong arm dealing with humankind. This should bring humans back to fear God and to live for the glory of God.

The psalm ends by saying...

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

This is a special call on God's behalf to His People, to His Church to recognize that He is God, and watch how His power is exalted among the nations of the earth.

In the wake of this Covid-19 pandemic, nations and the whole world have the opportunity to recognize the power and the hand of God, to humiliate themselves in repentance before the one whose name is eternal salvation... because God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, only in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord, and Judge of everything created.

"The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge."

The psalmist closes this wonderful declaration reaffirming in verse 7 what we commented on before: reminding us that the Powerful, Majestic, Lord of Heaven's armies is with us, and He is our safe refuge.

CHAPTER 9

God will Provide The 'Way Out'

What do the words "way out" mean in this phrase? It means the power to escape, to solve and find an end to a conflict. Finding a way out is being able to pass to a relief chapter, find an escape to a difficult transition. Applying this concept to the context of this pandemic we are going through and the rigorous and overwhelming lockdown that goes with it, we find that God will provide the way out.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds us precisely of this:

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful**, who **will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make **the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it."*

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

This pandemic is not entirely new, but only another version of the many adversities mankind faces and that are common to this world we live in.

I want to concentrate on the words: **"...but God is faithful"**. The word "but" comes in a salvific tone. In general, in human conversation, the word "but" is an interruption that anticipates an obstacle or a difficulty. However, in this verse, it represents a "but" from God, that is not a stumbling block, a trap, or a difficulty; instead, it represents His powerful intervention in our conflicting events and announces His fidelity in our path.

God's fidelity seems to replace the word "but" in this time of Coronavirus as it does in everything that bothers us, afflicts us, and oppresses us.

And how is God's fidelity manifested? It is written in the same verse: **"who will not allow..."** Another powerful phrase of a salvific nature!

It reminds me of the time when Jesus got into the boat when a fierce storm struck the lake while Jesus was sleeping. The disciples woke him up, shouting, Lord, save us! We are going to drown! So, Jesus rebuked the wind and waves and

suddenly there was a great calm. The same thing will happen to us when we are subjects to the fidelity of God: "He will not leave us". He will rebuke the evil one and will keep us safe, and there will be a great calm, and we will have peace. He will never leave us or turn his back on us.

What do we find in this verse? Neither temptation, tribulation, nor trial will be able to stand up against this powerful truth: God will not leave us! He will also guard our children, our homes, our business or life project, and especially our health during this time of the pandemic.

God will always provide the way out. That's right! Along with adversity and tribulation, He will provide the way out. So, we have tribulation, but we also have an exit. There are threats, but there is an escape, and just as the verse states: "...that you may be able to bear it"!

God will give us the strength to endure this pandemic and be able to pass this terrible and unexpected chapter of our life.

The Greek word that translates as "way out" in this verse is "ekbasis", which implies an exit literally and figuratively speaking. It is also translated as "final" or as "way to escape".

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God is faithful**, who **will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make **the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it."*

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

There is a "way to escape" that God will provide, a final moment to this great trial. We will be victorious through our God and will be fortified at the end of this calamity! Let us have courage and faith inspired by these wonderful words written by Apostle Paul to the Corinthians that speak clearly and with a voice of power and authority.

Second Part
CHURCH

CHAPTER 10

Times and Seasons

This is a title and at the same time a word spoken by Jesus. He spoke of the times and seasons.

We read in the book of Acts the following:

*"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You **at this time** restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 1:6-8 (NKJV)

I underline the phrase, *at this time*, because it reminds me that human beings usually want to handle their own agenda and feel reassured if they know when things are going to happen, especially if those things are important to them. This knowledge provides a feeling of control over events in their lives; however, if things turn out differently from what they expected or planned, they fall victim to uncertainty, insecurity, and fear.

In the case of Jesus' followers, in reading this passage in the book of Acts, they were subjected to the power of Rome, living in humiliation, discrimination, mistreatment, and having to pay obedience to that foreign power. They wondered how long was their current situation going to last so, they asked Jesus, *"...Lord, are you going at this time to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

And Jesus answered: *"It is not for you to know the times and seasons the Father has set by his own authority"*; the same thing applies for us today. It is not for us to know the dates and times; that is His authority, His alone! This same verse in another version of the Bible reads: *"He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know..."* (NLT). So basically *"times and seasons"* is the same as *"dates and times"*.

We would like someone to give us a specific date when the Coronavirus will disappear from our streets, cities, and countries, and when it will no longer afflict and frighten the world's population. We want to know the date when we will be able to go back to our normal life to celebrate festive days, birthdays, Mother's Day, summer vacations, etc. But this is not possible!

Interestingly enough, when the disciples asked Jesus about the time when He would improve their life scenario, He gave them an assignment and told them not to worry about the times and dates, instead, He said they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and turn them into His witnesses amidst their difficult circumstances.

To enter fully into our topic, I ask this question: If we are not supposed to know the dates and times – which our Father has put in His authority – what must we do?

What must we do?

First,

Learn to understand the signs and signals

Jesus spoke of signs and signals in Matthew 24. Other parts of the Bible also speak of the signs and the signals we must learn to recognize, but it doesn't speak of dates in the calendar.

What should matter to us is what God wants to do and not when He will do this or the other. In the context of this pandemic, what matters is not when the coronavirus will cease, but what is the sign we must recognize. It may be that the Coronavirus is a sign of that which Jesus called "the beginning of sorrows", or "hearing wars and rumors of wars...", or "...there shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes..." (JUB).

Wars and rumors of war were things we heard of even before the Coronavirus started. The United States was entering a new cold war that risked putting the whole planet in a global conflagration. Pests or epidemics, like the Coronavirus, have been increasing since the 20th century. Famines today are the result of climatic change due to the ecological destruction perpetrated by mankind: lost crops, floods in full summer, droughts when it should be raining, and earthquakes happen quite frequently anywhere on the planet, etc.

Then, the important thing is not “when” the coronavirus will cease, but to understand that we are looking at a sign of the second coming of our Lord and the end of the age.

**Second,
Stay filled with the Holy Spirit**

That is equivalent to keeping our lamps filled with oil. Have you read the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins? It tells the story of ten virgins, some prepared their lamps with enough oil, and some did not. The bridegroom was delayed, and they all slumbered and slept while waiting; those that did not have enough oil in their lamps were sadly left out from meeting the bridegroom.

What is the meaning of this parable? We need to have enough oil in our lamp, meaning enough fullness of the holy spirit. I am sure that those who have not been filled by the Spirit of God, without a doubt, are suffering from fear, anxiety, anguish, depression, and uncertainty. That is why in this quarantine, we must take advantage of the opportunity and continuously seek fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, the same way a lamp must always have enough oil if we want it to light up the darkness as long as this trial lasts.

**Third,
Become a witness to Jesus Christ**

We must share the message of the Gospel at all times with our neighbor, our co-worker, our boss, and that person in our family that is not interested in things related to God; this is a time to become a witness to Jesus Christ, and take notice that the scripture mentions *“in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

We must become witnesses to Jesus Christ, starting with our basic circle of friends to the end of the earth. And the ambiance in which the world society finds itself at this moment is auspicious to preach the Gospel. Of course, I am talking about the Gospel of Jesus Christ that proclaims an opportunity for the forgiveness of sins and a new life as children of God.

**Fourth,
Serve! May the Lord find you doing your job**

Jesus said that a good servant is one whose Lord finds working when he returns after an absence. But if that servant thinking

that his Lord is delayed starts hitting his fellow servant and doing as he pleases; he will suffer loss in every way.

So, we have spoken of "times and seasons", and "dates and times" learning that it is not for us to know when things will happen but to learn to recognize the signs and signals and to be able to do so, we must keep ourselves filled with the Holy Spirit, have enough oil in our lamps, become witnesses to Jesus Christ, and serve as a good servant is expected to do in the absence of his Lord. Because He is coming! And He is coming soon!

This is not just an expression but a firm declaration we are making based on the signals we can see taking place in this 21st century in which we are living.

CHAPTER 11

The Church and the End of the Age

This whole emergency for the Coronavirus pandemic has generated that we go back to reading our Bibles, especially on eschatological theological matters, to decipher if it is one of the signs mentioned by Jesus –in Chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew. I have been reading on social networks people's comments about the end of the age, but some are somewhat unfortunate because they are not well structured, or the result of knowledge. That is why, I think it necessary to share, with an open Bible on my hand, some interpretations of passages about the Church and the end of the age.

I want to introduce the topic with the words of Jesus as registered in the Gospel of Lucas:

*"Then Jesus turned to the crowd and said, "When you see clouds beginning to form in the west, you say, 'Here comes a shower.' And you are right. When the south wind blows, you say, 'Today will be a scorcher.' And it is. You fools! You know how to interpret the weather signs of the earth and sky, **but you don't know how to interpret the present times.**"*

Luke 12:54-56 (NLT)

I want to emphasize this last sentence, **but you don't know how to interpret the present times**. People were not able to interpret the signs during the days of our Lord Jesus Christ but neither can we during our present time. Many assertions are uttered by people who do not know how to interpret the present times.

After reading these words, I want to address some mistakes and omissions usually made when interpreting the present times.

Errors and omissions

What are these mistakes and omissions that we notice are being made frequently as of late?

One

Making today's world crisis a synonym for the end of times

People are ranking these two events equally and arguing that "if it is a global crisis, like this coronavirus pandemic, then it has to be something related to the end of time." But, is a world crisis really synonymous with the end of time? I think not; I believe it might be the opposite.

Let us consider what the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians.

*"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord **so comes as a thief in the night**. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."
1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 (NKJV)*

This passage tells us that the day of the Lord shall come as **"a thief in the night"** What is it about the coming of a thief? The thief does not warn anyone of his arrival.

I also find a relationship between peace and safety, and sudden destruction in the same context and scope. This implies, according to the author of the letter, that when nations claim to have peace and safety there will, in turn, come sudden destruction.

A time will come when it will appear that the world has solved its biggest problems, and a new model of government can be established worldwide; one with a new foundation, a new protocol, and a new guideline. Right now, the situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic creates the proper conditions to move in that direction.

We must pay strict attention because the world will enter a rebirth or renaissance. What kind of renaissance? Well, we are already at its doors: a technological, cultural, economic, and geopolitical renaissance. The powerful nations will start to orchestrate their opinions and make consensus to create a new state of things, a new world order.

It will be then when the antichrist system will be installed, without necessarily talking about the character yet. And what has been a struggle to have a healthy economy on the planet will be resolved. Guidelines will be imposed that will be the

result of a true genius; and people will begin to say "Peace and security!", ignoring that when they say "peace and security," that is when there will be rather "sudden destruction."

Two

Ignoring the fact that the Rapture of the Church is an event previous to the Great Tribulation

Many of those speaking of the Great Tribulation, ignore the fact that "The Rapture of the Church" is an event that will happen before the horrid phase mentioned in the Biblical Prophecy. Jesus in the book of Luke speaks the following words:

*"And **as it was** in the days of Noah, **so it will be also** in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so, will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."*

Luke 17:26-30 (NKJV)

I highlight two phrases in this passage: "**as it was...**" and "**so, it will be also...**" Jesus is establishing a relationship between what was and what will be; meaning that, "*just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man...*" (the day of the Son of Man refers to the day of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

And how was it in the days of Noah, and how will it be in the days of the Son of Man? Luke describes it well in this passage, "they ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage..."; and we certainly see that on the rise, actors and actresses are the first examples of people that marry several times as easily as they change clothes, and change spouses every so often. And of course, there are those who by following their example undervalue the holy bond of marriage.

The reading goes on saying: "...until the day that Noah entered the ark ...". What happened that day? "...the flood came

and destroyed them all." It is important to notice that the flood came until Noah and his family were safe inside the ark.

Then Jesus gives another example: "*Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot...*" The description of the scene is the same: "*They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built ...*"; these actions describe by far the contemporary society.

And the scripture goes on: "*...but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom...*". That sentence is similar to the previous one about Noah entering the ark and then came the flood. What happened the day Lot went out of Sodom? "*...it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.*"

In both cases, Jesus describes the condition of today's society and how "it will be the day when the Son of Man is revealed".

It is the same situation in both cases: Noah entered the ark and closed the door, and he separated himself from the rest of society, from the rest of the world. Lot left the city of Sodom and Gomorrah helped by the angels of God, and destruction came over those two unrepentant cities. The entering of Noah in the ark and the hasty exit of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah evoke the Rapture of the Church. Noah entered the ark, and the destruction came; Lot left the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the destruction came.

God is showing us that He brings His people to safety when judgment comes upon the earth and that, definitely evokes the Rapture of the Church before those terrible days awaiting mankind; but those are certainly not the days we are living now during the Coronavirus pandemic. These times are only a reminder of things to come, of things that will befall humanity, and a demonstration by God that, everything predicted in the Bible will come to happen.

And when given a reminder of what is going to happen, we must consecrate our lives to God. Leading a religious life is not enough because only those who have been born again and are truly part of the Church will be part of the rapture and freed from those horrid events.

Let's see another portion of the Scripture with the same line of thought. It is the apostle Paul speaking to the Thessalonians:

*"For the Lord, Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain **shall be caught up** together with them in the clouds **to meet the Lord** in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

Three images are presented here before us: "a shout", "the voice of an archangel" and "the trumpet of God". What will happen next? *"...And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord..."* We are a reception party for our Lord Jesus Christ! The rapture of the Church will take those who have died as well as those who are alive, to meet the Lord in the air... and thus, we shall always be with the Lord!".

It closes the passage by saying: *"Therefore comfort one another with these words."* (NKJV), or *"encourage each other with these words"* (NLT).

This is what I intend to do in this chapter: encourage fellow Christians not to worry or be alarmed about The Great Tribulation wondering: will I be able to endure that time or will I lose my soul amidst such terrible events? You will not lose your soul if you have already given your life to Jesus; if His blood has cleansed you of your sins then you are one of the Children of God and will be a participant of the Rapture of the Church, and free from the Great Tribulation.

