

From Our Pastor November 4, 2017

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

The greatest catastrophe in history was "the Black Death" that spread across Europe in the years 1346-53. Historians have calculated that the Black Death killed 50 million people in the 14th century, or 60 per cent of Europe's entire population. The human suffering and death were of unimaginable proportions. Most Europeans thought the world was coming to an end. Italy suffered terribly. A Florentine chronicler wrote "All the citizens did little else except to carry dead bodies to be buried [...] At every church they dug deep pits down to the water-table; and thus those who were poor who died during the night were bundled up quickly and thrown into the pit. In the morning when a large number of bodies were found in the pit, they took some earth and shoveled it down on top of them; and later others were placed on top of them and then another layer of earth, just as one makes lasagne with layers of pasta and cheese." Although it subsided, The black plague continued with smaller outbreaks for the next 300 years.

According to *HistoryToday*, "The Black Death was an epidemic of bubonic plague, a disease caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* that circulates among wild rodents where they live in great numbers and density.

Plague among humans arises when rodents in human habitation, normally black rats, become infected. The black rat, also called the 'house rat' and the 'ship rat', likes to live close to people, the very quality that makes it dangerous." The plague bacteria is spread to humans by fleas. From the bite site, the contagion drains to a lymph node that consequently swells to form a painful bubo, most often in the groin, on the thigh, in an armpit or on the neck. Hence the name bubonic plague. The infection takes three–five days to incubate in people before they fall ill, and another three–five days before, in 80 per cent of the cases, the victims die. Thus, from the introduction of plague contagion among rats in a human community it takes, on average, twenty-three days before the first person dies.

In recent months the plague has come alive on the island of Madagascar, off the Eastern coast of Africa. At least 128 people have been killed and more than 1,300 infected by the deadly pneumonic strain of the medieval disease, and there are signs that it may be spreading to nations on the African continent.

The Sun reported: "MADAGASCAR'S deadly Black Death outbreak could last another SIX MONTHS - with officials warning the oncoming rainy season could see the epidemic explode. And while health officials have seen a slight dip in victims, they warned it could explode at any point between now and April. Tarik Jašarević of the World Health Organisation told *The Sun*: "We cannot say with certainty that the epidemic has subsided. "We are about three months into the epidemic season, which goes on until April 2018."

The strain of plague they are dealing with is not just spread by fleas. It can also be spread airborne or through human contact, therefore it is call "pneumonic plague." Cities in the third world, with large populations living close together, often in poverty conditions, are at great risk.

"Pestilence"--another name for disease epidemics--is mentioned more than forty times in the Bible. God even says that it is one of his four punishments to bring men to repent. "For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it? (Ezekiel 14:21)"

We live in a world where evil is becoming dominant and accepted in society even more than in the past. As foretold long ago, evil is often called good, and what is good is ridiculed as evil or worthless. As Isaiah warned, " Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;(Isaiah 5:20.) He also warned that sin will be boasted about, "They declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves. " (3:9)

The judgments coming on this world will include disease epidemics. One of the horses of Revelation is understood to portray disease. " So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. "(Revelation 6:8)

What is being reported from the remote island of Madagascar might be the start of something much larger.

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