



**Look Up,
There's Hope!**

HOPE LOOKS UP

BIBLE STUDY BY: PASTOR THOMAS HANEY

Thirteen Week Bible Study via Zoom video to present a biblical perspective concerning the COVID 19 "Corona Virus" Pandemic and to encourage Christians to stay hopeful during the "Stay at Home" quarantine imposed by the government.

MAY 05, 2020 – JULY 28, 2020

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
WEEK 1: Is the Pandemic More Powerful than Jesus?.....	3
Week 2: Did Jesus Becoming Human Diminish or Increase His Power?.....	6
WEEK 3: How Did Jesus Obtain His Power?	9
WEEK 4: How Does Jesus Display and Use His Power?	13
WEEK 5: What is the Power of the Pandemic?	18
WEEK 6: How Should a Christian View the Pandemic?	24
WEEK 7: Why is the Unknown Always So Powerful?	29
WEEK 8: Is Our Only Hope a Vaccine?.....	35
WEEK 9: Why Do End-Time Events Cause Mixed Reactions Among Christians?.....	40
WEEK 10: What are Believers to Learn from the Pandemic?	46
WEEK 11: How to Develop a Rock-Hard Faith and Trust.....	53
WEEK 12: Pandemic Theme—My Hope is Built on Nothing Less than Jesus Christ	60
WEEK 13: Where Do I Focus My Energy and Help?	66

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us on the Hope Looks Up” on-line Bible Study. Pastor Thomas Haney prepared and presented a thirteen-week study to see how the power of Jesus lines up against the power of the pandemic. Francine Masterson was the driving force for this study and she facilitated the interactions and interchanges of our Bible Study on Zoom. Chuck and Linda Eaton served as Hosts.

The study meetings were conducted via Zoom Video. Approximately 25 -35 participants joined each week. Following each meeting, Tom’s detailed notes were distributed to the participants. This document is a compilation of the 13-weeks of notes.

At the beginning of each meeting, we joined with hundreds of other Churches across the world to pray. The prayer time was designated at 6:02 pm which is representative of the first three numbers of this area zip code 602. We were reminded of the passage in Philippians 4:6-7:

[PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NIV] *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

We joined in prayer for:

- Total healing
- The end of the pandemic
- Those who have lost loved ones
- Frontline workers & First responders
- People to move closer to God
- To see God’s hand in healing the world and stopping the pandemic

This Study was an encouragement and a blessing to all participants.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 1: Is the Pandemic More Powerful than Jesus?

At first glance, the question that frames this study tonight seems superfluous and unnecessary. We would all say, “Of course Jesus is stronger than the pandemic”.

But before we just say, “Yes He is” and walk away; I want us to spiritually wrestle with three questions in this study:

1. How powerful is Jesus and do we trust that power to control our life?
2. What is the power of the Pandemic and why does it have such a fearful hold on so many believers
3. But the greater question that this study raises for me is, why is the unknown so powerful and scary to us and how is a Christian to face the unknowns of life?

I think this study is relevant because there is widespread fear and panic caused by the pandemic that will only grow as the economic realities of the shut-down and the continual concern off a reoccurring virus become more obvious. Second, since many people consider any end-time discussion as very negative and depressing; it is very easy to miss any end time message that God wants us to hear and make a part of our life. We will deal with both questions as this study unfolds over the next 13 weeks.

I do have a request of you this week. Please do this and it will bring exceptional life to this study. Take time during one of your devotions this week to write down a list of all your blessings. In fact, I would encourage you to do it tomorrow morning. It will encourage you and help you to live with an attitude of gratitude. And it will be the right influence you need to not wallow in self-pity or to over analyze and personalize what is happening in our world today.

Start with the obvious blessings that we take for granted. One that comes to me is pure water—the major cause of illness in our world. Also--Electricity, over 1 billion people in our world do not have electricity. I lived the first four years of my life, 1945-1949 in a house without electricity where kerosene lamps and battery operated radios were the only conveniences we knew. Can you imagine this quarantine without electricity, air conditioning, media, electric stoves and microwaves, Thank Him for your family and list them by name; for first responders, for modern medicine, technological inventions, and all the things that help us keep in touch with each other. Thank Him for your spiritual blessings, the Bible, prayer, study books, your Church, your Pastor(s), for the religious freedoms you have in this nation, for prayer, and for salvation. You will need to include Jesus in your list many times—maybe more often than you thought—because He is the one who has saved us, led us to a place of worship, filled us with the joy of salvation, given us the Living Hope of being in heaven with Him forever, and told us that no one can every take us out of His hands.

Johnson Oatman wrote a hymn in 1897 that really applies to this time of crisis:

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

The first verse says: *“When upon life’s billows you are tempest-tossed,*

When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost.

Count your many blessings; name them one by one,

And it will surprise you, What the Lord has done!!!”

If you do that assignment, I will guarantee you that you will gain much more from this study. We need to constantly remind ourselves what God has done for us and what he has given us. Everything else is rather narcissistic and skewed.

Our study this evening will be” How Powerful is Jesus? I want us to look at the first 6 chapters of Hebrews to see how the bible outlines the power of Jesus!!

The author of Hebrews is unnamed and has been a point of discussion for centuries. But one thing we know about this author. Although Jesus was born into the Hebrew nation—He was superior or “greater than” all the things that made up the Hebrew religion and way of life. The author of the book of Hebrews might have directed his teaching to the Jewish readers of his day---you must recognize the power of Jesus and accept Him as your Lord and Savior; but it is a message that should still resonate with us today. Jesus is greater than anything we exalt and follow in our humanistic world. Our world has given it’s allegiance to humanism. The mighty dollar, the expertise of science, the glamour and wealth of the rich and famous, the popular thoughts about all the moral issues, and the cheers of the crowd—that seems to be what is worshipped the most reverently today. But we need to see that Jesus is more powerful than each of them.

Hebrews lists 11 ways that Jesus is greater than the Jewish religion, a faith set-up and established by God Himself with Abraham.

1. Jesus is greater than the prophets:
2. Jesus is greater than the angels
3. Jesus is greater than Moses
4. Jesus is greater than Joshua
5. Jesus is greater than Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood that came after him.
6. Jesus is greater than the Levites and the Levitical priests.
7. Jesus is greater than Abraham
8. Jesus established a ministry greater than the Tabernacle Ministry.
9. The New Covenant of Jesus is greater than the Old Covenant
10. The sacrifice of the life of Jesus is greater than the total of all the OT sacrifices.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

11. Experiencing Jesus is greater than the experience of being at Mt. Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given by God to Moses.

Let's take that one-by-one and see how they show us the unlimited spiritual power of Jesus.

1. Jesus was the final prophetic Word of God—and He was the one that made the Universe (Hebrews 1:2) He is God (Hebrews 1:3), and He is the only one who ever purified our sins, (Hebrews 1:3). He sits at the right of God because He alone has the power, dominion and Deity to belong there.

Application: God is still sovereign, the pandemic was allowed; and the most logical one to resolve the issue is the Creator of the Universe giving His power and insight to His people. We should seek Jesus to lead and guide us through this terrible time.

2. Jesus is superior to all spiritual beings. Here it is specifically the angels because the Jewish people did not believe in any other spirit beings except the angels, but today—it would mean that Jesus is superior to all Statutes. Candles, Saints, ancestors, and any other spiritual being. Hebrews says it well when it says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:14 Jesus is that source of salvation.
3. Jesus is greater than any leader—The book of Hebrews 3:1-6 chooses Moses, but whether it is Moses, the great Jewish leader or our leaders, governors, or authorities—the point is the same. They are at their very best ministering spirits of God—but Jesus is the builder of the house—He is God Himself and speaks things into existence. He is our greatest leader. This would include the military, Joshua—4:6-11; the Pastors of the land,

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Week 2: Did Jesus Becoming Human Diminish or Increase His Power?

To start the study tonight, I want to quote something Dr. David Reagan wrote in a recent article: “The headlines in the news are enough to make you think that all of nature is spiraling out of control. And that, in fact, is exactly what is happening from a human viewpoint. But spiritually, the Bible assures us that God is in control, and what we are witnessing is the fulfillment of end time prophecies.”

These ‘Signs of Nature’—those who have a Biblical view realize these are signs that God is using so they are ‘signs of nature’ not just acts of God—they are often very obvious and even the secular world takes note of them. Michael Snyder, who maintains a blog called The Economic Collapse, recently wrote:

“Over the last several decades, have we ever seen a year start as strangely s 2020 has? Global weather patterns have gone completely nuts, large earthquakes are popping off like firecrackers, it looks like the plague of locusts in Africa could soon develop into the worst in modern history, and a massive plague of bats is severely terrorizing parts of Australia. On top of all that, African swine fever is wiping out millions upon millions of pigs around the globe, the H1N1 Swine Flu is killing people in Taiwan, there have been H5N1 Bird Flu outbreaks in China and in India, and the H5N8 Bird Flu has made an appearance at a poultry facility in Saudi Arabia. And then, of course, there is the corona virus outbreak.”

This is one of the six categories of end time prophecies that the Bible tells us to watch for as the end-times approach. It is one area that causes people great concern and strong fear. So, again tonight, I want us to look at another aspect of the power of Jesus against the pandemic. When Jesus walked and taught on this earth, He encountered many signs of nature: he healed many of disease; He restored missing or damaged limbs, eyes, ears, parts of hands, and toes destroyed by leprosy. In short, Jesus demonstrated that He had control over the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual problems of people and that He had the power to restore wholeness in all of those areas. Did this empathy that Jesus showed while on the earth give Him a greater sensitivity to us as He cares for us from Heaven? Did it increase His power over all the pain caused by ‘signs of nature’? I want us to explore what the Bible says about the power of Jesus after His life on earth.

The second chapter of the book of Hebrews outlines clearly what it meant for Jesus to become human and how that affects His interaction with us—including His use of power with us.

First thing the chapter says is;

1. Jesus offers the only gift that will guarantee eternal life! Hebrews 2:1-4

If angels gave us the 10 commandments and we are to obey them—how much more should we accept the salvation that Jesus offered mankind in person. It is not just that Jesus is superior to angels; the point of the first four verses is that His sacrifice and

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

therefore His gift is superior. Now, if something is superior, we need to give it more attention and follow it with more dedication than we do something that is inferior. You might ask, how is salvation superior to the 10 Commandments—can't we have both/and not either/or? Yes, if you just want Godly direction for your life but if you want salvation and a life with Jesus then you need to take His gift. You see, none of us will ever keep all 10 commandments perfectly—especially when Jesus taught us that keeping the Law was not only not doing the deed—it was not even thinking about doing the deed. No one gets saved by following the 10 Commandments. As Paul wrote, the Law pointed out where I had failed. Romans 8:3-4 so, the salvation offered by Jesus is superior to anything the angels offered because it leads to life and the judgment that comes from being under the law just leads to death.

2. **To offer us that gift, Jesus had to become human**—Hebrews 2: 5-9

Jesus was already going to rule over the Millennial Kingdom—that was not something that angels would do; but the passage goes ahead to tell us that God wanted to seal that ruling of Christ with an act of love. He sent Jesus in the form of a man to come to this earth and did not just send another angel. The author quotes Psalms 84-6 to show that this had always been the plan of God. It was not a task that God wanted angels to do; but a task God wanted His Son to accomplish. Jesus completed that task. He filled the void where the original humans who had control of the earth had failed, Genesis 1:26-28. So, Christ fulfilled all that was needed to offer salvation to us; He became a person; He became our sacrifice for our sins, and He has won for us victory over sin and death. He had become less than the angels (lower than) for a short time that He might be over all things with glory and honor. Jesus never lost any power, but He willingly gave up that power so that he could experience the same things that we experience. That makes Him even more powerful in our lives. Jesus does not judge like the law does, but Jesus accepts all who will come understanding where they have been, what they have done, and reminds them—He took those sins to the cross for all who will accept His forgiveness.