And before those events, which can only compare to the universal flood in Noah's time and the massive destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Lot, the Lord will raise His people, and The Rapture of the Church will show everyone His Salvation. Paul explains it to the Thessalonians with these words:

"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

We are not people destined to bear the wrath of God, but believers in Jesus Christ are destined to reach God's Salvation. We do not have to experience the ire of God that will come to those that curse His Holy Name every day, those against His Word, and those who do abominable things against Him. We shall not receive that which is destined for them.

Three, Ignoring the fact that we are vessels of mercy and not of wrath

We are not vessels where the ire of God is poured, but vessels of mercy. The Bible says it, not me! It is the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans who speaks about this:

*"Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel **for honor** and another **for dishonor**? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the **vessels of mercy**, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"*
Romans 9:21-24 (NKJV)

I underline the phrases "**for honor**" and "**for dishonor**". These are two different types of vessels that God as the potter has the power to do.

And the scripture goes on: "*What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...?*" Painfully, the planet is full of vessels of wrath; and what's coming for them is destruction because they have not repented before God, their Creator.

It keeps on saying: "...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory..." We see that God prepared beforehand the vessels of mercy to show His glory, and if there is still any doubt he clarifies: "...even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles"?

Be careful and watch out for those errors and omissions in the interpretation of events regarding The Church and the end of times, especially those we hear during this pandemic.

CHAPTER 12

The Land of Goshen

Let us Imagine that the people of the world are "in Egypt", and Christians are in "The Land of Goshen". Speaking spiritually and Biblically, what does this statement mean?

During biblical times, a series of plagues came to Egypt as God's way to destroy all their idols, their pride, and everything that they trusted. They worshipped the Nile River and God contaminated its waters with blood, they worshipped frogs and God sent them a plague of frogs, and so on.

In that same context, the book of Genesis speaks to us about the Land of Goshen way before the plagues of Egypt.

"Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, 'I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.' So, it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."

Genesis 46:31-34 (NKJV)

Egyptians loathed the labor of raising and herding sheep but it was the main occupation of the People of God; for that reason, they were set apart and sent to live in the Land of Goshen. They were given land to live separately so the Egyptians would not have to interact with them; curiously, this fact helped the People of God to maintain their identity, their customs, their culture, and especially their worship of God. The Land of Goshen became a place of refuge and protection against the terrible plagues that would come in the future as part of the divine judgment against Egypt.

Well now! What does the Land of Goshen represent to us today? It represents something powerful. Let's see it:

What does the Land of Goshen represent to us today?

The Land of Goshen represents: family, food, and shelter

The biblical story registers this in the book of Genesis:

*"Hurry and go up to **my father**, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and **you shall be near to me**, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There **I will provide for you**, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine."
Genesis 45:9-11 (NKJV)*

"Hurry and go up to **my father**..." It is Joseph speaking here, sending his brothers back to Canaan to bring his father and all their families to Egypt.

"...You shall dwell in the Land of Goshen, and **you shall be near to me**, you and your children, your children's children..." A home is a place of shelter and refuge in which to be safely surrounded by family warmth; the home to the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

"...Your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There **I will provide for you**, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine." This meant provision.

This passage in Genesis is pertinent to the concept of "Goshen", and it is extremely eloquent. The Land of Goshen represents family, food, and shelter.

We are in Goshen. Spiritually speaking, Goshen is our land. But we reside in Egypt, surrounded by people who live without God, who have made money, sex, and self-gratification their objects of worship. During this pandemic, God put us in quarantine in the best place that could have been chosen: our houses, next to our family. We are under his 'shelter', in our homes, in the warmth of the love of our most valuable and important affections; and we have His "supply" of everything we need, and we lack nothing

The Land of Goshen represents: possession, growth, and multiplication

In the book of Genesis, we read:

*"So, Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and **they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.**"*

Genesis 47:27 (NKJV)

Let's take note of the words registered here in this verse: When Israel settled in Egypt in the Land of Goshen; **"...they had possessions there and grew and multiplied..."** This describes the Land of Goshen as a land of growth and multiplication. And all of this is described as happening in an "exceedingly" manner.

Maybe during this quarantine, we are full of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity but, just like the Israelites, we must learn the meaning of being settled in the Land of Goshen.

For them, the Land of Goshen was the place where they could interact as families; enjoy their own culture – different from the Egyptian culture -. Goshen was not a jail for them, but, on the contrary, it was a place where they became strong and grew exceedingly.

I want to express it prophetically: While we are home, we are growing stronger to make good decisions and withstand the onslaught of this pandemic; to walk with God and minister, and impart blessings to our families; and strong to manage well our possessions and resources so when we return to normality, we may go from victory to victory.

From that, we see that the Land of Goshen is the land of possession, of improvement, and multiplication.

The Land of Goshen represents: protection during divine judgment

The Land of Goshen is also a place of protection during the divine judgment as we can see when Egypt suffered God's ire with plague after plague. In the book of Exodus, we read:

*"And in that day, **I will set apart the Land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land.**"*

Exodus 8:22 (NKJV)

God announced to Moses that He would set apart the Land of Goshen and that no plague would reach it.

Today, in this pandemic, God is setting apart your home, my home, our homes, so that no plague may enter.

We are the People of God; we are God's Family... not only the spiritual house but also the physical house. God will set us apart so that no type of evil enters; and so, it may be known that it is God who dwells among us.

The same thing happened with the plague of the hail; God's protection of His People was evident. We read again from the book of Exodus:

*"**Only in the Land of Goshen**, where the children of Israel were, **there was no hail.**"*
Exodus 9:26 (NKJV)

The biblical record indicates that the plague of hail killed animals and crops; there were heavy boulders of hail and the plague killed animals and crops. **"Only in the Land of Goshen..."**—the Bible states— **"...there was no hail."**

Another biblical record that speaks of protection during the divine judgment is found in the book of Exodus:

*"So, Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and **there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt** for three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But **all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**"*
Exodus 10:22-23 (NKJV).

One more plague in Egypt. "...There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt during day and night ..." There was a solar and lunar eclipse of such magnitude that everything turned black as if during the darkest night for three days.

Three days of absolute blackness! Three days during which night lasted 24 hours; a night without stars and without moon, and even during the daytime hours, they were still in darkness. So dense it was that they could not see one another and nobody moved from their place for three days.

Maybe the Egyptians thought that it was the end of the world. Today, some people are ignorant of God's word and see the Coronavirus pandemic as the end of the world. We know that it is not so because, for us as Christians, there is no end of the world; we await the triumphant return to earth of our Lord Jesus to establish His kingdom and His rule. The capital city will be Jerusalem and the first thing that will be established will be a millennial kingdom; after that millennium, Satan and his hosts of wickedness will be released from his prison, and also some nations that did not submit to Christ; and then, in the end, there will be the divine judgment for all.

The scriptures continue: "*But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*" It was different for the People of God. God operated a miracle. They had light in their homes!

So, the land of Goshen represents protection from divine judgment. The plagues of flies and hail did not harm the children of Israel, and a light shone for them amid the densest darkness.

The Land of Goshen represents being prepared for the exodus

Later in the book of Exodus, we read about this:

*"Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "**Rise**, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. Also **take** your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and **bless me** also."
Exodus 12:31-32 (NKJV)*

Here we read about Pharaoh speaking to Moses and Aaron. He was feeling devastated by the strong hand of God and screamed at them telling them: "*Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. ...*"

He also guaranteed food for the road —without knowing it— to the new land where they were headed by saying: "*Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone...*" and humbled he begged: "*and bless me also.*"

With his decision to let them leave and that they take along their flocks and herds, God was preparing His People for the exodus; to go from slavery toward freedom.

Just like God freed His People from slavery in Egypt, He is preparing us for the day of The Rapture. They were taken out of the land of Egypt by the powerful hand of God; and we will be lifted to meet our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds!

CHAPTER 13

The Church in the Present Crisis

Based on all my reflections and meditations, I find that the Church, in this time of crisis, must be able to understand the signs and changes of the present times.

The world, since the Coronavirus started, will never be the same again. With the ecological disaster that began with climate change, mankind has been on a journey of no return; man's mismanagement of God's Creation, a responsibility given by God, has resulted in chaos and destruction.

Hence, we have to learn to understand the signs during the crisis we must face. In my country, I remember Hurricane Fifi in 1974, when the rivers flooded thousands of hectares; I also remember Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which caused such a disaster that the country was literally destroyed. Later, in 2009, a political crisis shook the country and left such discomfort and disagreement among the people that even today we are divided and live in fear for the insecurity and violence that surrounds us every day.

Suddenly, this pandemic makes us forget our ideological and political differences, and the only thing in our minds is surviving and guarding our children to guarantee the future after this world emergency.

That is why we must aspire to be a church that can read the signs and signals to make the adjustments to strengthen our faith and guarantee fraternal communion among believers. I must say that neither the government, nor the press, nor scientists must be interpreting what is happening; their participation is welcomed, but from a spiritual perspective, the church is the one who must interpret the signs we are seeing.

Let us consider a portion of the scripture that speaks about a time when the leaders of the church were selected. This is pertinent to what is being presented here:

*"of the sons of Issachar who had an understanding of the times, **to know** what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command."*

1 Chronicles 12:32 (NKJV)

"Of the sons of Issachar, their chiefs were two hundred..." — of course, it is always best to have enough leaders available. But look at how they are described, *"who had an understanding of the times"*, and I highlight this phrase because it conveys a lot. There are Christians, pastors, and churches still living in the '70s or '80s —trapped in the generation of their youth. This takes me back in time to events that happened twenty years ago, when God gave me the privilege to start the International Christian Center, which is the base of the CCI Global Missionary Network —a movement that gathers more than 600 churches around the world—. At that time, I prayed to the Lord: "God, please do not let me stay trapped in my generation, doing things according to my generation."

Each generation teaches us to think and do things in a certain way; and that is not wrong, but what I am referring to is the need to not stay trapped in the focus and way of life of a particular generation. We must read the times, signals, and changes that appear on the horizon. That is what I was asking in my prayer to not stay trapped in my generation. Since then, I have been adjusting my actions according to the times and changes, defining new ways to do God's work.

Going back to the passage we are reading, those two hundred chiefs *"had an understanding of the times"* and it goes on saying: *"...to know what Israel ought to do..."* This verb "to know" has an impact on me! Why? Because there are people that "do not know" how to do ministry for God; they haven't even noticed that today is not the year 2019 anymore, that it's been months since we turned the page in the calendar.

So, we should know from a heaven's perspective and from a perspective of God's Heart -as manifested to us in the Bible - what is exactly happening to humankind today.

There must be people in the churches that "know what the church ought to do". The verse that we read told us that there were two hundred chiefs "that knew what Israel had to do". They knew it well; they were not people confused or reckless that responded to situations with indecisiveness or emotionality but "had an understanding of what had to be done". Just like us, in the church of our days; we do not want emotional reactions from our pastors, our preachers, teachers, and Christian leaders; people need answers from those that can interpret times and have knowledge about what the church must do.

The Biblical text concludes: "...all their brethren were at their command." In other words, their words, their advice were well received and followed.

The times we are living are not times to be crouched prey of fear and confusion, but times to ascertain, to be just like the men in the text we read: "All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course..." (NLT). It's time to open our Bibles and see from God's perspective what is happening as well as determine the role we must play as His Church.

What do the Scriptures tell us about the times we are living today? That is a question we must constantly ask ourselves with the hope of becoming like those men from the tribe of Issachar that "*understood the signs of the times and knew the best course...*", in our case, for the Church today.

Nonetheless I clarify: these times are a great challenge for those who have a leadership position and spiritual authority in all fields; it is not only for pastors and church leaders, it is a challenge for parents having authority over their children, for teachers with authority over their students at school and universities and for public officials that lead over state workers. These are times for our leaders to "have an understanding of the times" and lead people on the correct path.

How do we obtain this 'understanding' of the times?

That is the big question. Next you will find some practical advice.

One, Don't pretend to turn into theologians overnight

To have a theology does not make us theologians. We must have a theology that supports our beliefs and practices, but moving from that to think that we have become theologians overnight is very different. The actual situation requires theological explanations but we are not expected to come up with every answer every time.

Two,

Try to have moderation when stating your position

The more radical we are, the more extreme our opinions and teachings will be. To have control and balance we must be flexible and study all theological postures that exist. I have observed that the most stubborn people are those who defend at all costs the only thing they know; but that, in the end, is ignorance.

Three,

Don't use theology to attack others

This attitude will only increase spiritual confusion around us; we have no time for that. Our mission is to preach the gospel and if we want to do it right, we must do it without any particular accent, tendency, emphasis, or personal preference. Think and let others think; believe and let others believe. Do not become a 'funnel' trying to force others to believe as you do.

Four,

Don't express as yours, other people's conclusions

Sometimes we speak conclusively about a subject we have not studied thoroughly. And we do it so people don't think that we are biblically or theologically outdated regarding world events. Do not ever accept that kind of pressure.

CHAPTER 14

Revival in our Homes

It is due time for revival to reach our homes so that the presence of God visits our lives and the lives of those in our house. The Bible registers one occasion in which the Presence of God reached a house and as a result, there was a great revival in that family: Everything started to change and get better. We find the story in the second book of Samuel.

"So, David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David, but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So, David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness."
2 Samuel 6:10-12 (NKJV).

I will make a brief summary of the context around this portion of the Scripture: David was trying to bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, and just when they started their trip one of the oxen stumbled, the wagon moved, so someone ran to hold it so the ark did not fall on the ground but the man who did died immediately. David became overwhelmed with fear and decided not to try to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

Therefore "...David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David but took it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household."

Three months in that house and everything started to change: the problems and needs they were having were solved, and the whole atmosphere began to heal. It all started to get better; literally, it happened as stated in the Bible "*and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.*"

Reading on: *"Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God."* The news was given to King David: The presence of God in that house had unleashed God's blessing on his house, family, and everything he possessed.

Maybe, during this quarantine, while we spend all our time at home, we might erroneously think that it would be better to be at work, or at the stadium watching a soccer game with our friends, or in a restaurant chatting with family or friends. All those things are nice things we like to do, but right now, we are under lockdown at home. And what if God is behind all this! maybe we should take advantage of the occasion to look for that Presence of God that will bring revival and release His blessing upon our homes and our possessions. And I'm not talking just about material things, like money available to buy food, medicine, clothes, gas, etcetera—which are important things—; but also, the immaterial but not less important things like mental and physical health so we may be strengthened spiritually and blessed in our family relationships and livelihood atmosphere in general. This means being blessed in an integral sense; blessed in the total circle of our lives.