3. **To maximize the gift Jesus had to become Divine again.** Hebrews 2:10-18

Without the humiliation and suffering of Jesus, there could be no redemption. Without redemption, there could be no glorification—being with Him in Heaven. He has become the pioneer of our salvation and has led the way into heaven. Christ was always faultless in His Divine nature, but when He became fully human and fully Divine, He perfected the human life by His complete obedience to God and lack of any sin. The result: He is our understanding intercessor—High Priest here—who establishes perfection in us that allows us to be His sons and daughters. Jesus fully identified with us to provide complete redemption, Phil. 2:7-9. Jesus by nature was not human—but he took on human form —

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

beginning with conception—to provide for us salvation. He was born to die—and die He did—but with His death the power of death was taken out of the hands of Satan and restored to the hands of God. Those who die in Him shall live forever. This eliminates a justifiable reason to fear death—it is to a better home we go. He totally paid for our sins and has an understanding nature with His interactions with us because He experienced every temptation that we experience. Did you ever notice that the pressure of temptation is removed when you give into sin? Oh, yes, it will build again, but it only disappears once we have rebuked it totally or given into it. Jesus was tempted for a life-time--- he felt the full force of every temptation--- and never gave into sin. He has a compassion level that far exceeds what we often even imagine. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus needed to become human so that His power, understanding and even empathy towards mankind would be even enhanced. How do you improve on perfection? I guess you become even ‘perfecter’. I don’t think we know. But that leads to another question: How does that affect our feeling about the pandemic and other “Signs of Nature”?

Let’s personalize this for each of us:

If a sign of nature is a call from God for us to repent, we need to repent—don’t fight it, just repent. If it is a time when we need to move past our apathy about being bold witnesses for the Lord—then let repentance restore holy boldness in our life. If it is time when we have drifted away from speaking out about the moral collapse of our nation—then pray that God gives you effective ways to speak out against what you believe is wrong. If it is a time when you want to lead people to the Lord, then make sure you have a list of people you are praying over about how you can share Jesus with them. Jesus calls us to repentance and when we respond, He never judges us or asks what took you so long. The only one who wanted to discuss the past when the prodigal came back home was the prodigal—the Father simply wanted to affirm the fact that his son that was dead is now alive again. One of the things that I have noticed in my own life, when God is sending me a message through “acts of nature”, He just wants my accepting response and not a long discourse on what I could have done better.

Getting closer to God is always the best way to eliminate fear!! And now you know Biblically, that you will be talking with a very understanding Jesus—who also desires that you get closer to Him. One of the burdens He wants to take from you is “fear” and replaces that with peace. His yoke is easier and His burden is light. He is the perfect one to steer us through this time of pandemic.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 3: How Did Jesus Obtain His Power?

To start the study tonight, I want us to look at some problems that naturally occur when you are talking about Signs of Nature as prophetic signs.

1. The conceptual problem lies in the fact that there have always been signs of nature. So, when confronted with the prophesied signs of nature, many people shrug their shoulders and ask, “What is new about that? There have always been tornados, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and earthquakes.” In fact, the pandemic is not new since we had a world-wide pandemic from 1918-1920. And many mini-pandemics the last forty years: SARS, MIRS, AIDS, Ebola, etc.

What is often missed is that Jesus said these signs would be like ‘birth pangs’, (Matthew 24:8). That means they will increase in frequency and intensity the closer we get to the Lord’s return. I feel that is what is happening today. We will continue to explore this idea in several of our studies.

2. The philosophical problem many people have with the signs of nature is the fact that we have been consistently taught by Western Scientific Rationalism that for something to exist, you must be able to see it, measure it, weigh it and dissect it. The Bible teaches on the other hand, there is a whole realm of the supernatural that cannot normally be perceived by our human senses. This realm includes angels, demons, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. It also includes God’s intervention into history when the times are right through supernatural manifestations and natural disasters.

When we study the human life of Jesus, we find that the life of Jesus was marked by signs of nature: At His birth, God placed a special light in the heavens—probably the visual presence of His Shekinah glory. Twice, God spoke on behalf of His Son with a great verbal affirmation that Jesus was the Son of God—at the baptism of Jesus and at the Transformation of Jesus with Elijah and Moses—as well as had these two deceased men appear in such a way that the three disciples who witnessed the event knew who they were. When Jesus was crucified, the earth experienced three hours of darkness—not caused by an eclipse. His death was followed by a major earthquake in Jerusalem targeted at certain objects: the Temple and the ripping of the Temple veil from top down to the bottom; and the graves of deceased saints are specifically listed. And the Bible says that when Jesus returns, the world will experience the greatest earthquake in its history. Every island will disappear and join the mainland; valleys will be lifted, mountains will be lowered, and the city of Jerusalem will be lifted to become the highest place on the earth—(Revelation 16:18-21 and Isaiah 40:3-5)

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

God the Father frequently used Signs of Nature to explain the classic events of the life of His Son—Jesus. It was as if the Father constantly wanted to remind the people of the earth that Jesus was greater than all these things of nature and that nature itself would shout and sing in praise of Jesus who was their ruler and king. We might ask—where did Jesus get such power that all of nature would be subservient to Him and would join in praise and worship of Jesus?

The first Chapter of John, written with the simplest of Greek phrases mimics the first few chapters of Genesis and explains not only what Jesus did—as Genesis records—but also who He was and where His power came from. I want us to study parts of this first chapter to see where Jesus got His power from.

*I asked someone this week, “Where do you think Jesus got His power?” They said from God of course!” Since Jesus is God, I don’t know if they meant He got the power from being God or if they meant it was something the Father gave to the Son. Let’s take those first 18 verses to see what John, through the Holy Spirit was telling us about Jesus.

6 truths about Jesus that explain the source of His power.

1. Jesus is eternal and has always been The Christ (literally King). He is and has always been Jesus the King. John 1:1-3

John starts out by paralleling the thought of Genesis 1:1, in the beginning of the time-space-material universe where we live—Jesus already was. He was described as The Word, and He was not made but just was. John believed this so strongly, that Jesus was eternal and always was—that he did not include a human genealogy as Matthew and Luke did—because the genealogy of Jesus spoke only about the 33 years of His life here on the earth and as far as His Divine genealogy—there was none. He was the Word of God that spoke the world into existence Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6; Proverbs 8:27. John gives this Word a human name, Jesus 1:14 but he still possessed all the power of His divinity while a man. He, Jesus was with God—and He was God. So, to ask how Jesus obtained His power is like asking, “Where did the universe come from—(from the creation of Jesus) how does non-matter become matter?” (Jesus speaks it into existence.) Jesus always was and was always divinely powerful. He made everything we see and know in our world—this thought is throughout the New Testament: Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; and Revelation 4:11 just to list this statement from three different Bible authors.

2. Jesus purposefully became human John 1:4-5

Jesus has always been the source of life and it is no different today. He is our life and with that He brings His light to be our light. It is the way we are able to discern between right and wrong, between prophecy and prediction; and between light and darkness. It is so powerful

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

that one single light can expel the darkness from a room. He took His power and allowed Himself to become our life and light to lead us to heaven.

3. He had a forerunner and his name was John. John 1:6-8.

We get so limited by our world and our patterns of living that we often miss the fact that Jesus displayed His power over all the things that are on His earth while here as a human. The ability to walk on liquid, the ability to change beverages in jars by a simple command, the expulsion of demons through words, the ability to restore parts of the body, the ability to create parts of the body that were always missing, the ability to multiply food by simply lifting His hands into the air and bringing it down, the ability to be victorious over Satan at every confrontation; the ability to restore life to the dead—the list is continuous as we see Jesus live among people but without the limits that most of us experience.

4. He was recognized by those who had eyes of faith. John 1:9-11

John explains why some recognized Jesus in the reality of His power—they had eyes of faith—while others rejected Jesus as nothing more than another crazed evangelist. That is part of the problem we face in this battle against the pandemic. Many who do not have eyes of faith do not see how Jesus can be more powerful than the pandemic. They want to leave Jesus to the spiritual things of life—saving, comforting the grieving, and answering prayers—but fail to see that Jesus longs to take your fear and panic over the pandemic and neutralize it in your life. Eyes of faith will expand your view of what Jesus can do and will allow you to experience victory in your life.

5. He granted a great privilege to those who saw His power and trusted in that power. John 1:12-13

They are able to take on His name and be called accurately “The children of God.” It is at this point tonight that I want to encourage you to claim all the privileges that come from being a child of God. You have the spiritual eyes to see that the signs of nature and that all the other signs that are converging mean that Jesus is coming soon. The ability to see that you are still an alien in a foreign land and one day you will sit at the table of your Father, God and eat with Him and Jesus and you will truly be home. The ability to see that there is no better way to face any Sign of Nature than to walk hand in hand with Jesus trusting that He will do what is right and what is best for you and the people you love.

6. He showed us what God the Father was really like, John 1:14-18

While Christ as God was uncreated and eternal, the word became a human. It means the Infinite became finite; the Eternal conformed to time; the Invisible became visible; the supernatural one emptied Himself enough to become natural; and He ‘dwelt’ with man. The word dwelt here literally means live in a tent. He determined to come and live in a

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

temporary place and a temporary home that we might see the power, the gloriousness, and an understanding side of God that we could all relate to and seek Him. He has offered us life and life abundantly.

To know that Jesus did not obtain His power but that He always had it; means that Jesus is not controlled by any other spirit being. He is the source of strength you need to hand everything to Him-He has created it. It is sin that has introduced all the natural disasters into our life, but it is the one who overcomes sin that wants to direct our lives and fill us with His power to overcome those natural disasters. When you believe that absolute moral truth exists, then you know it must have an author Jesus and that that author will always help us overcome the situations we encounter. The pandemic has a time-line, but Jesus has eternal power.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 4: How Does Jesus Display and Use His Power?

You might wonder why I have spent the entire month on how powerful is Jesus? You might say, He is all powerful and we all know that. But I wonder if granting Jesus all power means that He is even more powerful than our assumptions and ideas? In other words, do many Christians believe that Jesus is more powerful than anything except how they perceive Him to be.

I am sure if we took a poll, a majority of Christians would say that Jesus should not have let the pandemic happen and when it did happen, He should have cleaned it up right away and certainly had it stopped before 100,000 people in the United States lost their life. That is the way many choose to believe. We want Jesus to keep all harm, illness, and problems away from us and only let those happen to the people who are unbelievers. I believe there are several reasons that that is such a popular belief among Christians.

1. Many Christians say heaven is their final home but cling to the earth as if it is their real home.
2. Many Christians believe that illness, disease, and other personal problems are a sign of judgment on sin and do not think they deserve such judgment.
3. Many Christians feel that a bumpy life is not what Jesus has promised they would and should have.

I will address these main thoughts of the “Wealth and Health” Christian teaching in a few weeks when we talk about what we are to do. But I would say two quick things for now—first Jesus promised that those who follow Him would have opposition, persecution, and problems; but that He would be there to help with these areas and to take the burden. Second, Jesus promised it would rain on the just and the unjust but that also means the just would experience the drought, the tornado, the hurricane, and even the pandemic just as the unjust experienced it.

So, it is vital for us to study the power of Jesus so that we see that---“Jesus not doing what we want when we want”--- is not a matter of His lack of power; it is a matter of it not being the right priority. When Jeremiah the prophet was trying to call His nation to repentance as God commanded, God first had Jeremiah go through the land and list the sins that he saw the people committing. Jeremiah saw a land that was prospering, God had given them a good king to lead the people Josiah, and it was a time of great blessing. But he also saw a strong list of sins the people were committing that they did not want to stop doing. They are listed in Chapter 5 and 6 of Jeremiah: lying, blaspheming God, living in immorality, arrogance, social and ethnic injustice, religious corruption with pagan ways introduced into Godly worship, closed minds, and greed. When Jeremiah began to speak out against these sins and the need to repent and change, the people became very angry at him and rejected him as their prophet. In fact, they said he was ‘full of wind’. When he began to preach or teach, they would taunt him by chanting, “the temple, the temple, the temple” meaning God would not do anything to their

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

land because the temple housed the Shekinah Glory of God—what they did not realize is that the Shekinah Glory had departed when the people would not repent then Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple were all captured and destroyed.

So, it is not only that Jesus is all powerful---it is the fact that we must allow Jesus to use that power as His Divine Will knows is right and we are to be faithful to Him and His direction.

I think the poetic story of the creation of this earthly life as we know it---called the Creation of the World would be the right place for us to start to see how Jesus used and displayed His power and how He is helping us during the Pandemic.

Genesis 1:1-2 tells us that even though God-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were always existent, eternal—the heavens and the earth were not. They are temporary in every way you want to look at them. So, the beginning is the beginning of the heavens and the earth and the Scripture is clear—God created—He did not modify, reshape, or shift matter into another form—God created from nothing everything that we see. This was a verbal decree from God and the earth came into existence. It was not able to be inhabited yet—for it was formless and void—literally not finished in its shape and, as yet, uninhabited by creatures. It was a formless, barren lump with darkness and a watery mist. It was totally covered or immersed in water and a vast ocean covered all of the land. But God in 6 days completed the creation and decorated this watery mass and turned it into a place for human and animal occupation and covered it with plant life.

As we see this unfold in the first Chapter of Genesis, I want us to note three things tonight that speak of how the power of Jesus is used and displayed in all situations.

1. First, Jesus does first things first.

To begin with the creation of mankind on an uninhabitable land buried under an ocean would have been futile and ridiculous. So, Jesus spoke into existence light—the basis of how our planet functions for heat and sustenance. He might have just added darkness for some variety and to get some of you night owls like Pastor Cathie Hanna to bed. Seriously we needed the light, the darkness seems like an extra frill. Then God took the watery mist and spoke it into the right places. Much of it would be in the air to make a geothermal greenhouse that would allow the earth to be perfectly controlled in temperature and climate. This was the sky of the earth Jesus spoke into existence. Then Jesus spoke the separation of the water on the earth from the land and the first dry land appeared. Once the land was out from under the water, in this perfect ecological environment the plant life went berserk and quickly filled the earth, because Jesus had spoken it into existence as a mature plant already capable of reproducing itself with seed. Then Jesus spoke into existence the sun, the moon, and the starry firmament of the universe. They were given jobs that would correspond to the needs of the plants, animals, and humans that would inhabit this earth. Then Jesus spoke into existence all the marine life of the ocean and seas and all the bird life of the atmosphere.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

They were to reproduce after their kind. Only then did Jesus speak into existence all the animal life that we know: He divided the animal kingdom into three categories and spoke each one into existence to complete what it was to do. The three categories were: the wild animals—those that were not domesticated naturally; the livestock—basically, all the animals that would be domesticated easily and used by mankind for food and companionship, and all wild life that would live on the ground—animals, insects, and reptiles. Only then did Jesus begin the process of creating human life.

2. **Second, Jesus did not make any junk; something that needed improvement.**

The entire concept of evolution—things improving, is the complete opposite of how God creates. We need to see that everything Jesus made was good. It was good in any way that you want to look at it. No carnivorous animals, no disease, no lack of compatibility between any of the wild-life, no weeds or non-edible plants and fruit trees, no floods, no great waves on the shores of the ocean, no high mountains to change the atmosphere of this new creation, no danger from the waters that covered the earth, and no harmful rays or gases from the atmosphere. It was perfect in every way and ready for a utopian way of life for humans and all the animal and plant life that was spoken into existence with them.

3. **Third, Jesus spoke everything into existence capable of reproducing itself.**

In fact, the first blessing of God was telling the creatures of the oceans and of the air to be fruitful and multiply and fill the area where they were with their offspring. God created mankind to be like Himself—able to think, reason, and exchange with God in spiritual areas. But He also created them as male and female. They were by divine design physically diverse in order to accomplish God's mandate to multiply—neither one could reproduce offspring without the other. Jesus then spoke another blessing over humans. He told them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue the earth because they would have dominion over everything else that was created for the earth.

How can these principles help us to see that the power of Jesus is greater than the power of the pandemic?

1. **Jesus does first things first.** I truly believe that mankind will discover a vaccine that takes the deadly sting out of COVID 19 and the mother of the disease, Corona Virus, just like every other communicable disease before it. Jesus spoke all things into existence without fault and when the world was created there was no disease or illness. They are only in our life because somewhere at some time, sin was allowed to influence the health code of mankind and introduce this disease or illness into our planet.

But if Jesus has more of a Divine plan than just helping us get a cure for this new pandemic, then that part of the plan must be realized. Jesus always does first things first. It is just like salvation where He saves us and then cleans us up. We need to pray for the will of God to be

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

seen so that the Pandemic can be stopped and cured and God will get His needed message to our world. I hate to think what the next step will be if we do not get the intended lesson from the Pandemic.

- 2. Jesus does not make junk.** He will supply the concepts and ideas needed for the Doctors, Scientists, and Immunologists to bring a cure for COVID 19. That needs to be our prayer and I would add that it needs to be our prayer that God will be seen as the one who gave the right ideas to those who develop the cure and vaccine.
- 3. Jesus desires us to reproduce ourselves**—not just physically but also spiritually. This is the ideal time to share our faith in Jesus Christ with those who do not have faith and to show how our trust in Jesus is the power that gets us through the scary parts of COVID 19. I would go so far as encouraging you to not only lead your friends and co-workers to Christ but also be a part of their baptism and seeing that they get started right on their walk with Christ. We are to fill the earth with followers of Christ and show them that Jesus has a very special something for them.

Why is it so important that we get the mind of Christ about COVID 19 and the cure for it? Because that will align us with the greatest source of power for a cure. Let me share how that has worked in our world. The debaters of Genesis 1—the atheists and Christians—have taken many turns in their arguments. The “Big Bang” theory did not originate with Christians. It was first presented as an alternative to the Creator, God, making everything. But as science has developed, we see that Science through telescopes and back dating can actually show us when the world started. It was void—there was no matter—so this great explosion—originally, when I was a teen, it was considered a pool of chemicals that caused some level of combustion and created the first life. But the telescopes show—nothing—and in the next second—an explosion of light all over the universe. Those who do not believe a God had anything to do with it have always wondered if the original explosion had enough force to overcome gravity and continue expanding or whether all that mass would eventually collapse back on itself. Now that we have the sophisticated equipment to measure cosmic expansion, we see a problem. Not only is the universe expanding without any hint of deceleration—it is actually expanding faster and faster! So, the latest buzzwords are: “dark energy” or “dark matter”—a thinly veiled way of saying the reality is that there is something out there that we cannot see or measure—but it is affecting everything else. There is no other way to explain how the universe would be expanding at such an accelerating rate.

Interesting, the same minds that often dismiss the concept of God because He could not be seen or measured have embraced the idea that there is “dark matter” and “dark energy” that they cannot see or measure. In scientific circles it is not unusual for the idea that unmeasurable energy—(Dark Energy) and matter (Dark Matter) must make up 95% of the universe. The equations tell them it has to be so.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Let's try to put the Pandemic in the realization that Jesus may want more from us than just finding a cure. He may be asking the world to change and move back to Him and find that His way is the best way. Then we do not have to invent ideas like "dark matter" and "dark energy" to explain what is happening; we can say with conviction and truth, "the hand of God is doing something and I want to be on God's side to see that it gets done."

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 5: What is the power of the pandemic?

John Maxwell wrote a reflective poem about hope in his book, “Think on These Things”. I would like to quote from it in each of the rest of the studies on the Pandemic:

It is titled: “What does Hope Do for Us?”

Hope Shines Brightest When The Hour Is Darkest.

Hope Motivates When Discouragement Comes.

Hope Energizes When The Body Is Tired.

Darkest seems to have taken over in our on-going struggle with the Pandemic. Everywhere we look the Pandemic has become politicized. If you believe there are not enough tests and test sites—then you belong to one party. If you believe that the economy is more important than protecting the public from the Pandemic—then you must belong to the other party. For the first time in my life, the governor of the state with the most cases of COVID 19 and the most deaths has become one of the great spokespersons for how to cure the Pandemic and is positioning himself to become a candidate for president. On and on it goes and each step of the medical testing, masks, ventilators, hospitalizing, and treatment have become just as political as each step of reopening the states, the cities and all areas of commerce connected with the American economy. I am not sure this has happened before. I know that we were vastly divided as a nation about entering World War I, World War II—until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and The Vietnam War, The Iraq War, The Afghanistan War etc. and alliances with other countries have always been politicized—but when something is happening on American soil that affects American people— post the Civil War--our nation has always united and rallied to the cause, saw a common enemy and tried to conquer or eliminate the enemy. So, one way the Pandemic has become powerful in our nation is that it has become one more political tool to use to try and get your candidate for president, senate, or the house elected. We do not live in a state where the governor has made it a political issue but you can see that will also have a devastating effect on those states where they have and the lack of unity within those states where it is happening. We need to see Christian hope, rally the cause and help our nation and individual Christians see that God will usher in the brightest in our nation and our nation’s health---if we will trust Him for the guidance needed and the leadership desired.

The discouragement does not seem as strong to me as when we saw no end to the up curve on COVID 19 cases and deaths. But it is still quite severe and when we have the most cases in a day diagnosed in our state just last Saturday—then we probably have not flattened the curve to any extent in Arizona. We will remain in some state of national discouragement until we have a vaccine and people see that COVID 19 is being stopped by medicine and especially vaccination. That motivation seems to be working well among the drug companies, the immunology labs, the medical

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

teams, and other sources of discovery for the vaccination. Perhaps money and the dream of big money is helping their motivation; but it does not seem that they have stopped or quit looking for that needed cure. That area of our nation is not apathetic or unwilling to work hard hours to find the cure.

The nation is tired of many things: sheltering in place, people not wanting to wear masks or wearing masks around those who do not want them, seeing their business going under without a steady income coming in, being told that the way they served food, sold items, or even had Church, sporting events, and concerts, (etc.) is wrong, losing a job by furlough without any sign from ownership when that job will be offered back, and feeling trapped by the circumstances that has caused their financial problems, the inability to see family and friends and the stress this has caused for their life.

Let me touch on one more thing before we open our Bibles to see the answer that I think Jesus gives us to take the power out of the Pandemic. That is: what makes the Pandemic so powerful. When the year is over, it will rank a distant runner-up to causing the most deaths in the world. We see that the leaders in that category are:

- Malaria—over 2 million deaths last year
- Diarrhea related –over 3 million deaths last year
- Pneumonia related—over 3 million deaths last year
- Tuberculosis—over 2 million deaths last year.

The frightening thing about those diseases is that each one of them has treatment that would neutralize and keep them from being fatal. So, in our country where the percentages drop severely for all four areas except among the very ill with compromised immune systems, we shrug those numbers off. But COVID 19 is an unknown so many urban legends and self-taught thoughts have immersed and put together they have either heightened your anxiety or made you believe that this COVID 19 thing is a hoax.

Let me share some real facts with you tonight:

1. It is not as fatal as some other diseases but we still do not know exactly how to stop it from infecting us. Did you know or have you stopped to realize that only 6% of American cases of COVID 19 end in death? It is not a huge percentage and we are told every day that we might be a carrier of COVID 19 and show no external symptoms. But we are programmed to fear something when we do not see a solution. We are used to being told what we are doing wrong and that is causing our health problems: For instance, we are told-Oh, your problem is smoking—then you will decide to keep smoking or suffer the consequences. Or, your problem is something related to obesity and overeating—then you will decide to quit eating what you want or suffer the consequences. But when it is something that is just a

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

virus that could be left on anything, anywhere, then the unknown and how I keep myself protected is not clear. It easily produces fear.

2. The Bible is not silent about communicable diseases and handling bodies of those who have died from a communicable disease. Biblically we are told to take precautions. When God set up His laws to run and govern a country--Genesis-Deuteronomy-- for the nation of Israel to function, He had many health laws and they were especially strong when it came to how to handle communicable diseases and how to deal with dead bodies. It is obvious that God gave us the very first rules and laws to neutralize a pandemic. We are never to take risks that are against medical and Biblical good sense. We are to practice some levels of social distancing and leave the dead to those trained to handle the dead and who are able to cleanse and purify themselves after their task with the dead is done.