Two more comments and the epilogue of this story

Based on the biblical text read, I have two more comments:

First, God is bringing His Presence into our homes. Today, each one of us is the house of Obed-edom, because without anticipating it we received the presence of God into our homes. It was not something we thought of or planned for; but being under lockdown in this quarantine and with obligatory social distancing, our homes have become a place for God's visitation, because spiritually and by grace we received the Ark of the Lord.

Second, along with his presence comes Health, Preservation, and Prosperity. He will bring—just as we read in the biblical story— blessings to our home and family,

therefore activating health, preservation, and well-being as needed.

Epilogue. The summary and ending to the story of Obed-edom is registered in 1 Chronicles and it refers to his sons and grandsons and their number as follows:

*"All these were of the sons of Obed-Edom, they and their sons and their brethren, able men with strength for the work: sixty-two of Obed-Edom."
1 Chronicles 26:8 (NKJV).*

"All these were of the sons of Obed-Edom, they and their sons and their brethren ..." It is referring to the sons, grandsons and other relatives of Obed-edom; and they are described as *"able men with strength for the work"*; in another version of the Bible they are described as: *"very capable men, well qualified for their work"* (NLT)... That is so powerful!

Wherever your children are, if you have them, I pray prophetically that they will be robust and strong. If they are close to you, lay your hands on their heads, hug them, and tell them: you will be robust and strong, in the name of the Lord!

This is a word that we can impart on our children, grandchildren, and relatives that are home or in some other place: they will be robust and strong! They will be capable and qualified! They will not trip over where we did, will not fail where we fail, will not sin as we sin, will not stop where we stopped. They will be robust and strong! They will be capable and qualified to reach their goals and fulfill their destiny in the name of Jesus. Amen!

We must believe that after this pandemic our sons and family will be strengthened; because regardless of the havoc that the coronavirus is causing, God is bringing health, preservation, and prosperity to His People. Why? Because, just like the house of Obed-edom, the Presence of God has come to our home. This is powerful!

How do we activate revival in our home?

How do we reciprocate God for His presence in our homes during this pandemic? What must we do? I propose five things:

One, Remove idols

We may think that we have no idols or man-made images of worship in our house. But, what about football, music, electronic games, television series that at some point became idols because of the priority level assigned by us.

I am a jazz music lover, connoisseur, and collector; but during this time of lockdown, I felt the Holy Spirit within me, resisting that type of music. So, allowing myself to be guided by that spiritual feeling, I sought to replace jazz with traditional Christian hymns and that is what I have been listening to during the time of quarantine. Why? Because God hates Jazz? Definitely not. Because in days so crucial as these, God didn't want anything to interfere with what He wanted to tell me; and Jazz has been so important for me that it could have become an idol during a time in which God required my total concentration on Him.

Two, Make an altar for prayer

This is an additional way to activate revival in our homes: pray to the Lord with your family and those at home. This is a practice that has been postponed for generations and should be retaken by God's people. I recommend setting aside a time for prayer.

And remember that it's not the amount of time we spend at the family altar but the will and determination we put into it.

Three, Abandon all disobedience towards God

We need to give up all disobedience and rebellion towards God that in the past we've somehow been justifying.

And how do we show this disobedience and rebellion? Usually going against those in authority. A son or daughter disobeys and rebels against parents; a Christian disobeys and rebels against church leaders, and an employee disobeys and rebels against the boss. We must stop justifying those attitudes and behavior and give up any kind of disobedience and rebellion.

Four,

Ask and seek the Will of God

We must search diligently and with enthusiasm the Word of God, the teachings that reveal the truth and principles of the kingdom of God; that way we will direct our life towards knowing and doing God's will.

The Sermon on the Mount in the book of Matthew can be a good guide in this search for the kingdom of God and His Will; in this sermon, Jesus teaches us how to live based on a superior kind of justice and not just religiosity.

Five,

Accept God's treatment

I want to testify that God has been dealing with me during this quarantine. He has corrected, admonished, advised, and given me comfort. Therefore, my advice to you is: take advantage of this time of lockdown to accept and receive the particular treatment that God wants to give you. In the privacy of our isolation, we can find the best place to listen to His correction His admonishment, and His words of comfort; we can also be better prepared to receive His compassion and love.

CHAPTER 15

The Challenge in the Post-Covid-19 era

This topic is a projection of what will happen once we return to normality which we still don't know what will bring.

Everything that is happening right now already has a recognized behavior and handling; we must focus on what will happen after this pandemic because the human race won't be the same and our life's condition won't be either.

Nothing will be the same during the post-covid-19 era. It implies a new period in human life. Societies, governments, economic structures, everything will be different! Everything will change! And it will imply a challenge for mankind and therefore a challenge for each one of us.

There is a text in the Bible that has strategic and prophetic importance regarding the present time we are living in. Let's examine the words of Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians:

*"to the intent that **now** the manifold wisdom of God might be made known **by the church** to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
Ephesians 3:10-11 (NKJV)

We read: *"to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God..."* I emphasize the word **"now"** because it implies updating the Word of God in the context in which we live today; that is to say that when the apostle mentions the word **"now"** he is referring to his actual day and time which can be applied to us today, in the 21st century and amidst this Coronavirus pandemic.

We continue reading that this wisdom of God might be made *"...known **by the church**..."* indicating clearly that it is the responsibility of the Church, to make known what is in the heart of God, the purpose of God, the plans of God, and what God is saying.

This will be a message *"...to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places ..."* Meaning that His Church, must make His wisdom known; and not only in this world of humans, but foremost in the spiritual spheres where there are *"principalities and powers in the heavenly places..."* This means that our message and our voice will go through the roof of our houses and temples and will not stay filed in the Cloud of our electronic devices; but the voice of God in our message will transcend the human sphere and will reach the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Therefore, if we are sharing God's message correctly, and praying and interceding properly before God, the principalities, and powers of evil will be crouched and scared because here the Church is preaching and prophesying.

And continuing with the passage: *"...according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"*. So, we must understand that the Church will not be formed whimsically according to our perceptions, ideas, and interests; but that it will be formed the way God anticipated in His eternal purpose... such that we must seek with the greatest discernment.

The text tells us that God will *"use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all..." (NLT)*. This is a revealing and powerful message! It has a great strategic weight on how the Church must move today. And pay attention to this: It is pitiful to think of pastors who are only thinking of celebrating services to sit people in the temple to sing and listen to a sermon. We cannot think like that anymore! We need to discover through God's revelation how will the church that God wants in the Post Covid-19 era function!

Two alternatives for the Church Today

- 1) A Church that is only a 'refuge' for believers —maybe that's what the church has been in the last few years—, and;
- 2) A church that is a 'beacon' that guides human beings that are lost.

My comments on these two alternatives.

First,

A Church that is a 'refuge'

This means that the church is a nice comfortable place, whose only purpose is to make Christians feel good: loved by God, guided by God, protected by God. A '*nice church*', with an agreeable atmosphere, comfortable in all regards, motivated; a church dedicated to the nursing of the emotions as a substitute of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. A church with simplistic formulas on how to obtain blessings and how to reach prosperity. A church with positivist statements is more oriented to autosuggestion than to faith. A church that never takes sides on what is right or wrong so as not to offend its congregation.

Second,

A church that is a 'beacon'

This is a church perfectly aware of how elevated and demanding its callings is: To be a light that guides people lost in a sea of human conflict and evil. A spiritual church that exercises the authority of the Word of God and that releases its power to transform people. A church where people come not only to sit but to transform their lives and then go out into the world to testify of their new lives in Christ.

A proposal for the church in the post-Covid-19 era

Taking into consideration what we have mentioned before, I propose a guide about how the church must function in the post-Covid-19 era.

Study and teach what the scriptures tell us

I have been listening to some pastors —what they are saying teaching and preaching—, and I get quite restless because I notice that they are repeating a theology from twenty or thirty years back.

But the Word of God is alive; and the prophetic Word and the eschatological concept in the Bible lead us to compare day by day its contents against the current world's events. So, we

need to go back and re-study and teach again what the Bible tells us about the church in the context of the final days.

Become a church that is compact, simple, and pastoral

Why am I saying this? Because the bigger the church structure the harder it will be to keep it afloat in a world that grows more complex and adverse every day. So, it is all about looking for more compact and simpler organizational structures, and a stronger pastoral emphasis.

Review the active ecclesiastical programs

I am talking about reviewing and redesigning what we do and how we do it and terms of the current programs in the Church. Some ministries and activities have not worked well in the last forty years regardless of having been active in the church.

Then, our obligation, responsibility, and commitment, if we have such motives, is deciding if a program or ministry should be cancelled or empowered after analyzing the effect in the spiritual growth of the church!

We must identify which programs did not work well during this quarantine; and based on that we must decide which ones we need to widen to become more efficient; or which ones we need to replace.

Learn to function outside the temple

Meaning: 'take the church outside the church'. At another time this expression would have sounded like blasphemy. Can the church function under closed doors? Well, to tell the truth, that is how the church has been functioning as of late: Temples with closed doors!

Those churches that had their congregations organized and working outside the temple or place of gathering are managing in a superior way, and what's even better, they are winning more souls for Christ during this pandemic. On the contrary, those churches that were settled on just opening their doors to hold services or celebrations are definitely in serious trouble under this quarantine.

And what are those churches doing now? They have started to seek the members of their congregations because as things are right now, it is not possible to contact them or visit them personally. So, Facebook accounts are being opened to obtain a 'live' broadcast and start connecting with the members of the

church. The advice is then valid: Churches must organize themselves to work outside the temple or meeting place.

And for this, I strongly recommend what has been my practice as pastor for over forty years: Groups at home. This could be a 'solution'. In our main congregation, we have approximately three hundred groups of people meeting in different homes; and these groups have kept the members of the congregation united given that the temple has been closed during the quarantine.

This brings me to ponder and ask myself: What have we been doing? Have we been keeping the temple pretty, well painted, furnished with comfortable chairs, air conditioning and carpets, good audio system, lights well distributed, cameras and video screens...? I'm not saying that it is bad... the problem is that none of that is useful today! None of that works! In this hour of pandemic and quarantine, none of that is useful! What is useful is having organized the church in advance, so that 'the church may work outside the church'.

Activate a leadership of service

We need to renovate the organizational structure of the church; and instead of having so many hierarchies and leadership positions, we must go back to the leadership of service as a fundamental task replicating the model that Jesus talked about in the gospels.

What is the most vital thing that is effectively working during this quarantine? Serving others! Obtaining food for our brothers who are in economic trouble, getting medical attention for those who are sick, providing transportation for urgent matters... in other words: Serving others! Serving the family, brothers, and sisters in Christ, and neighbors. I believe the ecclesial service networks of the church are the ones better responding to the crisis; those who have and demonstrate a genuine sense of serving others.

Help those in need and doing missionary work

We need to focus on two specific areas when doing the Lord's work: helping those in need and those doing Missionary work.

And for that, we must make true that commitment to serve those in physical and spiritual need. This requires that we believe that everything depends on Him and not on our strength or human capacity.

The same applies to our Missionary work. We must understand that everything depends on Him: if God gives us a lot, we will give a lot to the missionary work; if God gives us little, even that will be enough to do everything He wants us to do.

Make the family a priority

Society has attempted to change the biblical concept of family, replacing it with a new concept: 'modern family', which presents a new definition of couples and a new concept of the relationship parent-child. And it would seem that even Christians are getting used to these concepts, but we must wake up from our numbness of consciousness and have a clear understanding that these concepts offend God. We need to return to the family concept from a biblical perspective and make the family a priority in the programs of our Church if we want to protect and defend God's model for marriage and family.

CHAPTER 16

God's Time to Refine and Cleanse

This time of pandemic is a time for God to cleanse our lives and put us in tune with Him. It is not necessary to be evil or live in sin to lose our communion with God; even those who serve in the church can experience that. During our life path we get things attached to our lives that are not necessarily considered a sin, but end up creating a hard crust of discernment that can eventually dull our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit; therefore, affecting our spiritual health and our capacity to see, hear and understand the will of God for our lives.

We read about this in the book of the prophet Malachi:

*"He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."
Malachi 3:3 (NKJV)*

The prophet is talking about an offering, not of money but an 'offering of justice' meaning the right acts, the correct ways, the right attitudes, decisions, and relationships all according to God's standards. This is the end-result; but, to make this possible, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, God has to cleanse and fine-tune our lives.

The prophet mentions in this verse, a man named Levi who is part of the family of priests, today referred to as ecclesiastics. And he tells Levi and his sons that God will purify them "as gold and silver", and as a result of that purification, they will offer to the Lord an "offering of righteousness". This means that God will apply a correction to their lives so that they truly consecrate themselves to God, and God is glorified.

In the context of this pandemic, the question must be asked: What is it that God wants to purify and refine in His People? in His Church? in our personal lives? I will give you a shortlist of things we all know about, but may have overlooked even though they are harmful to our relationship with God or are affecting our path as we walk with Him.

Consumerism

This is the immoderate tendency to acquire, spend, and consume goods that are not always necessary. Something interesting about being a consumerist is that one does not need to be rich to become one. So, we encounter very wealthy people that are not consumerists and have good financial habits, while on the contrary, we find people who are poor with very few resources that are extreme consumerists, compulsive buyers, and people who tend to go into debt for acquiring unnecessary things.

Consumerism has become part of our culture today. From it surges the concept of the shopping center or 'Mall' as known almost universally. Experts -sociologists and marketers- tell us that "malls" and shopping centers are like the modern Plazas of our cities. People come and go to these Malls not only to shop but also to interact with each other, meet with friends, or just go for a walk. All of this is very enjoyable because these places are mostly safe and very well-conditioned and offer a variety of entertainment and diversion.

So, these shopping Malls are a result of that immoderate tendency to consume, consume, and consume, or put in other words, to buy excessively.

But as God has us under quarantine, we are not free to go shopping and we cannot go like we would normally go to buy clothes, electronic devices or visit restaurants – although the real addicts of consumerism are probably buying online - we should take advantage of this time as an opportunity to seek God and be refined and purified by Him.