So, what else does the Bible tell us about how to handle the Pandemic?

First, we need to recognize that if the Pandemic is really something that God has allowed---and there seems to be no other conclusion than say that God is not sovereign. So, I accept that Jesus allowed this by lowering the hedge of protection and it has become a part of our life. God did not create bad viruses but He did not stop them from happening. The main thing that Jesus would be saying to us, is that we need to repent during this time and do all that we can for the Lord. There are always some items that get top billing in the news and therefore usually in our minds. The name of George Floyd is etched in our mind because of what happened to him in his death in Minneapolis but more because of what has happened in our nation since the death. While Jesus was preaching one day, a group came to him and asked the question about a situation that involved mass deaths that had happened in their day and were all the news. It is in Luke 13, verses 1-8. I would like to read that to you now:

The people who related the tragedy to Jesus had one of two intentions in mind: either they wanted Jesus to confirm how bad Pilate was or wanted Jesus to confirm how bad the people who got killed were. Evidently, some people were charged by Rome with crimes and the Roman soldiers located them in the Temple offering blood sacrifices and served the warrants of that day—the way the Romans did-- by the Roman soldiers killing each of the men right then in the Temple, one blasphemy, mixing the blood of their sacrifices to God with their own blood, another blasphemy, and all of this took place in the Temple while the men were worshipping God. The answer they got from Jesus was far from what any of them expected. Jesus did not condemn the Roman soldiers for blaspheming God nor did He say these men were so evil that they needed to suffer this terrible death. It was the belief of many of the Jews and many Christians today that disasters and sudden deaths always signify divine, displeasure over some sin and the person's death is really a result of a judgement from God.

What Jesus said was, "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Jesus did not deny the connection between catastrophe and human evil, nor that certain calamities may indeed be

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

the fruit of certain sins, Proverbs 24:15-16—but He challenged the idea that somehow the speakers were morally superior to the men who had been executed, so he called all to repent, for all are in danger of sudden destruction. NO one is guaranteed time to prepare for death—so, the Bible says, *“now is the day of repentance—now is the day of salvation.”* II Cor. 6:2

Then in case they missed the teaching of Jesus—Jesus supplied a second illustration that seemed like a very ill-timed accident. He spoke of a disaster—once again that made the news big-time—it happened at the Pool of Siloam. It was a well-known pool in the Southern part of Jerusalem that was known for healing powers and the ill and their families went there often hoping for a cure when the waters started whirling. Some went every day. Evidently, one of the towers that was a place to guard the aqueduct had collapsed and also had killed several people who were there to have their bodies healed. Although they did not ask about this natural disaster, Jesus knew their minds and knew they had decided these 18 people were very evil people who were being judged by God. They truly believed there was a strong connection between calamity and sin. Jesus told them that such a calamity was not God’s way to single out a special group of gross sinners and eliminate them; but instead it was a time and a warning for all to repent, examine their life, and draw as close to God as possible.

Biblically, we take away the power of COVID when we repent and grow close to Jesus. Then like Paul we can say—what is it to me? To die and live with God or to live and serve God? Here is the way Paul states the choice:

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet, what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is not necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

Then Paul answers his own question the same way you will answer when you have drawn as close to Christ as you can right now—you will also say, but I need to stay as long as I can help others and allow them to become great evangelists for Jesus.

That takes the power of COVID 19 out of our lives, but what can we do or say that is not trite to help reduce the power and therefore the fear of COVID 19 in the lives of others.

The Gospel of John chapter 9 is an entire chapter devoted to Jesus healing a man born blind at birth—never saw anything his entire life—and the lessons He wants us to learn. It is a great teaching tool to help take the power of the Pandemic out of the lives of others.

1. Jesus taught that some things that seem tragic to us are really a way that God will release and demonstrate His power to this world. I would encourage all of you to pray for a cure for the Pandemic and pray that the praise and glory will go to God.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

2. When the healing did not meet the expectations of the religious leaders of the day, they tried to say that this was not the man who was born blind. They went so far with this ridiculous line that they called the man's parents to confirm this was their son. They passed it on by saying that the man was of age and the authorities should just go ask him again, but yes that was their son. When they asked the man a second time, they spoke their erroneous thoughts to the man and asked him to agree with them. Jesus was a sinner and could not have done such a majestic thing, the man said, sinner or not—one thing I do know—before I could not see and now I can.

This infuriated the authorities and they came at him a third time, and finally the man said, are you continuing to ask me this because you want to become one of His disciples? They hurled insults at him and he stopped them and said, You do not know where this man came from, you do not know how He got this power, none of us have ever heard of opening the eyes of one born blind, He must be of God."

This time ended with them throwing him out of their meeting—literally and saying, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!"

In helping others to defuse the power of the Pandemic in their lives, you will encounter arguments. You will hear the two political stands that are being made today by the Republican and Democratic parties. You will hear some of the home-spun philosophy that the people you are talking to think or have heard, and literally you will hear a little of everything that backs up their original thoughts about how powerful the Pandemic is.

We need to think it through with Jesus—after all repent means about face—turn and go the other way;" and be able to say, "I started out with a lot of fear about what might happen with this Pandemic. But I spent time asking Jesus to come into my heart and totally lead me through this time—so I would not veer off to the left or the right—and He came. He turned me around to show me that my eternal hope was with Him and He would protect and guide me to make wise decisions at this time. I felt a peace come over me that has taken the power out of the Pandemic in my life and I now know that if I go and be with Jesus that is fabulous, but I really think that He wants me to stay and talk to people like you to show them just how powerful Jesus is."

Let me tell you how that story ended. When Jesus heard about the man being thrown out of the meeting with the Pharisees, Jesus went and found him and asked him if he wanted to follow Jesus. The man said yes and worshipped Jesus—saying he believed and whether or not he was ever welcome in the Temple again he knew that he was on the right side with Jesus.

Then Jesus said, "*For judgment, I have come into this world. So that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind.*" John 9:39 Jesus came to save all He could, but in doing that, it means that some are lost—but all are judged by Jesus. Jesus starts out as all are worthy of His salvation—and those who recognize they have some spiritual darkness will accept Jesus and see; but many that think

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

they are in the light of anything other than Christ will often become blind to Jesus. You will quickly tell when you speak with them and share your testimony.

Remember you have to have a testimony to share it Let's draw as close to Jesus as we can at this time and accept His peace and then share how we got that peace with others.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 6: How Should a Christian View the Pandemic?

John Maxwell wrote a reflective poem about hope in his book, “Think on These Things”. I would like to quote again from it tonight. The poem is titled, “What does Hope Do for Us”.

HOPE SWEETENS WHEN BITTERNESS BITES,

HOPE SINGS WHEN ALL MELODIES ARE GONE.

HOPE BELIEVES WHEN EVIDENCE IS ELIMINATED.

Over the past several weeks, our nation has been pushed into a hole. After riding an economic boom for the past few years, we suddenly find ourselves facing a public health crisis, potential economic calamity—uncertainty at the least, and a murky future. How should Christians react to a barrage of negative news and mounting frustration and uncertainty?

First, of all we need to remind ourselves and all other believers—our hope is not in our checking account, our 401K, our annuities, our supply of food and necessary household items or any other external person or thing. Our hope is in Christ alone. So, we need to speak truth to each other and not get swallowed up in the ‘politicalness’ of the Pandemic, the frustration of ‘sheltering in place’, ‘social distancing’, ‘wearing a mask’ or any other requirement to help contain the Pandemic, or allowing the ‘fear of the unknown to replace the truth of our faith.’

Since we as Christians are not caught up in the false idea that this world is all there is and that what happens here is the ‘most important thing in our life’—we already have a sweet message that can be given in the worst of conditions. Remember our Lord Jesus who said from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” also asked for the forgiveness of the mob that was chiding Him to die, told the repentant and accepting thief that he would be with Him in Paradise, and declared, “It is finished!” before He gave up His life. Jesus in the most bitter and horrible of conditions gave the sweet message of hope to all who were present: forgiveness, salvation, and a triumph over sin and the grave. We need to offer that sweet message of hope even if we are more like the reluctant prophet Jonah—even when he was not thrilled that he had to preach to those he had been sent to save—he gave it his all and led the entire city of Nineveh to accept God and escape destruction. We have a sweet message—Our God is bigger than any of these problems and He will solve them in a way that will bless all believers—we need to give it often and clearly.

We have a song of encouragement when all other melodies are gone. In one of the songs of the Bible, Psalm 73, a man named Asaph—often called the choir leader in The Psalms-- is very honest about how he felt in a time of discouragement. He said: *“God is good, but as for me, my feet had almost slipped. I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.”* Psalms 73: 2-5. His sense of justice was

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

offended just as you might have experienced when you see people afflicted by an invisible contagion—COVID 19. But he showed great wisdom—it was Godly wisdom. He said, “If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood the final destiny.” Psalm 73: 15-17

Demonstrating a realistic faith—a tough one—he refused to allow his emotions to get the best of him—or to cause others to stumble.

Remember: **DESPAIR IS MORE INFECTIOUS THAN COVID 19!** When we let the melodies dry up in our heart and we live in fear and anxiety, it will undermine the faith of all who come in contact with us. We will spread something much more deadly than COVID 19—no matter how many masks we are wearing over our mouth. Some folks think they’re old enough to say anything they want; but the truth is the beauty of age is gaining the wisdom to know what to say when.

Keeps that melody going---my encouragement to each of you listening is to have this same wisdom as Asaph. Resolve to resist the temptation from Satan to give into fear or anxiety. Refuse to give voice to despair. Do not allow your emotions to override your truth. But “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6

Sing your song with conviction and with faith. Jesus is greater than this Pandemic and He will see us through it. I will live and die in peace because I know that I shall always be with Christ.

Our message is really: **C.O.V.I.D-19**—Stands for. . .

Christ Over Viruses and Infectious Diseases.

Joshua 1:9— “Have I not commanded you, be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go!”

As Christians, we have an unquenchable hope that lives strong in us regardless of what temporary evidence might tend to insinuate. We have a lot in common with the readers of the Epistle of II Peter, and I want to focus on the third chapter of that little Epistle tonight as we see how a Christian can face and be victorious over whatever comes against them.

The greatest advice of this chapter I think is contained in those first two verses. If you want something that will guide your life right, then trust in the prophets and not the pundits and remember what Jesus taught and revealed to His apostles as they wrote the Books of the New Testament.

Why are the prophets so much more reliable than pundits? Because pundits say almost anything at any time. They tell us the economy is soaring and at the same time, they also say the economy is collapsing and they are using the very same statistics and material. They make statements all the

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

time that are very misleading, apply only to that time but they give them broad application, and are often self-promoting in all they say. I still remember as a young man how people in January would marvel over the percentage of predictions Jeanne Dixon had gotten right the previous year. But it was never more than 56%—usually much less. Why not use the Bible prophets—did you know they are batting 1000% and even the prophecies that the pundits think the Bible missed have been fully revealed over time and once again as always, the Bible wins out. Do you realize that the Bible predicted that Israel would be dissolved as a nation—as early as Psalms—3,000 years ago and many times in the Prophets—2,600 -2,800 years ago. And that the Bible in the Old Testament says 2,600-3,000 years ago that Israel would be restored as a nation—by the way Israel disappeared as a nation in 125 AD and was restored as a nation in 1946—1821 years later. But the most fascinating part of the prophecy given at least two dozen times is that Israel would be restored as a nation full of non-believers. God said in His Word over and over, the nation that He especially created to bear His Son would be eliminated for unfaithfulness and then would be restored again while unfaithful. We need to stand on the side of the Prophets and the Bible—over 450 prophecies of Christ coming; the first and the second time. If His coming the first time was fulfilled in such detail as the city where He would be born, the heavenly light that would help guide the wise men, the mother and father both of the tribe of Judah, the attempted assassination of Him as an infant, the family escaping to Egypt, and the child growing up in an obscure Roman village called Nazareth—among many fulfilled prophecies—then we better believe that His second coming will be fulfilled in just such detail.