Customs and Habits

I want to speak of typical customs and habits -of a country or region- that involve people's way of thinking, of acting, of interacting with one another and of celebrating special occasions, etc., etc. Some of these customs and habits may not be entirely good for us concerning our spiritual life.

We must pay special attention to what God wants to "refine and cleanse" in our customs, traditions, and habits because He is working in our lives during this quarantine. My advice is this: be available to Him. Take advantage of the fact that during this lockdown and social distancing all our customs have become disorganized which works in favor of trying out new habits and new routines.

Regarding our spiritual life, we have been forced to make big adjustments to our time of prayer, to reading the bible, or participating in a church service online as do so many other Christians in the same situation. Our family scope or circle has also suffered many great changes; now we have more time to talk to our spouse, to take care of our children and elderly living at home. This is how God is “refining and cleansing” our customs, but there may be more.

Individualism

Individualism, just as the term indicates, is the tendency to think and act independently. There is a rude saying in my country that people use to declare that they do not need other people or anyone at all: «The ox alone, licks just fine. »

This saying represents those people that are individualists, that do not like to interact or engage with others; people who tend to think and act independently from others, and do not like to subject themselves to anything or anyone. These people want neither rules nor laws, instead, they want to establish their own.

We can see it today during this time of quarantine; people walking in the streets disrespecting standards and guidelines given by the authorities. They go out in the street whenever they please, threatening not only their health but also the health of others. These are people that do not subject themselves to norms and live in constant defense of their autonomy.

However, today, with this pandemic, we have had to assume a new responsibility that has to do with the health of the whole world. It doesn't matter if we are sick or a relative is sick, we should all abide by the rules and procedures established to take care of the health of everyone around us. It is not only our personal or individual health that is important but also other people's health.

We are now responsible for each other; for the benefit and welfare of all. God is dealing with selfish individualism. So, leave behind individualism and become part of a community of solidarity.

Materialism

All these things mentioned previously are interrelated; consumerism, individualism, materialism, and our customs and habits, so one affects or considerably stimulates the other.

Materialism is then the tendency to give the highest level of importance to material things; it's when material things are always above everything else. However, in this time of lockdown, we have learned that there are more important things such as health, family, and biosecurity.

Let me give you an example: in our church, we have magnificent facilities referring to our building; we are proud and blessed for what we have and we are conscious that not all congregations can acquire facilities such as ours. But today, I am in my house, in a small room furnished only by my wife's desk, my work-table and two chairs and that is where I transmit online my daily messages of the Word of God... This is what my pulpit and my church have been reduced to!

But why are all these things happening? God is teaching pastors and the Church itself that material things should not be a priority, but everything spiritual! Spiritual matters must always have priority in the church!

What has been the additional benefit received by the church and congregation? That now our pastors are more accessible to them. It has become easier for the congregation to see us and listen to our advice more assiduously because we have overcome the physical and material barrier and have returned to the basics: sharing the Word of God by the simplest way at our disposal.

In materialism, there is a misconception that there is no other reality but the material reality; relegating to the background ideas and thoughts. That is why, materialism is indifferent to what the Bible says or any philosophy of life constituted with Christian, family, and citizen values; the only thing that matters to materialism is precisely that, materialism; that is its god.

Therefore, be prepared to bring down this kind of idols to which we have made altars in our lives; and after being "refined and cleansed" offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

CHAPTER 17

A Time to Be Prepared

It is of relevant importance that we ask ourselves if this forced lockdown during the pandemic is helping us ensure that we are prepared for the Second Coming of Christ.

Maybe our only thoughts have been in terms of when will it all be over or when will we finally go back to our normal life, leave the quarantine and return to our Jobs and daily activities. But we have to stop and think that maybe God has isolated us in our homes so that we may examine our lives and take a real close look with a spirit of prayer, to understand if we are sufficiently prepared for the Second Coming of Christ. It is a fact that the things that are happening now, in some way, announce the events that will come to happen before the Second Coming of our Lord.

Maybe we are still on time to look for the oil of anointment of the Holy Spirit and prepare ourselves to welcome the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, that is coming for His Church.

The book of Matthew teaches us about The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins:

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were

ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

*"Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."
Matthew 25:1-13 (NKJV).*

The parable tells us of ten virgins that awaited the coming of the bridegroom. "...five of them were wise, and five were foolish..." Christians can be like these virgins, wise or foolish, while waiting for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

The scriptures read: "...Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them..." This means that we may be going to church or serving in a ministry but that doesn't necessarily mean that we are putting oil in our lamp.

The passage also tells us: "...the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps..." That's the way it should be! It makes no sense to have a lamp and not put oil in it.

Then the passage continues: "...But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept..." Just like any human being, when fatigue comes to wear, we let our guard down and people fall asleep. This is human, and normal to a certain point.

Matthew continues: "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. "...And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps, are going out....'" Many Christians have visited the church every Sunday for the last few years but their lamps are still empty. Maybe God is using this pandemic and the lockdown at home, not as a punishment or a disciplinary action but as a favor to His People, to force them to fill their lamps with enough oil. I think that is the reason why we are in quarantine; I think a great revival will come to the Church as a result of what God is already doing in our homes; and when we return to our normal lives, to the lives we were living before, to our church services in the temples, we will be Christians that won't have empty lamps -who come to church bored and yawning or even slumber in the middle of the service, without

participating of the singing, or prayer, and just leaving the temple as empty as when they came in- but instead, we will go back in total revival with our lamps and lives full of the oil given by the Holy Ghost.

And we read on: *"...But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves..."* Because when one fails to make the right calculations, there's nothing left to do but look for the "how, where, or from whom" to get help.

At the risk that something similar to what happened to the foolish virgins happens to us such as: *"while they went to buy, the bridegroom came..."* let us not be caught off guard when the great event of the Second Coming of our Lord occurs.

The best thing that can happen to us is what happened to the wise virgins: *"...and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut..."* In a similar situation, just like with Noah's Ark, after everyone who was expected to enter went inside, the door was also shut. And it was God who did it for we read in the Bible: *"Then the Lord closed the door."* (NLT) The same thing will happen in the case of the Second Coming of the Lord, and there will come the time when He will close the door to the 'waiting room' and it will be crucial that we are at the right side of the door when it gets shut.

Finally, the Parable concludes: *"...Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'" "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."* Even though we do not know the date on the calendar or the exact hour, we can interpret the signs and signals and be mindful that we are getting closer to the Second Coming of our Lord.

What does this parable remind us of regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

Let's see exactly what this Parable of the Ten Virgins reminds us of:

First,

That sometimes we look 'prepared' but we are not

Going every Sunday to church with a Bible under the arm might seem like that person is prepared for the Second Coming of the

Lord. Sitting every week during the church service might also send the same message. Even knowing and singing every Christian song, or listening attentively to the pastor preaching the Word of God might also seem that the person is prepared. But be careful! none of that is evidence that a person is prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

We may seem prepared because we are carrying 'our lamp' with us, but we are not. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we read: *Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom...*" It appears that the ten virgins were prepared; the virgins might have looked similar, even the ten lamps might have looked similar to one another, but whatever was inside, that which one couldn't see, made the difference between them.

Ten lamps in the hands of ten virgins. The difference being that out of those ten lamps, five were empty and five were overflowing with oil. That was the difference.

**Second,
That sometimes we look 'wise' but we are not**

It is stated in the biblical passage: *"...Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps..."* Sometimes we might look like we are wise, but we are not. We might look good and spiritual before others when in reality it's just an appearance of something superficial.

**Third,
That time is not always in our favor**

Someone asked me why did I change my WhatsApp profile picture if I looked good in it. To which I answered: "I am not that person anymore" because the picture was taken many years ago. This only shows us that time does not run in our favor. Maybe I looked good in that picture, but I replaced it with a more recent one to show how I look nowadays. And it is the same with us in terms of time when waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord.

Let's look again at the verses that follow in the parable: *"...But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept..."* They nodded and fell asleep, and did not make

provision for oil. It happens every time: time does not run in anyone's favor and the time of fatigue and exhaustion comes to all of us, a time in which we stop and lower our guard.

**Fourth,
That we must prepare in advance**

We read it in the passage: *"...And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps..."* It generally happens that at a time when we least expect it, the need for something essential arises. Here, in the biblical text, it is midnight when the need for oil to trim the lamps to welcome the bridegroom arises.

But the foolish virgins did not have any oil, they had not prepared ahead of time; their lamps were without oil and at midnight they wouldn't find where to buy it. So, it happens in our Christian lives, the oil must not be acquired at the last minute, it must be sought in advance.

Let's then look at this time of quarantine as an opportunity that God is giving us to seek in advance and fill our empty lamps; that way we can be ready for the day when we welcome our Lord when He comes.

**Fifth,
That anointment cannot be borrowed**

"And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'" Those virgins wanted to participate with borrowed oil and so, they went and tried to get some from the wise virgins who refused to give them some.

This pandemic puts this in evidence: right now, we cannot meet in our temples, we do not have a musical band or singers to lead us in praise or a pastor that preaches in the altar. You must seek for your own supply of oil!

Some may be asking their brothers, church leaders, and pastors for oil; but no one can participate with borrowed oil! So, seek your oil supply for your own good!

**Sixth,
That preparations are not done at the last minute**

Preparations are not done at the last minute. We read it in the passage: *"...And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding;"*

and the door was shut..." The Virgins did not calculate correctly when they would need more oil to meet the bridegroom, so at the last minute they ran out of oil, he came and there was no time to go get more.

This teaches us that we must plan ahead of time and not at the last minute. So, my advice is: If when doing the math, we notice that our lamp is empty, let's promptly seek the oil of God while the signs of His coming are not yet seen in the sky. Let's dedicate ourselves to the search of the Lord, so, that when we return to our congregations, we may be Christians with not only lamps in our hands, but lamps filled with oil.

CHAPTER 18

An altar to God and the withdrawal of the plague

The Prophet Samuel in his second book teaches us how to build an altar to God for the plague to cease amongst his People:

"Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the Lord your God accept you."

*Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; **nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.**" So, David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So, the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel."
2 Samuel 24:21-25 (NKJV).*

It is King David, who says: *"...nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing."* Maybe going to church every Sunday was just another activity in our weekly routine, to the point, where it required no significant cost. So, going to church for one and a half hours to later spend the rest of the day doing a thousand things at home, became an offering with no extra cost.

Now, next to our family at home, and with other fellow Christians connected on social media, or online platforms, we are practically praying every night. And what were we doing

before the Coronavirus at that time at night? We used to watch television —football games, news, series or movies—; or maybe we went out to visit family or friends, or a restaurant or a theater to see a movie. But today we are making an altar to God by presenting offerings and prayer sacrifices that have value before the eyes of God and glorify His name.

This is what David is referring to when he says: *"No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing."* So, David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So, the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel." Therefore, to stop this pandemic that we've had to face, let's follow David's example, and just as it happened in his case, so it will in ours: *"So, the Lord heeded the prayers for the land."*

Let us make an altar and present our prayers to God crying out to Him in different ways: in repentance, seeking mercy, receiving His comfort, and speaking the prophetic word of His forgiveness and restoration.

How can we build an altar to God?

This is the big question: How can we build an altar to God? What elements are needed to build it so the epidemic we face ceases? Where are the fire and wood to burn our sacrifices? I am not speaking of a physical altar, but a spiritual one. Next, you will find answers to these questions.

It is in the Lord's prayer found in the book of Matthew – the model prayer that the Lord Jesus gave us, a legacy to his disciples of all times-, where we find answers to these questions.

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For

Yours are the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."
Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

Taking the Lord's prayer as a premise, we can identify elements to build an altar to our God:

One, Exalting God's name

Before presenting a list of requests and supplications we must exalt God. Exalting God is transcendental when building an altar. That is why the first thing we do in church during our services is to pray and exalt God's name with praise and worship. Those are the first things we must do as told in the Lord's prayer:

"In this manner, therefore, pray..." It is Jesus Christ teaching us how to pray. And in His prayer, He tells us to exalt God's name: *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name..."* With this sentence, He is telling us that we are not praying to a strange god, but to one who we can call "Our Father". It also indicates the confidence with which we can approach God, who is Father to us all.

And what do we do when we approach Our Father? Exalt Him! We read: *"Hallowed be Your name"*. What do we usually do when we meet with our earthly parents? We tell them: Oh daddy, I love you! Mom, you are so pretty! Those are the first words that come out of our mouths: words of exaltation. So, we must do the same with our Heavenly Father: Exalt Him! Exalt His name!

Two, Submitting to God's Will

This is one of the elements needed when building an altar to God and it is something we must seek and rummage because it is possible that, for a long time, we have not submitted to the will of God.

After exalting God's name, the submission of our will to the divine will must come. Exalting God's name brings about submission to Him.

We continue reading in the Lord's Prayer: *"Your kingdom come..."* This phrase has no argument attached to it; it is a basic phrase, formed by three simple words, but is direct and

does not admit justification or negotiation. Some may wish to negotiate with God to submit to His Will, but submitting to God's will cannot be the object of bartering or bargaining with God. We must simply learn to say: "*Your kingdom come.*"

And the text continues: "...*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" Just like everyone submits to God's will in Heaven, so must we here on earth. When it says "on earth" it refers to our lives, our desires, ambitions, and interests; our projects and dreams also. Your kingdom come and Your will be done in our lives must be our constant prayer.

Three, Depending on God for our needs

"*Give us this day our daily bread...*" This is another element with which to build an altar to God: The element of human and personal needs.

When we don't know how to pray, we just prepare a list like we do when going to the supermarket so we don't forget anything; and with the list in our hand go through each of the aisles picking up in our basket the goods we need. But this is not the way prayer should be. It is more about depending on God and the conviction we must have regarding the one who provides for us each day.

God is the one behind our boss; it may seem like it is not so, but it is. Maybe we took an exam to apply for a job, and we were given the position; but let's not fool ourselves, even though it was the employer who said yes, it was God who provided for us.

God is the one who gives us not only the breath of life but also the food on our table; and that should be a reason to express our gratitude to the Lord. That is why we must use that dependency on Him as a rock to build an altar to His name and His glory.