So, Peter begins with taunts that would be thrown at those who believe that Jesus will come again—he says they will say—you have said that ever since Jesus was born and nothing has happened. That is partially right. The last days began when Jesus brought salvation through faith and grace and continue to this day. The last days of our generation have seen many signs come to fruition, like Israel becoming a nation again, the realignment of the Middle East, the rise of China to be a world power, the holocaust and the resulting birth of a nation for persecuted Jews in the land first given to Abraham.

Then Peter reminds them and us of a truth Christians should hold onto. The earth has had two cataclysmic events that created a new earth. The first was creation when the earth was created out of water—by water. The ideal earth was created by the Word of Jesus with a water canopy above the earth and reservoirs, rivers, lakes and seas below the earth. Then these same waters that provided a Garden of Eden existence for everyone at that time were used by God for a universal flood that changed the earth in every way and none of it for the better.

So, Peter says when the Day of the Lord comes, God's judgment upon the earth—it will be a second element of creation that will be used to cleanse the earth—fire. The Day of the Lord will occur twice as the earth is reshaped for eternity. First, as we see in I Thessalonians 5:2 the Day of the Lord will occur when Christ comes again—even His coming to get His Church will be a part of the Day of the Lord. Revelation 6:17 says the opening of the 6th seal will start the Day of the Lord unwinding on the

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

earth. But the Christian believers will already have been raptured from the earth and will escape this great time of torment and punishment. We see in I Thessalonians 5:9 that the believer will receive salvation not wrath. Revelation then takes us through the judgments of the bowls and of the trumpets until Christ comes to earth with His raptured bride, Revelation 19:19-21. If you will take time to read those judgments you will see that fire and heat are both a great part of the punishment that comes upon the earth in an attempt by God to get more people to accept Him as Lord. After all, the caldron of fire and molten rock that fill the center of the earth is only restrained from the rest of the earth by a thin ten-foot layer of protective rock. This fire cleansing will be enough to cleanse the earth for the 1000-year rule of Christ and to reshape the earth in the way that Christ originally spoke it done.

But as we read on in the book of Revelation, we find the 1,000-year reign ends with a rebellion led by Satan against the authority of Jesus. This will end with the total fire destruction of the earth and II Peter 3:10-tells us that this will be the total destruction of the heavens (the atmosphere we can see and the Universe beyond this atmosphere) as well as the earth and will include the destruction of all the atoms and all the elements of this earth. This is essential for two reasons:

- 1) There is not one part of our present universe that has not been polluted by the effect of sin. And the final Heaven and Earth or the new Heaven and the new Earth will have nothing tainted or stained in it at all.
- 2) Nothing in our present universe is eternal and the new heaven and the new earth will have to be made of eternal material to last forever. Revelation tells us that this will happen while the Great White Throne of Judgment is going on and at the end of this judgment, which will not include Christians—for their name has been found in the Book of Life; God will display this eternal earth to His followers and will bring the eternal city of Heaven down to the earth for God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and all of His believers to live forever. This is the place that Jesus spoke about in John 14 when He told His disciples that He was going away to build a place for them and would come again and take them with Him to live together in this special created place of personal mansions/huge rooms and great beauty.

The final admonition to the readers of his Epistle by Peter is the final admonition to us. How should a Christian view the Pandemic? We should see it as one more step towards the coming of Christ who will cleanse this earth and make it again what He created it to be and then even more—usher in the eternal heaven and the eternal earth. We should keep ourselves as holy people and we should live godly lives that reflect the relationship we want to have with Jesus forever. We should believe in that new heaven and new earth and do all that we can to speed the day when it will happen and we can see it with our own eyes. We should not give any eternalness to the Pandemic---for it will pass. Take caution, foolishness is not faith and saying that you do not have to observe any restrictions for you are a child of God is about as dumb as handling snakes and drinking poison to prove how strong your God is---No, we need to put your strongest trust in Jesus—who will take care of us through the

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Pandemic and through much greater problems and persecutions---trusting that He shall also honor His prophecy and statement to come again so that we might be with Him.

The end of the Second Epistle of Peter is a challenge that we need to hear. It is interpreted, "What kind of people should we be?" This is said in light of the present Pandemic, in the upcoming Day of the Lord, and in the hope for eternal life with Jesus. It literally means, "How astoundingly excellent you ought to be!"

Peter spells it out when he says, "Follow God for He alone controls the judgments and eternity." Live with sin as an occasional unwanted guest in your life—not as your constant companion. Move Jesus into your house and every other influence that is not Christian out. Live in hope, in expectation, in eager desire of the Day of God---a strong contrast to the Day of the Lord which is judgment upon those who refused to accept Jesus as Savior; the Day of God is when our eternal life with God starts.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 7: Why is the Unknown Always So Powerful?

The unknown approaches us with a lot of stealth and cunning. It often seems to surprise us and rarely makes us feel very good. We want to explore tonight why the unknown is so powerful and what God is saying to us when we face the unknown.

When it comes to the signs of nature that God might use to get His message across to us, most of us know only enough to scare the 'bejesus' out of us. We know that God uses signs of nature as judgments to call nations to repentance. Both the Bible and history attest to the fact that God has a pattern of dealing with nations. When a nation rebels against God, He responds first by raising up prophetic voices to call the nation to repentance. These are not necessarily people with supernatural knowledge of the future. They simply have the gift of discernment to see where a nation is missing God's mark. We would say, "they know how to apply the Scriptures to contemporary events". If a nation refuses to listen to the prophetic voices, God will then send remedial judgments. These can take many forms. God spelled out one such time in Deuteronomy 28 and mentions these judgments: economic failure, rebellion of youth, an epidemic of divorce, confusion in government, foreign domination and military defeat. The same chapter also mentions natural disasters like drought, crop failure and pestilence.

Finally, if a nation digs in against God and sets its mind against God and all His calls to repentance, a point of no return will be reached --- often referred to as "when the wound becomes incurable:", Nahum 3:19 (Nineveh); Jeremiah 30:12 (10 Tribes of Israel), and Micah 1:9 (Judah, Samaria, and Jerusalem). At this point the Lord will deliver that nation from judgment to destruction. That destruction may occur quickly – as with Babylon—which fell in one night to the Persians and the Soviet Union, which crumbled out of existence in a matter of weeks or it may occur gradually over a period of time, like the Roman Empire, which wound down for several centuries before it disappeared as the dominant force in the Western World.

We hear things like that and we think, all right is God doing something in this world through the Pandemic and in our nation through the racial unrest that we need to hear and respond to? Are we able to see what God might be saying behind these two crises?

Some want to direct us to Satan and say that all-natural calamities come from Satan and not God. But we need to remember that the Bible tells us that God is sovereign. Satan is not free to do anything he wants or pleases. When he wanted to torment Job, who we will look closely at tonight, he had to ask God's permission, and when he was granted permission, God laid down rules about what Satan could and could not do, Job 1: 6-22.

We know that God does not tempt us, James 1:13, but Jesus taught in His model prayer for us to pray, "Do not lead us into temptation", Mathew 5:13. The only way I see to reconcile these two

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

statements is to see that although Satan is the tempter, he cannot do so unless God permits it to happen. That is why God told us that every temptation can be resisted and refused. I Corinthians 10:13. God monitors the temptations that come to us so that none are greater than our ability to resist.

God is sovereign and nothing happens that He does not allow, either in His perfect will—what He would always do or His permissive will—what He allows to happen. So, we need to see the lessons for our time of dealing with the unknown in order to be as victorious as possible.

We must listen to the voices of social unrest and hear what God's prophetic voices are saying. I am very disappointed that we have chosen to use unbiblical thoughts to phrase the discussion but I clearly see how it happened. The Bible uses the word race to speak about moving forward in the Lord—running the race with patience etc., because the Bible does not acknowledge that God created three or more different types of humans and divide those into race. God created mankind—and Adam and Eve had within their gene pool all the colors that a person could ever be; from the iridescent white beige to the darkest black or blue beige. The same was true of Noah and his three sons and their wives. They had within their gene pool all the colors that a person could ever be. He called this creation group mankind and if you must use the word race with people and use it Biblically, He created the “human race”. It only takes the most elementary of thoughts to realize we are all the same type of creation. We can breed together with no faltering in the genetic ability to continue to produce children in future generations, we can exchange body parts, blood and other essentials for life not on the basis of the color of our skin but on the basis of testing for compatibility and the match of the materials being exchanged—we had a lovely Asian woman in our congregation that needed a kidney transplant and it was a match found primarily in Caucasian people. Although her family could trace their Korean heritage back for centuries and they had only married other Koreans, here this woman needed a kidney from a larger pool of people than her ancestry.

But people being people, we have decided that certain ethnic groups are different enough that they need to be classified as different races, I will use the common usage tonight, but I just want you to know it is neither biblical or right, and long term it is very dangerous because it implies that we are different types of people or different races.

I have two thoughts I want to state about our present social crisis.

Since God never uses sin to accomplish His purposes.

1. Stereotyping and mistreating people of color can never be the way that God wants good to come to our nation.
2. Looting, destruction of property, and the taking of lives cannot be the ways that God would have people make a statement about their mistreatment.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

The Church must take the lead—we have heard a trumpet call from God to change how our nation treats and mistreats people of color. It means we must learn, befriend and embrace people of a different color than you and make sure that you share the knowledge that you think they are just as valuable as you and your family. Twenty + years ago the nation rioted because of the beating of a black man in Los Angeles; and we basically did not change the treatment of people of color—some ways worse-- and now the riots are almost always fueled by people of color being killed. We need to also embrace the police that patrol and police our city. We also need to befriend these people and embrace them and the danger they face in their work to keep our city safe and secure. We need to find a way through friendship and love to have a voice in both groups, so the Church is not silent or distant or even biased in how it looks at social tension and crisis.

I feel this is true, because if there is not an insertion of Christian morals then the prevailing sins of bigotry and out of order rioting will not only not solve the problem, they will only inflame it. This is a wake-up call for the Church to move outside of the comfortable and begin to have deliberate and life-changing interventions in the lives of others.

Our current crisis demonstrates in real time that those who have cast themselves adrift from biblical truth are tossed about and say some of the most ridiculous things. Some pundits have endorsed military control of our country on one side and others have legitimized the rioting, looting, and destruction on the other. When gale-force winds blow, these pundits and their followers' risk being blown to destruction with their 'loser philosophies and ideas'. Only those who have anchored themselves in Jesus will stand firm.

Our country has certainly devolved. Franklin Roosevelt once reassured America with the positive statement, "We have nothing to fear, but fear itself." Now, many leading spokespeople and politicians proclaim the hopelessness of our economy, our society, and our future. While others, especially entertainment pundits tell us in Pollyanna nature to just 'hope in hope'—as if that would solve anything. Christianity is not built on such gossamer strands of nothingness or the ability to stand on your soap-box and declare everything you think is wrong with our nation. Jesus is our Blessed Hope, and we can hope in the promises of God in spite of our circumstances.

As we move back to a discussion of the power of the unknown, I think it is important that we see that what God has done already in our life is a clear indication of what He will continue to do. In other words, if what was an unknown was revealed by God and we see the result—we can apply the same scenario to what is an unknown for us today. I would like to take two passages of Scripture that show how the universal promises of God are not dependent on circumstances nor are they dependent on what is known and what is unknown. In each Scripture the known will shed the light of understanding on that which is not known.

1. II Corinthians 1:20 says, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Christ. And through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God. All the promises of

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

God in the Old Testament and New Testament of peace, joy, love goodness, forgiveness, salvation, sanctification, fellowship, hope glorification, and eternal life in heaven are made possible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All that God said will come true and Jesus will be the one who makes sure it is done. What we have seen Him do already in our lives will be the basis for us to believe that He will continue to do them—until all are done.

2. Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” Persecution may come but God is faithful, Temptations are plentiful but God will provide that true escape, and God’s promises are reliable.
3. Some other Scriptures that prove God is reliable are: I Cor. 10:13 (Temptations), I Thessalonians 5:24 (Everything), and Jude 24-25 (Protection from self-sin).