Four, Repenting of our sins and forgiving others

"*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...*" Jesus speaks here about repentance and forgiveness.

We must learn to say: «Forgive me Lord, my debt with you; the times when I did not listen to your voice; the times when I made my own decisions when my attitude was not right when I said things I shouldn't have said when I was angry when I

should've been calm when I threatened instead of advising. Please forgive my debt for all my errors. »

But this is not where it all ends. We must also say: —as we forgive our debtors—. To whom is this part of the prayer referring? It's referring to those who have offended us. We must pray for strength to forgive them.

How many Christians who pray every day have nested in their hearts a lack of forgiveness, and resentment against other people in their hearts? — How can we ask God to forgive our great debt if we have not forgiven the small debt that someone owes you? In the Lord's prayer these two statements are linked to one another: "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" This is the only way God's forgiveness works: if we are willing to forgive those who have offended us!

Five, Seeking God during the fight against the evil one

We all have temptations and we all have to face the enemy, but we must not fight temptation and the evil one with our strength but with the help from God.

When I speak of temptations, I am not talking only about those typical conducts referring to moral things, but also to all those things that impel us to leave God's project for our lives and drives us away from the Lord's guidance. We cannot fight temptation alone; neither can we fight the evil one alone.

The Lord's prayer continues to say: "*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*" Be careful about how you interpret this statement. God does not tempt anyone; neither is He tempted by evil. In another translation of the Bible, this sentence reads: "*And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.*" (NLT).

As a conclusion, we can say that God wants us to build an altar where we can look for His favor. So, just like in the story of David, let's build an altar to pray to Him to stop this pandemic.

Third Part
NEW WORLD
ORDER

CHAPTER 19

Coronavirus Altering the World Order

Life has been altered by a hundred percent. In other words, human life has had a total turnaround. Our activities have changed, and we have had to adapt, in a certain way, to new customs; production, commerce, and industrial activities have stopped; even the Church has experienced a profound and severe impact. The world order has definitely been upset! A microscopic virus has been enough to turn the world upside down, "feet up." Everything has changed! Everything has been altered!

Everything happening in the world today is already described in the Bible. In other words, what is happening is not something that should surprise us entirely — it surprises us in the sense that in our generation we have never had such an experience; but we should not be surprised in the sense that this scenario is familiar, because we have already read it in the Bible, and not once, but multiple times. So, this pandemic, and all disruption of order that it has brought, is characterized and reflected in the Bible.

Let's read a text in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 24 that we probably have already read or have already heard comments on it, recently:

*"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places."
Matthew 24:6-7 (NKJV)*

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass..." These words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps we are surprised to one degree or another, but in Heaven, there are no surprises. In heaven there is no crisis, in heaven, there are only plans.

"...but the end is not yet..." This should be read more carefully because some are claiming that we are entering the Great Tribulation; which is not so. In particular, I think that this Covid-19 pandemic is not even one of the signs in Matthew 24, but rather a kind of precursor or indicator, a reminder or sample of what is on the way, later on.

"...For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places." That is the true sign, not the Coronavirus specifically! What we are experiencing is just a reminder or a sample that the words written in Matthew 24, without a doubt, are going to happen. And we have seen with this small sample called Covid-19, that the world can go into a much larger, much greater form of collapse. But as the Bible says: controlled by the power of God.

Now, given the scenario of global alteration that we are experiencing, consider this: «Henry Kissinger, Former Secretary of State of the USA published a note in the Wall Street Journal, entitled: "The Coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order". In his opinion, "when the COVID-19 pandemic is over many country's institutions will be perceived as having failed. The crisis effort, however vast and necessary, must not crowd out the urgent task of launching a parallel enterprise for the transition to the post-coronavirus order." » This statement is extremely important today, as it indicates the intention to create a new world order, a new Post-Covid-19 system.

We then see that the 'masters' of the world also perceive that something is happening, and point out that the world will never be the same after Coronavirus, and that conditions must be created for another kind of world order for mankind.

And in case this idea is not clear enough, he goes on to explain « "...No country, not even the United States, can in a purely national effort overcome the virus. Addressing the necessities of the moment must ultimately be coupled with a global collaborative vision and program. »

Next, I will express my perceptions about this 'global collaboration program':

Number 1

The first thing humanity is crying out for - countries large and small, rich, and poor - is a massive vaccination program. The hope that this pandemic can be controlled is that the long-

awaited vaccine is approved and that there is a massive vaccination program worldwide.

But what is the main implication of a massive vaccination program? That it will generate conditions for the monitoring and control of the world population because all countries will need to verify who has been vaccinated and who hasn't to know who is already immune to the Coronavirus and in so doing ensure they do not have more infections.

Number 2

Another implication that I see from this 'global collaboration program' is a necessary sanitary control at airports and borders, through the installation of new control mechanisms and new devices, in this case, of biosecurity.

Where did those heavy and annoying controls at airports and customs come from? Of the constant terrorist threats that nations experience. However, now, the controls will not be for bombs or weapons, but for health control reasons.

This will be an excuse to make it difficult for certain human groups to move from country to country. That is to say that groups not considered welcomed in some countries, due to race, ideology, religion, and other reasons, will find it more difficult to travel or migrate.

Number 3

The third implication in this 'global collaboration program' is the use of health immunity passports. Some countries are already proposing it, although the idea is taking time to be assimilated. Until now, the passport is only a general identification document containing name and surname, place and date of birth. In other words, the basic information of each individual.

But these health immunity passports, even though they are currently facing resistance, will ultimately be accepted by countries in the name of biosecurity - another of the cries of the world population; And if the idea is not accepted in the end, it will surely lead to what is known today as 'nano-chips'.

'Nano-chips' are implants that are placed under the skin and are the size of a grain of rice - Denmark and other countries in that part of the world are already implementing them. In that electronic implant under the skin, people will have information like their identification or security number, the code to enter their homes, credit card numbers, and possibly some other

information in terms of health and security, and who knows what else.

So, there we go; It is no longer about something that is going to happen 'one day', but something that is already happening: The 'nano-chip' already exists, and is already being implemented in greatly developed nations of Europe.

Number 4

All of the above will contribute to the creation of a new global economic policy created to solve the complex economic crisis caused by the Coronavirus. Why? Because the economic contraction unleashed by the Coronavirus, due to the speed, scale, and global projection that it has had, has been different from everything known to mankind before - in terms of mobilization, social distancing, closing of businesses and companies, public health, and so on.

These last conditions have caused the stagnation of the world's economy; and have produced such an economic impact that countries are entering a risky situation, which can lead to total bankruptcy.

Therefore, a new global economic policy will have to be defined because the economic crisis of the countries will not be solved with a loan here there, nor with the intervention of the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. And the experts are already working on that.

Number 5

And, finally, the endpoint of all those actions will be the creation of a New World Order.

And what does this new order imply for the world? It implies a 'supra-government' that directs national governments from a global dome of authority. It also implies the control of the development and the administration of artificial intelligence and digital technology. It also implies the development of what experts are already calling a 'new social contract'. What is this "new social contract"? It is a contract that will seek a new balance between power and legitimacy from governments as well as citizens. It implies a concept of 'new state', supposedly to satisfy the fundamental needs of people, that is security, order, economic well-being, justice, etc., under the premise that nations cannot satisfy those needs on their own.

A final warning from Mr. Kissinger in his statement was: "If this post-coronavirus world order does not come true, the world could catch fire." And it refers to outbreaks of social discontent; and we already know all that can bring.

Now, how does the Bible respond to all this? The answer is found in a single text, a powerful and broad text that covers the spectrum of all we've been talking about. We find it in the First Letter to the Thessalonians, written by Apostle Paul:

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you, yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore, comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing."
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (NKJV)

Let's carefully review what we are told here:

"... That when they say peace and security ..." Attention! This is what the new system will supposedly offer, order in the world for the good of all.

" But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief...." The exhortation is, to not be surprised.

"... Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober..." Keep constant in our search for God, so that we walk soberly and lucidly.

"... Because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to achieve salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ ..." —we are not going to inherit the wrath that will be unleashed on mankind.

"...who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." So, whether we are alive or dead, when Jesus Christ returns, we can be with Him forever.

"...Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." Dear brothers and sisters, I am sure that there is approval in heaven that we speak of these issues because it is part of our preparation; that is why Paul says: *"edify one another, just as you are doing."*

CHAPTER 20

Coronavirus, The Basis for a New World Order

In the battle against Coronavirus, what some call a 'real-time experiment' is being carried out without even our realizing it. This 'real-time experiment' will define which political system - the authoritarian and taxing or the democratic one subject to consensus and deliberations - will respond better to the pandemic, as a guideline for reacting to future emergencies, which we are already expected to live from here on ahead?

Let's see what is happening in the world, to give dimension to the question we are asking ourselves. The world is on pause; true. The people under lockdown, the streets empty, the economy slowed down. But this pause, as well as vertiginous, is also intriguing; it is a pause charged with questions because nobody knows what will come next. Governments, just like society as a whole, are alarmed because they sense that this is just one of many events that could repeatedly happen in the future, and no one knows what will come next. When the Coronavirus is defeated, what else will we find? What else will once again subject human beings to confinement, and subject them to this paralysis in productive capacity and economies?

For the moment, this is the picture: Drastic changes — which perhaps not all of us are aware of. For example, all over the world restrictions are being placed on the freedom of citizens; in fact, quarantine is mandatory. However, no democratic society would otherwise tolerate an imposition as such; no democratic society would accept that a government or a ruler mandated: "Everyone must stay at home, nobody must go out. The restaurants, hotels, markets must close; people will only be allowed to go out on certain days and times. " Normally, in a context of democracy, nobody would tolerate that, but it is already happening, there are restrictions on individual liberties.

In other words, public safety is overriding individual freedom and privacy. But the funny thing is that in many countries people are willingly accepting and supporting it. In other words, people are willing to exchange their freedom and privacy, for control, and surveillance. Because there is surveillance, not only physical but also technological. For

example, in several Asian countries, the use of technology has been key to curbing down the pandemic. People have given up their personal information, and allowed monitoring of their location, for the sake of everyone's well-being and of public health; then, later, when people are vaccinated, controls will exist over who has been vaccinated and who has not. Countries are talking about a bio-health passport, that is, a passport that keeps a record of vaccines and any other data of interest in the biosecurity area.

This is what is happening in the world; it is an almost absolute control over the human race. And we are perceiving it as something normal. Of course, it may be necessary; but it does not mean that we are not responsible for considering what will happen next, if governments become addicted to being in control, or having the power to restrict individual liberties in such a way.

Something that should not go unnoticed, is that the decisions that are being made about public health are essentially political. They are not necessarily scientific, but rather politically oriented. Why? Because governments know very well that they are under the rigorous examination of the population; they will be judged regarding their management of the pandemic. Besides many governments are using this crisis to gain more power; for example, the Chinese, the Iranian, the Russian, and other governments as well.

Questions that arise due to the current situation in the world

Now, there are questions on this subject that have remained in the air, and it is convenient to consider and answer them.

1. Are authoritarian government models going to be the big winners after the pandemic?
2. Has the coronavirus placed democracy and the free world in crisis? Could it be that after these severe restrictions the world will no longer be the same? Could it be that with the coronavirus we lost liberties that we will not get back?

3. Has a threshold been crossed in the use of technology, and in the future, will we have to accept that we are being monitored regardless of where we are, what we are doing, or who we are with?
4. Have we entered a new type of society with greater social control and widespread use of digital surveillance?
5. Would a new model of government be imposed with the capacity to control and restrict the population for the sake of the "common welfare"?

I want to give a biblical answer to all those scenarios presented to you in these questions; I will use a single biblical passage, in the book of Psalms chapter 2:

*"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You. **Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance,** and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*
Psalms 2:1-12 (NKJV)

First, a comment on verse 8: It is God speaking, and saying: "... Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance." This seems like a conversation between the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ; then, in verse 9, He adds that Jesus Christ will be given "... as a possession ... the ends

of the earth" which we know will happen at the time of His Second Coming.

Then, in verses 10 to 12, we see that God turns to the rulers and powers of the earth, and tells them: "*Now, therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*"

My comments to this passage of Scripture, as a divine response to what is happening in the world today, are these:

In verse 1, we read that "*nations mutiny and people think vain things,*" and they turn against God. This is the irony that we are living with human corruption: plotting, conspiring, scheming evil.

In verse 2, it says twice that "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together" against God and His Anointed; he says it twice. This has to do with how nations, and people led by kings and rulers, channel their hostility against the Lord and Jesus Christ. Let me tell you that the nations, after this pandemic, are not going to be closer to God; on the contrary, they will be further away from Him. This pandemic does not have the power to make nations repent of their sins; so, we must continue to preach the Gospel to every creature, so that Christ may come for his Church and establish His Kingdom.

In verse 3, we hear the kings and rulers of the nations proclaiming against the Lord, "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us." Thus, the nations regard God, His laws, His regulations, His government, and His authority as a negative bond, which must be broken. It was recently said by Andrew Cuomo, New York's State Governor: «It is not God, nor religion, nor prayers, that can solve this! we do not believe in that. It is Science that will solve it." This is how the nations seek to break the bonds with the Lord. It is the mutinous humanity that, instead of accepting the bonds of God's love, consider them bonds that enslave, bonds that must be broken and discarded.

Verse 4 says that God "*shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision;*" those kings and rulers. This is serious, it is strong: God will laugh and mock them; And then, it says in verse 5, "He shall speak to them in His wrath and distress them

in His deep displeasure." That is, God will speak and act in the manifestation of His anger. It should be remembered that God's anger is perfectly balanced; God's wrath is ruled and equitable. God does not lose His temper as human beings do.

Verses 6 to 8 refer to Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, as the King of kings, as the Lord of the nations of the earth.

Verse 9 points out how Jesus Christ will rule the nations: "you will break them ... you will crush them"; These are strong words, but they express the supreme sovereignty and might of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus Christ is going to confront the greatest powers in this world, and He is going to break them, and He is going to crumble them.