Now, to look at the life of Job and what he said, as we see how to make the unknown less powerful in our life:

Job lived at a time when people believed that every bad thing that happened in your life had a root cause—you had sinned and God was punishing you. Although this was and is not true, those who are convinced of this always refer to the justice of God or the judgment of God when something bad is going on

Job was a very well-to do man who had a great reputation in his community and was making an impact on his world. God allowed him to be tested by Satan, within limits, because Satan maintained that Job was only this nice and wonderful man because he had such a cushy and pleasant life.

The calamities came to Job: and they were many and terrible. He lost his animals, his income, his 10 children, and his health. After a constant barrage of criticism from his wife, friends, and neighbors, Job expressed his thoughts in Job 3. It comes after a time of great trauma in the life of Job and all the items I just listed were taken away from him. It continued through the time his own wife begged him to curse God and let God take his life and take him out of his misery and it comes after his three best friends have all come to see him and the four men have sat silent for 7 days and 7 nights because of the intense grief they saw in Job.

Then Job spoke and he cursed the day of his birth, he moved on to say that it would have been better for him had he been born as a stillborn and that even death would be a reward to the terrible life that he now was living. But Job did not see God as the problem, he did not curse God, and the Scripture said that Job did not sin against God.

While we are living out this Pandemic of COVID 19, I think it is right for us to lament, to grieve for those we know who have contracted COVID and to grieve with those who have lost a loved one or more to COVID. God does not want us to approach the disappointments of life as a stoic unemotional person—He wants us to react in the normal way we as Christians would. But He also wants us to see that He is our hope and He is our destiny. When all is said and done, we will not end up in the camp of COVID, but we will end up in the camp of Jesus. There is nothing eternal about

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

COVID—it is one more disease that has come into this world through sin and will be handled by God’s creation—mankind. So, Job begins to draw from his deep resources of seeing the blessings of God in His life up until now. The three friends are never able to leave the unfairness of the situation. They continually measure the areas of God’s retribution with what Job has or has not done. This is always dangerous because we have nothing more than a human perspective and yet we instruct God who always has an eternal perspective.

Job moves away from their constant discussions of trying to reconcile the actions of God with his sins and Job settles on trust. He will just trust in God—who rules over a sin-confused world with power and authority directed by perfect wisdom and mercy.

When Job reviews what God has done and how He has done it, even in the midst of his suffering he says in faith, *“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* Job 19: 25-27 - Job recognized that God was his redeemer and that He would vindicate Job when all justice was finally given and rewards were bestowed.

Job had no hope left for this life, but he clearly felt that God—here his redeemer—he would have said Jesus Christ had Job known who He was--will vindicate him. It would be a time of perfect fellowship as they share together for eternity.

By the time Job has truly evaluated his life and the role that God has in his life—he makes a great comparison that should be our guide for how to face the unknown. He tells of human expeditions that seek to mine the valuables out of the earth; the paths that all creatures take, but says you cannot find wisdom by any of these means. It is not dug out of the mountain, or found in the sea, and it cannot be purchased. So, where is wisdom found? The wisdom to handle the unknown?

“God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for He views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it.

And he said to the human race. The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom—and to shun evil is understanding.” Job 28: 23-28

Just as with Job—so with the COVID 19 Pandemic, “God alone knows all about it, because He knows everything. True wisdom belongs to the One who is the almighty Creator. A person can only know it if God declares or reveals it to him. Job had made the connection his friends could not see. While the specific features of God’s wisdom may not be revealed to us, the alpha and omega of wisdom is to revere God and avoid sin. In so doing, we leave the unanswered questions to Him and trust in

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

submission. All a believer can do is trust and obey, and that is enough wisdom to face anything. One may never know the reasons for suffering in your life.

So, the unknown is not as powerful as we allow it to be, because when we walk hand in hand with the Lord—it may not all be understandable but it is bearable. We do not have to live in fear or anxiety. How we have seen God work in our life—revealing and explaining things to us; how we have seen God work in the life of others—testimonies here on earth and the great stories of the Bible; and how we know the mercy and faithfulness of God has led us to where we are—all combine to shed great light on what God will do for us when we face the unknown. Everything that we accept on faith—that which we cannot see, touch, or measure—the effect of baptism on us, the healing power of God in our lives; the assurance of salvation in our hearts; the fact we are saved by grace and not something we have done; the reality of heaven and the knowledge we will be with the Lord all take a leap of faith to believe. That is what distinguishes us from the humanist. Paul defines Christian hope in Romans 8:23-25. No one hopes in what they have. We hope for the unknown—what we do not have to be redeemed for eternity adopted by Christ. We do that patiently because we trust in Jesus! It is the basis of Christian hope. It is the reality that what is promised can already be enjoyed in our life. It is the key to defusing the power that any unknown can hold over us—even the power of COVID 19. We have experienced the presence of Jesus and that will not change. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”; because He has promised to always be with me and lead me.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 8: Is Our Only Hope a Vaccine?

Before we tackle the question for the night: “Is our only hope a vaccine”; I want to give more Biblical insight on the social crisis we are facing in America and the end-times.

Someone asked me this week, if the racial unrest in our nation is a sign of the last days. It is clear that in Matthew 24:7 that Jesus said in the last days, English translation, “Nation will rise against Nation”—that will happen—but quite honestly we have seen that throughout all of history; but in the language Jesus spoke, Greek, He uses the word “ethnos” from which we get our word ethnic/or tribes that has evolved into our use of the word race. I already shared with you that race is not a Biblical word to mean different types of humans, race in the Bible always speaks to the human race, that word that speaks to the differences of the peoples of the world in the Bible is ethnos; but the meaning of the passage is clear. In the last days there will be more human conflict—not only on national levels but on the division of ethnicity and even great division in individual families.

First question, will it ever be resolved? I am afraid that without conversion to Christ—(who was a man of color—there are no Mideast men that are not some shade of brown), we will not be able to get a realistic view of the problem or the solution. Racists come in all colors and are found in all ethnicities. Racism has the same basic cause as all other areas of bigotry. A person or a group has a perverted view of self and therefore a false value of self. That leads to a feeling of superiority and unchecked superior feelings are destructive, humiliating, and produce genocide. Bigotry is a sin and that makes it a spiritual problem that will not be solved without loving, accepting, and converting people to Jesus Christ. On our walk last Saturday, Sharon and I saw a sticker on a car at a house in our addition: “Black Men—kill them all”. We were floored to think that a young person, it was one of their children homes for a visit, would post such a hateful and bigoted sticker on anything, let alone a car they were driving every day. It was also beyond my ability to comprehend why the parents did not either demand the sticker be taken off of the car or the child leave the house. My thought immediately was—this is not a first-generation bigot—he was raised in bigotry.

Have we all forgotten that our creator has given us a standard by which all Christians are to live: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love our neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 22:36-40. What would our world, nation, city, or even home look like if we as a culture remembered what God has said, and loved God above self, and then showed that intense accepting love to others? The answer to racism is not just funding, education, or not even justice unless people have a change of heart—the only complete answer to racism is to accept the fact that our Creator demanded in His law that we accept every other person in this world as just as valuable to God as we think we are. This will be the goal of the Millennial Kingdom and will completely happen in our Eternity with God. I do not believe that just accepting each other as brothers and sisters will be enough—after all the first murder was the jealous and envious Cain killing his good brother Able. The

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

solution to sin is still the same. It will not be out of our lives until we give that sin to Jesus and ask Him to forgive us. Racism and bigotry are sins and they need to be repented of, handed to God, and forgiven—never to be a part of our life again. Racism is as addictive as any drug and much more dangerous both to the person being discriminated against and to the bigot projecting racism. Tonight, I want to ask the provocative question “Is our only hope a vaccine?” Our world, and the United States has more cases of CO-VID 19 and more deaths than any other nation – so it is very direct question to us—what are we to do as the crisis and the spread of the Corona Virus increase in our city, county and state? We are currently grappling with a threat that has long been discussed and dreaded—the outbreak of a disease that has become a global pandemic.

Widespread epidemics have occurred throughout human history. The one we have probably heard the most about in the Church is the Old Testament epidemic in Egypt recorded as an outbreak of disease on all the animals and people of Egypt. It was one of the plagues recorded in Exodus 9. Israel had a severe plague as a punishment for King David’s “census of gloating” that God had commanded him not to take in II Samuel 24. 70,000 men died before David repented and offered a sin offering sacrifice to God that brought the plague to an end.

We are almost overwhelmed at what II Kings 19 records where the Assyrians had encircled Jerusalem with a massive army and the Godly king of Israel, Hezekiah, went to the lord in prayer and asked God for deliverance. II Kings 19:35 says, “That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp When the people got up the next morning— there were all the dead bodies.

Since Biblical times, we have had several epidemics. In the Middle Ages, a widespread outbreak of bubonic plague in Europe killed 25 million and led to persecution of the Jews who were practicing the God given dietary and hygienic laws.

In 1918, the Spanish Flu or bird flu broke out the last year of World War I, and quickly spread worldwide. It resulted in more deaths than those who were killed in the war. It is estimated that as many as 40 million people died from the disease worldwide, making it the most devastating epidemic in recorded history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in the four years of the bubonic plague which swept Europe from 1347 to 1351.

The reason for the high death toll of the Spanish Flu is that it produced pneumonia in almost every case, and there were no antibiotics in existence to counter the pneumonia. The first antibiotic, penicillin, was not discovered until 1928.

As medical scientists have come to understand the nature of viral diseases, they have made incredible strides preventing and treating them. Vaccines and treatments are able to mitigate most of the threat to our times. But doctors, scientists, and even political leaders have realized that new strains might not be treatable by our vaccines and be easily transmitted from person to person. With a global economy and air travel available to anywhere, the fear of an explosive outbreak of deadly virus was a very true possibility.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

In late 2019, a new type of virus, COVID-19 emerged in the Wuhan province of China. Once the new virus began to infect the local population, it was only a matter of time before it spread throughout the world. In late February, 2020 the WHO said it could become a global pandemic and on March 11, 2020 declared it was a world-wide pandemic. It disrupted the life of almost everyone on the planet. Normal everyday life changed for billions of people. Businesses closed, people lost their jobs, and almost all who wanted to keep their jobs were forced to work from home. The few exceptions were those deemed to be in essential jobs for the nation to survive. Our world in a few short weeks had gone into a lockdown.

Will that lockdown only really be lifted by the discovery of a vaccine? I want us to look at Scripture as we study that question tonight. When Paul got ready to write a book to a town where he had never been, he stated clearly the reason he wanted to go there. He wanted to be able to preach Jesus to the wise and the unwise—to the Greek culture trained in all levels of sophistication and to the non-Greeks referred to as bar-barians—simply the untrained. Were there other problems in Rome—yes, tons of them. It was a bigoted city, a city of slaves where the slaves outnumbered the Romans by a 5-1 ratio, a city of disparity in which the rich were filthy rich and the poor were below impoverished. Paul said his desire, 1:14-17 was to bring the Gospel to the people and teach them about Christ. Keep in mind that Cesar worship had already been mandated and those who refused to worship Cesar would be killed or jailed. Paul wanted to bring the word of the Lord, because it had exceptional power. The word he used is “dunimis” from which we get our English word, dynamite. It could blow up any situation and any sin and allow the condition to be changed from wrong to right. It was powerful enough to topple kingdoms, unseat dictators, and change a nation for good. He would offer salvation through Jesus. The word salvation means—deliverance or rescue. It would be a rescue from the world where they lived and a deliverance from the wrath of God directed toward those who refused to accept Him as their God.

It would be a message also of enlightenment, because the truth of God is released in a person when they accept Jesus as their Savior. It is the only way we can ever be aligned perfectly with the mind of God in our lives. It alone will produce authentic obedience. And it alone is unbreakable when evil comes against it.

So, clearly Paul tells the Romans, when I finally get to Rome, I want to preach the power of Jesus through salvation so that it will release the mind of God into everyone who believes. Nothing will be more powerful than that.