In verses 10-12, we see a surprising attitude in them; because having read that Jesus Christ is going to break down and crumble their rebellion against Him, these verses 10 to 12 have a different tone. Instead of immediate judgment, the Lord and His Anointed show their mercy as an opportunity for repentance; God speaks to them with love, despite being totally against Him; and offers mankind five commandments and guidelines for turning to God:

- Be prudent (v.10).
- Admit a warning (v.10).
- Serve the Lord with fear (v.11).
- Rejoice with trembling (v.11).
- Honor the Son (v.12).

We know that mankind will not respond to this divine call, and rather, will become even more proud, which will further affirm the need for the prompt return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

CHAPTER 21

The Post COVID-19 era

Facing the new Post-COVID-19 era, I have four questions with which I intend to approach this issue:

1. Is it true that when we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will be better people, more caring, more generous?
2. What type of society will emerge after this pandemic; will we undergo some kind of evolution or metamorphosis?
3. Will countries become united or isolated?
4. Are surveillance tools going to be used to protect citizens, or rather to oppress them?

These are interesting questions because humanity will enter a new era, the Post-Covid-19 era. Mankind will not be the same and societies will evolve in an accelerated manner.

On this, let us listen to the voice of the expert, the Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari, author of the book "Sapiens, a Brief History of Humankind": The decisions people and governments take in the next few weeks will probably shape the world for years to come. They will fast-forward historical processes. Decisions that in normal times could take years of deliberation are authorized in a matter of hours. Harari warned, in an article published in The Financial Times newspaper. "Surveillance technologies that are being produced at breakneck speed can be put into practice without adequate development or public debate," the writer points out.

He goes on to say: "In the wrong hands they can be used by governments to institute total surveillance regimes. Let them collect data on everyone and then make decisions in an obscure way. In Israel, for example, the government has increased the power of the secret services - not just the health authorities - to access data such as people's location; this has also been tested in South Korea. In China, which has one of the most sophisticated surveillance operations in the world, facial recognition has been used to fine citizens who skip quarantine. This may be justified in the short term, in the middle of an emergency like this, but in their view, there are risks if these measures become permanent."

The comments of this Israeli expert immediately lead us to the question: What will the Post-Covid-19 society be like?

To give you an answer, I will refer to an eschatological and prophetic biblical text, which speaks of the days that we are living. We find it in the book of Matthew chapter 24, a portion of the scriptures that is already partially fulfilled:

"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

Matthew 24:10, 12 (NKJV)

With these basic biblical verses, I will give you some answers to the question: what will the Post-Covid-19 society be like?

The Post-Covid-19 Global Society will likely be:

Number 1

A society with strong measures of individual control. This means that there will be greater immigration controls, greater financial controls, greater controls on political and religious affiliation, and so on. In short, strong individual control measures.

Number 2

A more intolerant, less supportive, more racist, and repressive society. Very likely, new rules of coexistence will be imposed based on the racial, political, and religious background.

Number 3

A humanistic society that puts human beings above God will usurp the place that belongs solely to God. A society that will embrace a belief system centered on the principle that intelligence and human needs can be satisfied without having to accept the existence of God and the preaching of religions.

Now, what is our response, I mean, that of the believers in Jesus Christ? We find it in this same Chapter 24 of the Book of Matthew.

*"And because **lawlessness** will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who **endures** to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be **preached** in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."
Matthew 24:12-14 (NKJV)*

I highlight three words in this passage: "**lawlessness**", "**endure**" and "**preached**"; because there is a connection between them, and a whole equation can be built with these three words.

"And because evil has multiplied, the love of many will grow cold." It is the Lord Jesus who exposes that love will grow cold because of so much evil in the world, and because of the inhuman attitude of "save yourself if you can" or "only the strongest survive."

What will happen in a Post-Covid-19 society? First, the dehumanization of systems. The greater the controls, the greater the actions of discrimination for different reasons - origin, race, religion, and so on. And the love for human beings will grow cold, and then we will begin to be treated and to treat others as "things". What do you do with things? You assign them 'barcodes', and different prices. Right now, we have an identification number, the "ID", as it is called in English-speaking countries; but when society becomes even more dehumanized, human beings will be considered just 'things', and will have a type of barcode as well. Well, that is the product of the "**lawlessness**" or wickedness that is mentioned in the verses we read.

*"But he who **endures** to the end will be saved."* We need to start running the race of Christian Faith, as it should be. It is in the race of Christian Faith where you have to learn to assert yourself and persevere to the end. Stop being an unpredictable and fluctuating believer, one who sometimes follows Jesus' ways and sometimes the ways of the world; a believer with 'crooked' ethics, who does business without hesitating to lie to achieve his purpose, or pays and/or receives bribes. If we run

this race of Christian Faith, it will become clear that we have given our entire life to God.

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be **preached** in all the world..."* We must preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, to all nations.

Let us note the connection between these three words: The "**lawlessness**" or wickedness reigning in the world meaning institutional, financial, social, and political evil, and so on. The answer to that is to "**endure**" or persevere in the Word of God. And "**preach**" the blessed Word. In short: in the face of evil, we have to persevere; and take a stand next to the Lord and begin to preach the Gospel. This will cause a great revival!

We do not believe that Christianity will go through a stage of darkness, after this pandemic. On the contrary, a great revival is coming! And already the news is reporting that Christianity is growing at a rapid pace in this quarantine. Many people are coming to know Jesus; many unstable believers are devoting their lives to the Lord. Something powerful is happening! And a great revival is coming! It is not possible that the Gospel of the Kingdom is being preached throughout the world, as a witness to the nations, without Christians being revived in the Spirit. I can see it: Evangelistic and Missionary work are going to grow!

CHAPTER 22

Coronavirus and the New World Order

I want to approach this issue by reading from the book of the prophet Habakkuk.

*"O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid;
O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years!
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy."
Habakkuk 3:2 (NKJV).*

This is a prayer that has prophetic projection valid now for our current time and life scenario.

The first thing we find is Prophet Habakkuk moved by the Word of God. We read the prophet, saying to Jehovah: "***I have heard your word.***" This is not a trivial or ordinary statement. Why? Because in this era of the Coronavirus it is crucial that we hear the Word of God; that we make sure we are hearing the voice of God, and not just the voice of the news, not just the voice of our concerns, not just the voice of our fears. We have to know how to say like the prophet Habakkuk: "O Lord, I have heard your word."

And so, the prayer continues: "**And I was afraid.**" Why fear? Because the Word of God is not only a matter of rejoicing, of hallelujahs and shouting for joy; sometimes the Word of God comes at a historical juncture accompanied by uncertainty; sometimes it moves us out of our comfort zone. We are experiencing this now; it gives the impression that we are on the verge of events —mentioned in the Bible—, related to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth. And then, we are overwhelmed by fear when we receive words from God, in circumstances like the one we are experiencing... circumstances with a pre-apocalyptic appearance.

The prophet continues saying: "*...revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years, make it known ...*" This part of his prayer should bring us hope; hope that God will show His strong arm to save us and that the wonderful testimony of His power will reach us in the 21st century, during this global Pandemic called Covid-19. We are witnessing how

God is making His work known again, just as it happened in the time of the prophet Habakkuk, and other prophets as well.

Finally, Habakkuk concludes by pleading: "*In wrath remember mercy.*" This also applies to us, today; we also cry out for His divine mercy during these days of planetary death caused by Coronavirus. It is a prayer that all of us should say every day during this Pandemic.

Four Stages of the Coronavirus

There are four stages that mark the start of a new era for humankind since the Coronavirus pandemic started. Humankind will not be the same after the Coronavirus. While this quarantine will not be permanent, of course it won't, humanity will no longer remain the same. It seems that the Coronavirus is the event that removes the pin and opens the door to a series of new events for the human race that have to do with the preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

First Stage, The Massive Contagion

We are precisely at that stage. Every day the media inform us the number of new people infected for the different cities and countries of the world; unfortunately, it also informs us about the number of deceased people. We are in the stage of the massive spread of the disease.

But the end of this stage won't define the end of the epidemic. We simply will move on to the next stage.

Second Stage, The Financial Crisis

Once the issue of contagion is resolved with the expected vaccine being applied and the number of infected people is controlled, we enter the stage of the financial crisis. What will happen in this second stage? The economy, industry, and commerce are going to slow down. The collapse of companies and businesses will come. Today, we already hear the clamor in different countries: companies and businesses fear having to face bankruptcy and having to lay off their employees.

The financial sector is also going to be affected meaning the stock market and the banking sector. The means of production

are going to be altered; also, transportation, product distribution, imports, and exports. The sectors that work with food, health, and services will also be seriously affected, not to mention the labor market, in which thousands and thousands of jobs have already been lost in the world.

All this means that the world is going to go into a deep recession; it means that from now on we should adopt a more frugal, economical lifestyle; it means that we should not spend money on things that are not absolutely necessary; It means that we should not waste food, that is, no longer preparing those opulent meals where a third of the food prepared is thrown away because it was not consumed; it means that we should not waste car fuel or keep so many lights on at home, etc., etc. Hence, we have to become quite prudent and moderate in our expenditures. This implies a much more simplified lifestyle.

How do we apply this to the context of the Church? During my work sessions, via videoconference, with the pastors of our organization, I have encouraged them to enter a phase of consolidating their ministries to be able to work in a weakened and badly battered economy.

Of course, this cannot be solved by hiding our money under the mattress; let's forget about that! We, believers, know that our lives are protected by the Lord, that our safety is guaranteed; and that now more than ever, He will be our protector and provider. God is never going to abandon His sheep! He has said that no one will snatch His sheep out of His hand; and that's something we can hold on to with conviction.

Third Stage, The Social Crisis

Then the social crisis will come. Why a social crisis? Because this experience of a global pandemic with its terrible consequences and spin-offs, is hitting the life model we have known and led; our socioeconomic level has been trampled, forcing negative and severe changes in our lives.

We already know that we can no longer go out at will, or at the hour of the day we want and we can't do what we like anymore. In the capital of Honduras, where I live, there is a specific day to go to the supermarket, the bank, the drugstore, and gas station, depending on the last digit of your ID number; this has generated an abrupt change in people's lives. But it is

difficult to fully control the population; it is then that the control mechanisms, and even repression, over the population emerge; provoking outbreaks of violence that no one wants to see in our streets.

Our prayer to the Lord, on this stage, must be that we do not reach a level of violence that cannot be controlled; it is one thing to be locked up at home, and quite another thing the discomfort in the population that may cause social disorder and violent behavior.

Fourth Stage, The New World Order

All of the above stages will create the conditions for the development of a New World Order. It is worth our time to ensure we understand what this New World Order is.

About the New World Order

The New World Order is not something that is going to be created overnight, of course not. But four actions will be carried out in the world, step by step and in due course.

First Action, Reordering World Geopolitics

The New World Order is all about the reordering of world geopolitics, with a small core of the most powerful nations at the head of a worldwide confederate government. For what purpose? To lead all nations including those smaller nations that will have to subordinate due to economic reasons. So, this New World Order begins with a search movement by the most powerful countries on earth to control other nations therefore requiring a reordering of world geopolitics.

Second Action, Control of new technologies and artificial intelligence

We are going to see, that small core of powerful nations looking to exercise greater control over the development and administration of artificial intelligence and new technologies. Let's take a look at how much freedom we have available today; At present we do not have to ask anyone for permission to transmit the Word of God on digital platforms and social

networks. But that freedom is coming to an end. How long before that happens? I do not know. It can take months, or it can take years, I don't know, but I do know that there will be greater and perhaps even total control over the development of new technologies and artificial intelligence because this is vital to control the entire world population.

Third Action, Absolute control of mass media

Today, there exists more mass media than we can access, and even more than we are aware of. But this will also change; someday soon, there will exist an absolute control over news given and the content allowed the population to see. There will be absolute control of the mass media. This may take a few years, but we are going to address it, step by step.

Fourth Action, Control of the world population through the restriction of benefits and migration

This control of the world population will be done through two mechanisms: (1) A rigid migration control mechanism. Shortly it will be very difficult to travel, especially to certain countries. Immigration controls will become quite strict and may have racist, religious, and ideological overtones. The background and origin of an individual will be decisive when passing through these migration control mechanisms. (2) A restrictive access to loans and other benefits for the population. A mechanism that will control who is given a loan and who is not regardless of requirements fulfilled; who is granted benefits and who is not according to a new set of standards that may have ideological, political, racial, and religious reasons. A mechanism that will control who is given a loan and who is not; who is granted benefits and who is not according to a new set of standards that may have ideological, political, racial, and religious reasons.

We are beginning to notice how all of these things are happening already, with the crisis and emergency of the Coronavirus, an issue much broader than just pertaining public health; the Coronavirus is also a global security issue; it is a matter of economic, social and political impact; it is a matter of human survival.

This will move the world forward to other unknown stages, without anyone or anything capable of stopping it; the Bible has already warned us about these things, so let's be vigilant!

CHAPTER 23

Christians and the New World Order

The New World Order is part of the new Post-Coronavirus reality. Conditions have been created in the world for it. The most powerful nations showed such fragility in handling this pandemic - let alone the smallest nations - that the idea prevails among them that it is necessary to create a superstructure, a secure scaffolding, for the management and control of the world crisis. In other words, a New World Order.

I want to begin approaching this issue by quoting the words of Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State. At the age of 96, he published a note in the "Wall Street Journal" titled "The coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order." I quote his words: "When the Covid-19 pandemic is over, many countries' institutions will be perceived as having failed. Whether this judgment is objectively fair is irrelevant. The reality is the world will never be the same after the coronavirus." Henry Kissinger, in his globalist style, questions the ability of the Americans to govern themselves, a question that can be extended to the rest of the nations. Kissinger gives the example of the year 1944, in which a new post-war global order began to be built; year of the birth of institutions such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the year where the foundation for the creation of the United Nations (UN) was laid. Kissinger goes on to say in his note: "Now, as in late 1944, there is a sense of inchoate danger, aimed not at any particular person, but striking randomly and with devastation."

I also want to bring up what is known as the "ID 2020" initiative - "ID" is identity, and "2020" referring to the year 2020—. Someone who comments on this initiative says: «This is a dark plan between elitist companies, who prepare the ground for the arrival of a unified, technocratic government, based on the application of control through technology; since that is how they are going to control us all, through technology.»