Paul continues that same great thought in Galatians 3 when he explains that good works will not be strong enough to change the world, nor will they be strong enough to change you. In fact, many people get pretty proud of themselves when they have done a lot of good works. He says you want change in your life and the life of those around you then—realize that Jesus is the only way. We all live under a curse, the effects of sin. This world the Scripture says is under a curse from sin and strives to overcome that curse. We are under a curse from our own sins and the sins of all who lived

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

before us and we strive to overcome that curse. In fact, the Scripture tells us that rightfully so—everything in all creation feels the effects of that curse and wants it lifted off of them.

That only happens when we accept Jesus as the Lord of our life and let Him take the curse of our life away—by forgiving our sins. The same is true of a nation, the same is true of creation, and the same is true of all that God has made. It needs to be a repentance of what we have done and a seeking of God to come and cleanse the curses that our sin has produced.

Abraham Lincoln clearly saw the spiritual conditions that led to the Civil War. He agonized over the Civil War and spent a great amount of time seeking God to see the cause and the cure. In a presidential proclamation dated March 30, 1863, he called for “A National Day of Prayer and Humiliation.”

Not unlike David who said something very similar when he led the nation in repentance over his census of pride. Lincoln said, “It is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.”

I want to read you the heart of the proclamation, because I feel it is God’s true desire that we heal our land first by what Lincoln said.

And I quote, “And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of a national reformation as a whole people?”

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the Go that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness. People that is how you get a cure to a Pandemic in our country without a vaccine. But we have become so secular and pagan that no present president will utter such words—probably be charged with treason for mixing the Church and state; and no large percentage of the present citizenry of the United States would demand it.

So, in the spirit of Hebrews 10—I ask us all to go into the Holy of Holies, the inner presence of Jesus and confess our faults and shortcomings and seek for His forgiveness of our nation. We have become so secular that people are criticized daily for using Bible thoughts about moral subjects. Just take homosexuality, cohabitation, transgender issues, and abortion as just a few of the subjects that almost no one consults the Bible anymore—but launches into verbiage of a political or ethical nature

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

that fits what they believe. When was the last time you laid on the floor and wept for our national attitudes about things that God calls wrong? We have that inner sanctum available and we need to seek God to heal our land—by healing our sins—and changing our hearts.

I must say, I knew I needed to take time to reflect this past week on how many advantages I had been handed just because of my ethnic background. I had some false pride that led me to say none. I was raised so poor—keep in mind—I never lived in a home with conveniences until I left for college, never had a birthday party past the age of 6, got only clothes and food for Christmas—and I thought that took all privileged advantages away from me!! How pridefully wrong I was. Since I was raised in a teacher's family---there was a great focus on education, and that education along with the many activities that I was allowed to do, gave me tremendous privileges. From High School on, I zoomed forward mostly on the advantages that came to me from my background and culture. I did not realize that until I moved to a large city with a new small church. When you have no advantages, it is much harder. It is time we all quit hiding behind our under privileged excuses, our being raised in a difficult family situation, or how hard we had to work to succeed and recognize that we are where we are and who we are because of what God has given us as abilities, what our culture has given us as far as advantages, and what our Lord has given us because of our salvation. I know I am not a man who raised himself up on his own bootstraps—I am a man given great opportunities by God to do what I have been able to do.

We as a nation have set our jaw against God. We are tempting Him to move beyond judgment and send destruction. Our God is merciful and He is sending us another warning. He never pours out wrath without warning. Pray that Americans and our leaders will open our eyes and hearts to the significance of the disasters that are relentlessly afflicting our nation. Pray that pastors will awaken to the fact that all the end time signs are multiplying and that it is urgent for them to proclaim the soon return of Jesus and the need to be ready.

Pray too that people around the world will be awakened to the reality that God is proclaiming through Signs of Nature that His Son could return at any moment.

If all that is just not where you are---then for God's sake—you better pray for a quick vaccine. That will be the only hope for a world that will not seek God for healing and release.

So, without strong repentance and a realignment with what God has taught us to do, (worship Him and Him alone); the only hope for our present world is a Vaccine!! This would be the very first pandemic that was stopped by a vaccine.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 9: Why Do End-Time Events Cause Mixed Reactions Among Christians?

Before we address the question for this evening, I want to share a few more Biblical insights on the social—racial crisis--we are facing in America.

I want us to remember that bigotry is a sin problem and all ethnic/racial problems have their root cause in bigotry. You cannot throw enough money, enough education and quite honestly enough laws on a sin problem to solve it. The only way to totally resolve the problem of bigotry is people must convert to Jesus Christ and let Him direct their attitudes toward all other people of the world—no matter how different they look from themselves.

When we see race riots or ethnic divisions that turn into riots, we need to see that is clearly a sign of the end times. We need to keep in mind that genocide—the attempted destruction of a race of people or a total ethnic group—produced more victims last century than any five centuries combined since the death of Christ. Let me just remind you of a few: Hitler's death camps for Jews, the aged, the infirmed, and Poles; Cambodia under Pol Pot; the battle between the Hutu's and the Tutsi's ----- in Rwanda; --those three alone produced a combined total of over 10 million deaths—and history knows that Stalin killed more

Ukrainian Jews than Hitler, as many as 10 million--just because someone in power wanted to eliminate another ethnic group or race of people. Also, last century there was hundreds of more minor genocides that produced less than a million deaths. This does not count wars that cover up attempted genocide like the constant battle of the Palestinians and the Jews; the battle between China and almost every one of its neighbors; the splitting up of Yugoslavia and the genocide produced primarily among the Serbians and the Bosnians in war. If you believe that ethnic group killing ethnic group is a sign of the end times, then you should have your eyes wide open with astonishment that God has not eliminated mankind from this earth just based on last century.

Keep in mind as people discuss the situation with you, that at the base of this conflict is a sin problem and only one human has ever been able to eliminate that sin problem from dominating our lives and our motives. His name is Jesus and we need to keep talking about Him and what He can do when we discuss this situation. To see the police or the rioters as the problem, misses the point. The problem is sin and bad cops, or looters and rioters are not controlled by Jesus, so their actions are sin-directed and despicable. Conversion will be the only thing that can bring a true healing to the ethnic/racial divide or our nation or any other nation.

It is amazing to read statistics like these and see with your own eyes on Television what is happening and hear people say they feel like as a society we are getting better and better—more intelligent, more educated, more cultured, etc. What planet are they from and what are they using for brains? We are not getting better and every one of the problems connected with this series of riots is worse

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

than the riots of 1970 except the square footage of cities burnt in our country. I would ask us all to pray for conversions---that people will give their hearts to Jesus and allow Him to take the hatred, bigotry and meanness out of their lives.

It is amazing to me that the same attitude often is espoused by Christians when it comes to End-Time prophecies and even the simple pointing out of what is happening in our world and how it matches up with the Bible's predictions.

When I first became a Pastor, in 1965, the major concern expressed to me especially at the revivals I held was—"are you one of those hellfire and damnation preachers? I want to hear about love, goodness and heaven." But now more often I have Christians ask me, "You're not going to talk on those depressing end-times subjects, are you?" It is amazing that somehow many Christians do not want to be warned or even have the warnings pointed out to them. Let me point out how foolish that is. I want to give you some headlines from the major United States newspapers these last three years:

- "Natural Disasters, An Increasing Reality", SF Chronicle, Oct. 2018
- "Is the Pacific Ring of Fire getting ready for the End-of-Days?" Breaking Israel News, Dec. 2018
- "With a Surge in Tornado Activity Scientists Want to Know Why", Washington Post, May 2019
- "Very Unusual Seismic Activity on the West Coast Has Experts Extremely concerned" Zero Hedge Dec 2019
- "Locust Plague of biblical Proportions Threatens African Famine" The Economic Collapse Blog, Jan 2020
- "World Economy Projected to Shrink for First Time since 2009 as Coronavirus Plays Havoc on Global Supply chains", Economic Collapse Blog, Feb 2020
- "Historic, Unprecedented Flooding Swamps Southern USA, USA Today, Feb 2020
- "Global Crop Failures Continue," Economic Collapse Blog, Feb 2020
- "Astronomers Discover Eleven Dangerous Asteroids That Could Impact the Earth", Sci/Tech/Daily, March 2020

They are enough to make you think that all of nature is spiraling out of control and that is what is happening from a human viewpoint, but spiritually, the Bible assures us that God is in control, and what we are witnessing is the fulfillment of end-time-prophecies. These articles were written by secular writers who are trying to make sense out of what is happening in their world.

Usually signs of nature in the Bible are used by God to underline the importance of remedial judgments and are a call from God to repent. God follows a pattern in Scripture when He is seeking a nation that belonged to Him to repent of what they are doing.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

1. He raises up prophetic voices to call the nation to repentance.
2. If the people refuse to listen, then He begins remedial judgments.
3. If they refuse to respond to these remedial judgments then God discontinues the judgments and allows the nation to be destroyed.

To bury our heads in the sand and pretend that these things do not happen, or to decide that there is a scientific explanation for all the events is quite honestly the same as an outright rejection of what God is trying to tell us. You might say, but this is a day of grace and God wouldn't have such judgments anymore. God has always extended grace even in the Old Testament; God has always saved people by grace. Noah preached salvation for 125 years while he built the ark—result, only his family got on the ark with Noah one week before the rain started and God sealed the doors. Lot and his family were all warned, and an angel of the Lord even came to Sodom and sought to find righteous people in the town that worshipped only God Jehovah. God had promised Abraham that for as few as 10 people God would spare the town. But the angel could only locate 7 people in this large metropolitan city that followed only God and they were the only ones led out by God right before the sulfuric destruction of the town. Even one of those, Lot's wife, disobeyed God and looked back and was lost. God is a God of grace and He offers a way out of the punishment that will be inflicted, but we must see the need to repent and turn to God. I fear we do not look at things realistically.

We exist today because of God's restraining grace has been working for all of us. In the last 70 plus years we have had over 2,500 nuclear warheads detonated in testing. Nine countries have stockpiled an estimated 15,000 nuclear weapons, with 1,800 always standing at alert and prepped for immediate launch. C. S. Lewis spoke to this very subject when he wrote a 72-year-old essay "On Living in an Atomic Age"—I think it applies quite well to living in the coronavirus pandemic age. He said, "In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented, and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made; and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let the bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds."

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

The Bible tells us that one of the reasons Jesus came to this earth, was to free people from their bondage to a fear of death, Let me share that Scripture: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.” Hebrews 2:14-16.

But the Bible also clearly tells us that we must listen to God, see His signs and let them guide our behavior. When the nation of Israel had almost completed their 40 years in the wilderness right before they entered the Promised Land, Moses gave them a very long list of blessings they should expect when they stayed loyal to God—these are found in Deuteronomy 28 and then he listed all judgements that would come on a nation that turned its back on God. The list is long and very detailed. It includes: the curse of chaos; crop failures; livestock diseases; loss of children; confusion in all undertakings; pestilence; diseases; insanity; drought; troubled marriages; defeat in wars; and even foreign domination.

When we see those happening in our nation and especially when we see them increasingly happen, we need to hit our knees and take our concerns to God and asking for His intercession. It is not a time to ignore the signs or pretend that there are other answers for the signs. We may not have as many national prophets as Israel had, but we have plenty that are telling us to turn from the ways we have chosen and seek the direction of the Lord so the curses will be lifted off our land and disasters will not get any worse.