I am concerned in this regard, and I have expressed it to priests and pastors that do missionary work. I have recently told them: "Do not think that we will always have internet

available to preach the Gospel. When I was young there was no internet and none of all the gadgets and digital devices available today existed. The Word of God was still preached in distant areas in the countryside to people who did not have access to churches through short-wave radios. So, let's find out where to get short-wave radios, that is, transmitters and a few receivers to put at strategic points in our countries.

To continue reading the comments on this ID 2020 initiative, I quote: "The first step would be to create a digital identity with your biometric digits where essential data would be stored; such as identity number (ID), virtual wallet, driver's license, medical history, etc." With this, we enter a very dangerous territory because our rights, such as having access to a doctor or shopping at the supermarket, would be linked to the condition of having to accept this new form of artificial intelligence control ... Bill Gates, one of the richest men on the planet and one of the promoters of this initiative, has revealed the following: "Eventually we will have some "digital certificates" which would be used to show who'd recovered, been tested and ultimately who received a vaccine." The digital certificates that Gates refers to are the '*Quantum Tattoos*' that are implanted in the human being.

Well, after seeing the outlook of what is already happening in the context of this pandemic, we must ask ourselves how Christians should respond to this great proposal and project towards the New World Order. Let's look for answers in the Bible.

How should Christians respond to the New World Order?

Number One, We must refuse to be controlled by electronic mechanisms inserted in our body

Certainly, I don't know when such control will be implemented; but whoever believes that it will happen two centuries from now, is very wrong! This type of mechanism is already applied to pets, in case they get lost; a chip is placed under the pet's skin, and if the pet goes for a walk away from home and gets

lost, the locator finds it and owners can go pick it up solving the whole matter.

Now, what should our response be as Christians? Refuse to be controlled by electronic mechanisms inserted into your body.

Let's consider what the apostle John says in the book of Revelation — a book that has precise instructions for us, as well as words of hope:

"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads..."

Revelation 13:16 (NKJV)

And he points it out as something that will happen in the days of the antichrist when a system of world government will be fully established. So, when this control begins, we will have to receive divine guidance on how to avoid it. But for now, be aware of this warning in the Bible on what to say yes to, and what to say no to, in this new Post-Coronavirus era.

Number Two,

We must simplify our financial operations and consider living in a 'simple economy' system

We have to simplify our operations in financial and business matters, buying and selling activities, as well as administrative processes; all of this, to avoid the heavy controls that will be enforced. As of now, we ignore how far these controls will put pressure on us. So, we must learn to operate with very simple financial and administrative structures.

In the context of the church, I am telling the pastors of our CCI movement: "Even today when we are still under quarantine, let us set out to promote three characteristics for our churches: compact, simple, and pastoral. (1) Compact, work only the most basic activities in our ministries. (2) Simple, stop worrying about lights, audio, chairs, carpets, and buildings. (3) Pastoral, put your emphasis on the people and give priority to the care of the sheep.

In our church, during this time of lockdown, people are happier because they now have more contact with their pastors through the internet and they feel cared for and protected. The pastors are praying with them every day, teaching them the Bible every day, and giving them directives every day. So, an

increased pastoral action has been achieved highly focused on the people.

Returning to the topic of simplifying our financial operations and administrative processes, let's read an additional text in the book of Revelation.

"And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Revelation 13:17 (NKJV)

"That no one could buy or sell ..." This is what this 'new system' is going to try to do. That means that businesses and operations — even church operations — the larger they are, the more complex they will be. Therefore, we must seek to make our operations as simple as possible to be able to move more easily and less visible to the system.

Number Three, We must refuse total and absolute obedience to the system

We must refuse total and absolute obedience to the system, in terms of using obedience to 'the institution', as a barter; that is, to obtain favors from that world government.

We have to refuse blind obedience. Although it is clear to us Christians that we must honor authority because according to apostle Paul it has been established by God; as citizens, we must obey what the government authorities dictate, with no discussion on our part; but it is also valid that we must refuse obedience in exchange for favors and privileges, especially when this implies denial or postponement of our faith and obedience to God and His Word.

And when that system wants to take us to the point of having to decide between the Word of God - which expresses His Will - and what 'the system' says, we must be clear to whom we must obey at any cost and to whom we owe our loyalty; and the choice will have to be the Lord and His Holy Word.

Let's consider what Apostle John tell us in another passage of the book of Revelation:

"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.""
Revelation 14:9-10 (NKJV)

Reading on: *"If anyone worships the beast and his image..."* we may argue that we do not worship any beast or any image, but the reading continues: *"... and receives the mark on his forehead or in his hand..."* Apostle John is talking about a device that will be implanted under the skin to control people and their activities such as doing business, paying bills, and buying and selling.

And finally, he adds: *"he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."* We have been warned!

Number Four, We must simply wait our turn in the Lord

The antichrist and the system that will be implemented worldwide that will initially bring 'peace and security' to earth, solving financial, political, and social problems will not last long.

So, we Christians just have to wait our turn because victory is guaranteed for us. We read it about again in the book of Revelation:

"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God."
Revelation 15:2 (NKJV)

Christians are described as "standing" on a sea of glass, worshiping God. And it is also said of us that we will have achieved victory over the beast, over his image, over his mark,

over the number of his name ... that we will stand in total victory before the throne of our God. So, we just have to wait our turn.

CHAPTER 24

The concept of a New World Order

The concept I want to refer to is mainly taken from the Bible. The first thing I want to clarify is that this is not something new. The search for an order without God with human beings at the center of everything has clear marks and traces easily detected; The book of Genesis tells us about a story which can be seen as strong evidence of what I am saying.

*"Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a **city**, and a **tower** whose **top** is in the **heavens**; let us make a **name** for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."*
Genesis 11:3-4 (NKJV)

The context here is that human beings come from a global hecatomb: the universal flood, which wiped out the human race, except for Noah and his family, and the animals that, according to their species, were preserved in the ark of salvation. And they gathered in an assembly and decided as follows: *"Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower, whose top reaches the heavens; and let's make a name for ourselves..."* Take note that this is not just a construction project. It's not!

By highlighting some words in the passage, and putting them together, we find the deep meaning of their proposal: "city", "tower", "cusp", "sky", "name". Oh, such words!

It all starts with the project of building a city; that is normal in the life and history of mankind. But they wanted a special building in that city; they wanted to build a tower there. But the tower they wanted was not just any tower, they wanted one that reached as high as possible; it mentions it in the passage: *"whose top reaches heaven."*

And that city, with that tower and a cusp so high that it reaches the heavens, has as its ultimate goal: ***Let's make a name for ourselves.***"

What are my comments on this portion of the scripture? Well, they decided to build a city with a monument according to their power, their capacity, their autonomy, and also their fame. They wanted to leave a mark that would be evident in heaven and on earth as if to say: Nobody rules us, except us!

What does all this imply? It implies the desire for independence from God. Certainly, that is what was behind that great project; a desire for self-government, self-determination, and the desire of being masters of their will and destiny. I reiterate this was not just any project; men sought to govern themselves without accountability to God; they were seeking self-determination: to act or decide without consulting others. They were also seeking their glory, and fame; even knowing that God is jealous and does not share His glory with anyone. That tower and that cusp were a physical declaration of a spiritual breakdown and of a cry that said: We have emancipated ourselves from God! We are our own god!

The tower was the central point in the project, and it was the most open and elaborate manifestation of their arrogance. What that majestic tower evidenced was their rebellion and their self-importance that defied God. With this project, they disobeyed God, tried to usurp His place and steal His glory. They wanted their own fame, and glory; they wanted to feel like they too were gods.

It is interesting to see that they used the technological advancement of their time in the construction of their ambitious project. They started using brick instead of stone, and asphalt instead of mortar. There were no stones to cut, so they made bricks; they had no mix, so they made asphalt.

Now, what was the divine response to this claim of man? The answer is found next in the same passage in the book of Genesis:

"But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and

they ceased building the city. Therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."

Genesis 11:5-9 (NKJV)

Let's carefully review this passage:

"And the Lord came down to see the city..." It reminds us that God watches over humans and looks at their intentions, not only as individuals but also as a whole.

"And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one..." Note that even in a conglomerate there can be unity without God because unity is not a virtue binding only with God. And one can be in perfect unity with others to do evil and bring dishonor to the Name of God.

"...And they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them..." This insistence is like a spiritual power that moves people towards a goal, ideal, or purpose; unfortunately, in this case, contrary to God.

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city..." God had to intervene; otherwise, they would have achieved their purpose.

And what would have emerged from all that? Maybe a religion without God? Or, perhaps that monument —the tower with its top— would have been a work that gave rise to an ideological system against God? Surely that would've been the case. Doesn't the United Nations (UN) building represent, in a sense, a symbol of human agreement and unity, without God?

So, God stopped them; That is why the passage ends by saying: *"Therefore, its name is called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth, and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."* They had decided to settle in that city, and centralize their power and capacity for self-government. But God forced them to spread out.

Henceforth, the name 'Babylon', derived from 'Babel', is synonymous with 'human power that competes with the power of God, and attempts to usurp His glory'.

This desire for autonomy and self-government without God is persistent in mankind, according to biblical history. And we find it again several times in the Scriptures.

Another example is found in the First book of Samuel, in Chapter 8. We read here that the nation of Israel wanted to rule itself like the rest of the nations on earth. They didn't want God to lead them, they didn't want God to rule them; they wanted to govern themselves, and thought that if they put in place a king, they would have the autonomy they craved.

"But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' So, Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'"

1 Samuel 8:6-7 (NKJV)

This passage is interesting to read. Notice how the prophet was uncomfortable with the People's request: *"Give us a king to judge us."* A man of God must have sufficient spiritual sensitivity to be able to discern the requests or proposals that come from the people of God. These proposals might originate within the church, but may not come from God and may try to persuade the pastor to make unbiblical changes.

These proposals may also come from governments and could offend God or may not be aligned with His will. In both cases, the man of God must become concerned and troubled, and just like the prophet, go and pray to Jehovah. Surely, He would respond in the same way: "It is not you who they are rejecting, but me."

As you can see, this concept of a New World Order is in the Bible. And we have seen how the human race, since the dawn of universal history, has advocated for it; a New World Order without God, and against God.

Now, let's move from biblical times to the situation in the world today — what do we find?

There are indications that affirm the existence of a plan designed to establish a single worldwide government, with the following characteristics: collectivist, bureaucratic, and controlled by elitist and plutocratic sectors (very wealthy people who influence and exercise power over governments).

The expression 'New World Order' has been used to refer to a new period in history which intends drastic changes in political ideologies and a new balance of political power because the current one does not seem to solve mankind's needs.

What else do we find? The United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), organizations that already exist and go in the clear path and direction of a New World Order.

For some analysts, the main instigators of the New World Order are an amorphous group; they are not a political or an ideological movement. They are an amorphous group that includes -apart from those already mentioned- powerful individuals and organisms such as capitalists, communists, nobility, bankers, tycoons, and plutocrats. Apart from these, there would also be other groups such as Freemasons, some groups infiltrated in the Catholic Church, politicians, governments, armed forces, mass media, the film and television industry, and some environmental groups.

So, we can see that there is evidence, both in the Bible and in the world today, of a New World Order in our future and the Coronavirus Pandemic is creating the conditions needed to finish taking shape.

CHAPTER 25

Jesus Christ, the Legitimate and True New World Order

Jesus Christ is coming to establish a true and new world order. The Bible tells us that the lion and the lamb will graze together and weapons will be converted into sickles. It also tells us that there will no longer be any suffering because God will wipe the tears from their eyes.

It will be something completely new. It will be “new heavens and a new earth where justice will dwell” —and it will be on this Earth, not in heaven; it will be a new world order where justice and equity will reign. It will be the life that God always wanted for His creatures!

Jesus Christ gave us a clear example when he spoke with some of His disciples. We read it in the book of Acts:

There is incredulity about God doing this for us.

“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Acts 1:6 (NKJV)

The disciples were thinking of political actions, human-style revolutions; they were thinking of how social structures are changed by humans, that is, in socio-political-military factors.

It is easier for people to believe in an armed revolution than to believe something spiritual can happen leading the world to change to a new order, a new model, a new system. They do not believe that change can be spiritual.

That is why Jesus Christ has to return; He is the true new system, the true New World Order.

New Heavens and a New Earth: The New Order

Before commenting, let's first read a biblical passage where this promise appears. If a new order in Jesus Christ is to happen, there must first be a promise fulfilled. So, let's read the promise of new heavens and a new earth.

*"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
and the former shall not be remembered or come to
mind."*

Isaiah 65:17 (NKJV)

"For behold, I create..." I like it! Because the word "create" appears in the book of Genesis, starting in Chapter 1 showing the creative acts of God. But, let us note here that God is going to start over: "I will create new heavens and a new earth."

And the scripture continues: "*And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind*" He says that we will not even remember human life on the previous earth. Those of us who will have the privilege of being there —and that privilege is neither bought nor sold, it is received by faith in Jesus Christ—, the former heavens and earth will not be remembered or even come to our thoughts.

The Bible tells us in other passages that we are going to have regenerated bodies in the new earth; we will be similar to angels as Jesus Christ said it Himself. This new earth may completely replace the previous one, or it may be so wonderful that no one would want to remember the previous one. The truth is that whatever those new heavens and the new earth be, for sure they will be wonderful!

And of course, we will be part of those new heavens and new earth. It is not a movie that someone plays for us and that we just see and admire. No! The Bible says that we will be part of that new creation. Let's look at what the prophet Isaiah himself says in his book:

*"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I
will make shall **remain** before Me," says the Lord,*

*"So shall your descendants and your name **remain**."*
Isaiah 66:22 (NKJV)

Note that, in the verse, the word 'remain' appears twice; it says that the new heavens and the new earth will "**remain**", and your descendants and our name will also "**remain**". What a wonderful prophetic statement and promise!

But then, if we are to be a part of those new heavens and that new earth, we have to learn to wait for the Promise. Some people say "the Lord is coming"; But they don't want the Lord to come, because they have been having such a good time,

that they don't want a new world order in Christ. They are so comfortable with themselves!

I believe that God's purpose for our lives during this quarantine is that all useless and superfluous things not benefitting or contributing in any way to our spiritual growth be disconnected, and only God and our dependence on Him remain.

Well, we have to learn to wait for the Promise. The apostle Peter is the one who tells us about it in his Second Letter.

"Nevertheless we, according to his promises, wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness."

2 Peter 3:13 (JUB)

"We wait..." I like that phrase! Waiting is an act of faith. Waiting is part of being a Christian, a believer, and a disciple. Waiting is part of the Christian life; it is part of the assignment to those of us who walk with Jesus.

Here I underline "Nevertheless we..."; it makes a difference for us, as if saying that for us as Christians the situation will be different, there will be something additional for us.

That something else is the "new heavens and a new earth, in which justice dwells." Justice is going to be the great hallmark of this new order in Jesus Christ. We currently live the antithesis of justice: injustice; and injustice, linked to its twin: corruption. Wherever there is corruption, justice is bought and sold. But we read here that, in those new heavens and in that new earth, justice will dwell.

In this verse, there are two important words, hope, and promise, to highlight our hope for justice according to the promise made by our Lord. But we must dig deeper.

The translation of **we hope** in the text originates from the Greek word *prosdokaō*, which means anticipating in thought and hope. Hence, if we are waiting for God's Promise, our thoughts are rooted in hope. Furthermore, the word denotes a constant action that is the permanent action of waiting. Waiting then is not a single act, but rather a continuous and permanent one.

The Promise is the other underlined word. It is translated from the Greek *epaggelma*, which means self-commitment. This is powerful! What is it telling us? That God was

committing to Himself when he promised new heavens and a new earth. When we make a promise to someone, the way to fulfill it is to remain committed to ourselves. We demonstrate our reliability when we fulfill the promises we make. God made a commitment to give us His righteousness, and we are waiting and clinging to His Promise

We will see the sign of His coming

Let us consider the words of Jesus Christ as written in the book of Matthew:

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Matthew 24:30-31 (NKJV)

Let us carefully review the passage: *"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "* Everyone will see the sign of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is an event that will be seen from one end of the earth to the other. There will be no one who does not learn of this extraordinary and miraculous event. And many will remember us Christians and will regret having despised the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The scripture goes on to say: *"And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* Let's try to imagine the sound of a trumpet that will be heard in the heavens all over the planet at the same time, and the angels physically manifesting as they come to collect the chosen people of God from all over the earth ... We have no idea how it can be possible! But it will happen and it will be a spectacular thing!

In another passage in the Bible, it is Apostle John, in his book of Revelation, who describes the Second coming of Jesus Christ.

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who **is** and who **was** and who **is to come**, the Almighty."
Revelation 1:8 (NKJV)*

I underline *is*, *was*, and *is to come*, to focus on Jesus' attribute of eternity, which in turn guarantees the fulfillment of His Promise. John concludes the verse naming Jesus "The Almighty", "El-Shaddai", to ensure that He will fulfill His Promise with the manifestation of all His power. Hallelujah!

Another verse, also from Apostle John in his book of Revelation, reads like this:

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for [a]a thousand years."
Revelation 20:4 (NKJV)*

Apostle John tells us that all the martyrs and those who did not submit to the antichrist will be there to reign with Christ for a thousand years. Christians will be there, reigning with Christ in the Millennium, in the true and legitimate New World Order!

One last verse to conclude my point, records the words of Jesus declaring who He is:

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."
Revelation 22:12-13 (NKJV)*

I want to conclude the book with the inclusion of two topics that seem appropriate and necessary as a climax. These last two chapters are entitled: 'The Blessing of Being a Prisoner' and 'At the Break of Dawn'. They bring us back to our current situation and confirm the hope needed to wait for the legitimate and New World Order that Jesus Christ will bring. Right away, let's move on to the first of these final topics.

CHAPTER 26

The Blessing of Being a Prisoner

This is a statement that had a great impact on me! I found it in an article written by Pastor Sergio Banegas who deserves my respect and credibility. He writes for a newspaper in my country, and I always pause to observe his articles. I asked for his permission to share portions of his study on The Blessing of being a Prisoner in my book, to which he gladly agreed.

I begin with these words: What if this temporary test is teaching us what we do not expect: the dimension of a 'good captivity'? Because, in a sense, we are at home being prisoners. Is it not true? We cannot go where we want, we cannot be with who we want, we cannot do what we want. But, could it be that God chose the easiest and friendliest place to put us in captivity, and reveal himself to us? Why am I saying this? Because, during this confinement, which is rigorously imposed on the entire population, God could not have chosen a better place to keep us under lockdown than our own homes. At home with our family and the personal things we love: our comfortable slippers, our comfortable pillow, that little chair where we sit and enjoy reading, in short, what better place to be held in captivity than our homes!

Hence the question: What if this temporary test is teaching us the dimension of a 'good captivity'? Perhaps, we rebel, protest, and question if any kind of captivity can be considered good. The answer is yes, and we are going to consider the blessing of being a prisoner. Naturally, it will be based on the Holy Scriptures.

Who are we prisoners of?

We find the answer to this question in the Bible:

We are prisoners of Christ

The apostle Paul writes in that context, defining himself as a prisoner of Christ.

"For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles..."

Ephesians 3:1 (NKJV)

"For this reason, I, Paul..." Perhaps each one of us should try putting our names instead of Paul's, and say: "For this reason... I, Robert... I, Rachel... I, Sophia..." What a wonderful expression and concept!

Although Paul had been a prisoner for about two years in Caesarea and two additional years in Rome, he did not consider himself a prisoner of any government, or any human system, much less of any one person in authority. In our case, are we under lockdown by a human government? If we think so, we deserve to be pitied.

Paul, having been a prisoner on more than one occasion, does not accept being a prisoner of any hierarchical structure, of any human power or authority. He considers that he can only be a prisoner of Christ.

That is why the question comes up: Who are we prisoners of? We should be at home feeling, not prisoners of circumstances, not prisoners of the pandemic or quarantine, not prisoners of any government or authority, but, prisoners of Christ.

Paul knew very well that he was under the rule of Christ, down to the smallest detail of his life; he knew he was in the hands of the Lord. What about us? Are we convinced, as Apostle Paul was, that being prisoners of Christ we depend on Him and no one but Him? Are we convinced that He will feed us and protect us? Are we convinced that He will tell us where to go and how to act? Are we convinced that He will solve our problems? We must be convinced that Christ is the one who has total control of our lives and takes this quarantine time as a kind of prison to bless, protect, guide, and restore our lives.

The apostle Paul suffered his time in prison, with only one purpose in mind: preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. The question then arises: What about us? Maybe we are home showing disdain, anger, long faces, getting easily upset, murmuring about the news, or complaining about the government, the boss, the job, and even the Church. It shouldn't be like that! Apostle Paul made the most of being in prison. He said in his letter to the Philippians that being in prison had served to advance the Gospel because the whole palace guard and everyone else around had been able to hear his testimony.

So, we are prisoners, but prisoners of Christ. This is the blessing of being a prisoner.

We are prisoners of Hope

In the Bible, the Word of God, the concept "prisoners of hope" is found in the book of the prophet Zechariah.

*"Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.
Even today I declare that I will restore double to
you."
Zechariah 9:12 (NKJV).*

What is the message for the prisoners of hope? *"I will restore you double."* Therefore, we must be confident that when we leave this confinement and our life returns to normal conditions, we will be restored twice as much! Double blessing, double anointing, double vision, double provision. Double in every sense!

"Even today I declare that I will restore double to you", is the announcement and the promise.

The hope of those 'prisoners of hope' at that time was that they would be restored; but not just in any way, rather, they would be restored "double" by the power of God. Let's pay attention to what is being said here and applies to us today: We are going to come out of this quarantine, not with what we had, but rather, we are going to come out with more! Like those who escaped the plagues of Egypt unscathed, they came away with more than they had before the plagues; so, our lives will return to normal, with more than we had before entering this time of quarantine.

And who are the 'prisoners of hope'? In ancient times prisoners were thrown into cisterns or wells; just as it happened to Joseph, who was thrown into an empty cistern to die there. In the times of the prophet Zechariah, the exiled of Israel found themselves in a pit of captivity. They were suffering and anguished; that is why God announces that they will be freed from that pit of captivity, all because of God's unbreakable pact with them, His people.

The same applies to us because God has made a pact with us, and He never backs down from His promises and His Word. God loved us and forgave our sins past, present, and future. He did it because He has a pact with us. Naturally, God expects us to be faithful, but even if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful because He cannot deny himself. He cannot refuse to fulfill His pact.

So, for this reason, people in the time of Zechariah, and Christians here today, are called 'prisoners of hope'; not prisoners of anguish or pain, not prisoners of poverty, and not prisoners of sadness or depression. Prisoners of hope — hope of what? Hope to receive a double divine blessing.

We are prisoners who receive special treatment

Humankind is under lockdown at home, but some of us are receiving "differential treatment" from God, and that is because we are part of God's purposes.

Let's look at this, in the Second Book of Kings:

"Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given to him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life."

2 Kings 25:27-30 (NKJV)

Let's read carefully: "***It came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity...***" He points out that after all those years of captivity, the king was released, —and here we are already complaining about being under lockdown for just a few weeks.

Continuing with our reading: "*the King of Babylon, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon.*" The great king of Babylon brought the king of Judah out of prison and put him in a place of eminence, above the kings of other nations whom he had also led into captivity.

It continues to say: "*So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life...*"; This was special treatment, a 'differential

treatment' for King Jehoiachin... and so is the treatment that God is giving His people during this quarantine. Additionally, he adds: "*There was a regular ration given to him by the king, a portion for each day...*" In our case, the provision comes from our King and Lord. A reason to rejoice every day.

Then he concludes, pointing out that this provision would be continual "*all the days of his life.*"

The same applies to us. In this house prison in which we find ourselves, our prisoners' clothes will be changed and we will be assigned a portion of food from the King's table. We are prisoners of hope and prisoners under special treatment!

Therefore, let us not despair. We will emerge stronger from this quarantine; and this pandemic will remain etched in our memories, not as an experience of tribulation, but rather, of special and differentiated treatment by our God.

CHAPTER 27

At the break of Dawn

I conclude the book with a topic that I find inspiring and will help us look into a future, which is unclear and uncertain for most human beings. However, for Jesus Christ's followers, the future is encouraging and full of hope.

Apostle Peter mentions in one of his letters:

"And so, we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

2 Peter 1:19 (NKJV)

For many, the future apocalypse portends terrible destructive events. For Christians, the apocalypse is the announcement of the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom we await like the noonday sun; and to whom we pray: "Come, Lord Jesus."

We embrace hopefully the last verse of the entire Bible, which says:

"He who has said all these things declares: Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:20 (NKJV)

The biblical text that serves as the basis for the final reflection of this book is found in Psalm 46:

*"God is in the midst of her, **she shall not be moved**; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn."*

Psalms 46:5 (NKJV)

"God is in the midst of her..." I like that! It refers to the City of God, the People of God, the Church of God. It refers to us!

And it goes on to say: "*She shall not be moved...*" This is a powerful word! And we can use it as a prophetic declaration of

our house, our church, our city, and our country. It is just a short but powerful phrase - "*She shall not be moved*". And why will she not be moved? Because God is in the midst of her.

This is similar to the time when the disciples were in a boat with Jesus in the middle of a stormy sea and spoke to Him: "Save us, Lord, we perish!" But if Jesus was in the boat, how were they going to sink, how were they going to be overturned in the water and perish? It's impossible. With Jesus in their midst, it's impossible to think that they were going to sink. So, the same idea is revealed in Psalm 46, we can dare to believe that, because "God is in the midst of her ...", "*she shall not be moved*"; but, rather, "*God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*"

I want to highlight some ideas that made an impact on my mind when observing this writing. First, the phrase "shall not be moved." I asked myself the question: What should I understand from this phrase? What does this have to do with being or not being moved?

In the original texts, what was translated as 'be moved' -in this case 'not be moved' - comes from a Hebrew root that has the following meaning and possible translations: waver, shake, fall, get out course, fall into decay, be stirred and slide. What is this word from Psalm 46 telling us? It is telling us that because God is in our midst, we will not waver, we will not slip, we will not be shaken to the point of being destroyed, we will not fall, we will not go off course.

Let us consider the word waver or vacillate, the first meaning of this translation. The text is telling us that, because God is by our side, we "will not waver"; we will make the right decisions, we will walk the right path, we will be able to discern, and we will not be shaken. In short, we will not vacillate.

The Bible teaches that a person that vacillates is a double-minded person that can be washed away by the waves of the sea, going from one side to the other. So, this verse implies that "we must not vacillate in the crucial hours of our lives."

Let us also consider the meaning of the phrase "do not go off course." Fear can turn into a wind that blows the ship of our life off course far from the path and the place it must be. Perhaps our doubts and uncertainties regarding our job, health, or the future of our children become forces that push our ship off course. It is then, that this word "shall not be moved" has

enormous validity. God promises that we will not get off course no matter how heavy the tide we have to face.

Let us analyze one more meaning 'fall into decay'. These words promise us that there will be no decomposition, disarray, or disintegration that can shake our lives while the trial or tribulation lasts.

Now, in summary, what does this powerful verse of the Scripture remind us of?

God's presence is with us and it is guaranteed until His Second Coming. It is not about whether we deserve it or not; it is not about whether we are good enough, and it is not about whether we are holy enough. The Word of God in this text tells us that the presence of God among us is and will always be guaranteed.

The final chapter of our story, as God's people, is predetermined. The final chapter of this crisis is predetermined. The Church of the Lord will emerge blessed and victorious from the midst of the trial. We will be like those young believers in the fiery furnace, who, instead of burning could be seen in serene conversation with One, who appeared among them: Jesus Christ, who surely told them: "Do not fear, you shall not be moved."

Trials and tribulations have an expiration date. The text includes a prophetic word, which is a promise and is projected towards the immediate future: "God will help her." And it includes a specific time. "At the break of dawn."

Remember that the entire 24-hour period of the day, is not all night; that the whole period of the day is not all darkness; that in a few hours, the sun will rise and the morning will come. Our sun is the Lord Jesus Christ, the true light that we long for, of which the biblical author wrote:

"That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."

John 1:9 (NKJV)

"...Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining."

1 John 2:8 (NKJV)

Let us not forget then, that this tribulation that we are living today will end one day; that its expiration date is: "At the Break of Dawn."