Jeremiah was sent by the Lord to examine the attitudes of his country and report them. He found that the people had become immoral, conceited in what they were doing, and evil in their desire to move away from the laws of God so they could do what they wanted. He warned them repeatedly and then in Jeremiah 30 he states that they had gone too far. They were not winnable, and they would be lost as a nation. It happened less than 20 years later when Babylon came and destroyed all of Israel. God wrote about this in II Chronicles 36: 15-16 when He said, “The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

You might think that could not happen in our nation, but it did. When Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn defected from Russia after he told the Russian nation about the gulag concentration camps mostly located in Siberia and he was asked to leave by Russia. He also wrote about the tremendous persecution and torture administered by the Russian troops to get the people to agree with the teachings of their nation. He was very popular here in intellectual circles until he was asked to speak at the Harvard commencement in 1978. At that point he spoke of the wrongness of the materialism of the United States and said that our leaders had forgotten God. He was immediately pronounced

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

as a “Tsarist Revolutionary” and dismissed as a viable intellect in our highest educational and political circles. He was not the first, when David Wilkerson, the author of “The Cross and the Switchblade”, the founder of Teen Challenge and a man who strongly impacted the gangs of New York City in a very good way stated that our nation had to repent or it would self-destruct, he was mocked by spiritual and political leaders all over our nation.

I want to share one other thought in this area. If 9/11 was a remedial action allowed by God, we failed the test. We had no repentance as a nation for our worship of money and our military might; but instead a call to patriotism and a show of force to the rest of the world. I am not against retaliating against those who attack and destroy our people; but I do not remember one person who said, “Maybe we should repent of the great admiration we hold for our wealth and our might.” Maybe we should pray that God again becomes our protector and our source of blessings—in our hearts and minds.

During clear and obvious signs and many of them, our nation has turned its back on the very One who has blessed us beyond any nation that has ever existed. As a nation we have grown spiritually cold and made some very long-term terrible decisions.

We have kicked God out of our schools and the public arena. We are in the process of confining religious freedom to the Worship areas and the homes. We continue to kill babies while still in the womb and justify it as important for women’s rights. We are in the process of outlawing hate speech including the quoting of certain verses of Scripture in public or speaking about specific acts that the Bible calls sin. We have churches that have bought into this new theology or may I say absence of theology because they want the approval of people more than the approval of God.

So, is it any wonder then that many Christians—especially the lukewarm type are not interesting in end-time prophecies, they do not want to hear about any remedial judgements that God might be bringing against our nation; and certainly are not wanting to think that God is trying to tell us something by all the natural disasters that they see happening in our land.

Maybe it is time for each of us to examine what really makes a Bible-believing Christian and see if we fit that definition. I read a clear 6 sentence test we can all take right now and see if we really are Bible believing Christians.

Questions:

1. Does absolute moral truth exist?
2. Is the Bible totally accurate in all the principles it teaches?
3. Is Satan a real being and not simply a symbolic force“
4. Can people earn their way into Heaven by doing good works?
5. Did Jesus live a sinless life?

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

6. Is God the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today?

If you answered yes to all 6 of those questions, you are part of only 9 % of Americans who would agree with those 6 questions and part of only 17 % of Christians who would agree with those 6 questions.

A recent poll in our nation showed:

- 77 % of Americans say divorce is acceptable. (No sin involved)
- 71 % believe that sexual intercourse between unmarried adults is acceptable. (No sin involved)
- 69 % believe that having a baby out of marriage is acceptable. (No sin)
- 58 % believe viewing pornography is acceptable. (No sin involved)

But one thing we have forgotten is that: Legality does not equal Morality. Slavery was not moral when it was legal, and neither are abortion or gay marriage now that they are legal..

Legality does not equal morality.

Nahum chapter 3 tells us that even though God had saved the city of Nineveh before when Jonah preached there; they had fallen back into a life style where God could no longer save them. Micah 1 says the same about Samaria and Jerusalem.

It is time that those of us who are watching the signs of the Lord and seeing them multiply as well as seeing the disasters come upon our nation—encourage our fellow Christians to come together again around the need for our nation to turn to Jesus. As the darkness deepens, we must serve as salt and light. We must stand for God and His Word and refuse to give into the demands of a pagan society. We must be beacons of hope, pointing people to the God of hope while urging them to put their hope in their only Hope—Jesus, the Son of God, who is the soon returning King of kings and Lord of lords.

I like the way TV evangelist and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas; Pastor Robert Jeffress said it:

“When the darkness deepens, the light of Jesus will shine more brightly, like a diamond on a black cloth, and more and more people will be drawn to Jesus and be saved.”

That is our role in times like these. Convert the sinner and encourage the believer to accept all the Bible and all the signs that God is giving us to change our land.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 10: What are Believers to Learn from the Pandemic?

Before we address the question for this evening, I want to respond to some of the questions that have been sent to me. The first one I will answer is: *Should Christians fear the mark of the beast?*

Bill Gates has frenzied an entire community of people who worry about his proposal to vaccinate and provide a digital ID that will track every person across the world. Many are asking is this the way Revelation 13 will be fulfilled and is it eminent?

I want to share with you three thoughts:

1. Where you place the rapture of the Church in relationship with the Tribulation really affects how much people fear they are accidentally taking the mark of the beast. They obviously feel they will be living part or all of the 7 years of the Tribulation so they do many end-time survival things: store 1-2 years of food, water, precious metals, and survival gear—or some store even more than that. They also lose some sleep about accidentally taking the number of the beast. I'm sure that many of you remember the scare about all of your information coded on your driver's license—and some Church groups even sued to keep the information and picture off of the driver's license in West Virginia. They won by the way in court. If you believe the Church will be raptured before the 7 years of Tribulation then this is not anything that would really apply to you.
2. More importantly, Revelation 13 tells us clearly that the Antichrist would have to be ruling the world. Since he's not at this time, you are good. Also, since the Mark is the Antichrist's key to controlling the world economy, and Christians are still buying and selling—it cannot be happening yet.
3. The most obvious is the Mark in Revelation 13 is easily recognized as either the name or number of the Beast. It really cannot be a bar code and it cannot be now, because all the physical signs of Revelation 13 are not happening yet: the beast has not displayed magical power to entice the world; there is not an animated /talking figure of the Antichrist that are all are commanded to worship and the other signs that mark the time of Revelation 13.

When it comes time to decide to accept the Mark or not; you will know more clearly than any other choice you might be asked to make. The Mark, pure and simple is allegiance to Satan and nobody will be tricked into taking it. You will know. It is not ID2020; a microchip, a barcode, or a vaccination. It will be a clear Mark that everyone who gets it will know what they are doing.

Relax and trust in God on this one, as the Scripture says: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6.

But as easy as it might be to dismiss the worry about getting the Mark of the Beast accidentally—the battle with COVID-19 has become quite personal for many of us. It is now our friends, family, and

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

people we have loved through the years that are getting COVID-19 and dying from it. So, when you are fighting for the survival of your family or agonizing over the life of a dear friend –it is hard to stop and ask yourself— *“What is God saying to Me through the Pandemic”*. I have heard from three families that are either a part of this group or close friends this past week, who have said, my _____ has tested positive for COVID 19. They have the Corona Virus. I do not want us to stop praying for anyone; stop helping in any way we can; and quite honestly stop thinking about this loved one. But in addition to those things, I think it is very important that we build a foundation of understanding about how God works to move people and ground ourselves to that information so we have an anchor and a direction for our life as this crisis has become personal for so many of you.

So, what is God doing—allowing this pandemic to appear in the first place and not immediately wiping it out once it grew to a world-wide pandemic? What is He trying to say to us? I truly feel, He is warning us of even more possible and impending judgments and He is warning us to turn back to Him in great numbers. This is obviously not just having your name on a church roll somewhere. This is getting baptized into Christ, if you have not been baptized or you question the validity and sincerity of your baptism. Then, give me a call tonight if you question your baptism and we will get you baptized with a baptism that makes you feel at peace as soon as possible. Call me a 602-999-8488 or 602-866-3464

It means that you need to surrender your life to Christ and let Him be your guide in all the important things you do in your life. It means you treat all the gifts He has given you as truly gifts from Him. It means you need to tithe during this time and if you are floating between Churches, then the work of the Lord is still being poured out in dozens of areas you can help. The Gideon’s furnish the Word of God; Teen Challenge changes lives; St. Mary’s Food Bank is helping feed the entire valley at this time; missions and missionaries all over the world have been drastically hit in collections and donations because the Corona Virus has struck the people they get their support from.

It means you need to serve where you can at this time. Many of the regular areas of service are closed to us at this point, but we can serve our neighbors, those we know are needy, and we can help in all the areas where those on the front lines need supplies and material.

This is not a time to refrain from doing good—hoping that things will get better and I can do it then. It is a time to draw near to God and let Him guide you to be very productive and helpful in all the areas that mark a true Christian. It is a time to write letters, call with encouragement, bake and give cookies, love obviously and most of all share the love of Jesus with your friends and family who are battling the COVID 19 invisible monster.

The Bible is very clear that God never pours out His wrath without warnings. II Peter 3:9 is so clear, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but every one to come to repentance.”* God desires the

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

unsaved to be saved; and those who have totally drifted from God having any control of their life and their resources to repent.

We saw last week that God's first line of warning is always the same, He sends prophetic voices to identify and point out the sins of the people and call for them to repent. Then, if the prophetic voices do not produce any repentance; then God begins the process of remedial judgments—to call people back to Him in repentance.

I want us to turn to Matthew 24 to glean what Jesus was teaching His disciples by answering their questions about the Temple being destroyed and all the signs that would be a part of the very end-times after the disciples were long gone. At the end of the teaching, Matthew 24:36—51, Jesus makes several points that help us be aware of what we should see as we analyze the Pandemic to find what God is telling us.

1. First, the time that the Lord needs to intervene will resemble the days of Noah. The marks of the days of Noah in Genesis 6 were immorality and violence. These are certainly marks of our nation at this time and quite honestly these two harmful characteristics are very prominent throughout our world. It has become a world where most people protect themselves and their own (family, ethnic group, nation, etc.).
2. Second, the time will be one where we are to watch and see the hand of the Lord. We need to realize that much of the world is intent on getting you to do what they want you to do. Our series of call centers and there attempt to sell people things they do not want; or take money from them they truly need; or con them out of their money to buy things they do not want or need—should convince us that we are in an amoral world. Making money is king--regardless of who you hurt and how you hurt them. It is up to the Christian to heed what Christ has taught us and read the signs.
3. Third, the time will be one where God measures our love and faithfulness to Him by how faithful we are with what He has given to us. Jesus states it in a way a little different than we normally speak, when He says, "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns." Matthew 24:45-46. Who has God put you in charge of to make sure that they receive the food that God has asked you to give them?

How ironic that Jesus says those who take seriously their responsibly to care and provide for their families; to take care of those people who work for them; to make sure that everyone that is responsible to them is taken care of by them; and to include those who by friendship, mentoring and social connections lean on them for spiritual and physical help are helped—is the way that God will evaluate who was really doing what He wanted.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

In other words, the Lord is telling us that the worse it gets in the world in which we live; the more we should be caring for those we have an obligation or responsibility to care for. When times get bad it is not a time to demonstrate “tough love”; it is a time to practice “real love”. There will not be a single person that Jesus commends for being a “tough guy or tough gal” to those they were responsible to guide. Christians were known for how they loved one another—never on how tough they were with each other.

But it is so easy to say that we have always had natural calamities, so why should I try to learn anything about the Pandemic. I know I hate it, I will be glad when it is gone, and I am just waiting and praying for the vaccine to be discovered that will stop it.

I would ask you to stop and realize that Jesus in Matthew 24:7-8 did not say that natural disasters will start only in the end-times. Because we live in a world that has been impacted by sin and all the forces that it has released, we have had tornados, hurricanes, monsoons; tidal waves; droughts; insect invasions; disease and even pandemics; as well as many other types of natural disasters—all through history. What He does say is that this rise in natural disasters will signal a new era. Matthew 24:8 says, “All of these are the beginning of birth pangs.”

They will increase in frequency and intensity just like a woman in labor and that is what has been happening. Let me take just one category to show how this is happening: Earthquakes in the decade of the 1980’s showed 1,085 world-wide earthquakes of 6.0 or greater in magnitude; that number jumps to 1,492 in the 1990’s; and from 2000-2010 it jumps to 1,591. The monster quakes of 8.0 magnitude or greater reflects the same. 1980’s—4; 1990’s 6—and in the first decade of this century—13.

But a much better way than take each natural disaster as a single entity is to lump them all together and see if the ‘birth pang’ teaching of Jesus is happening. This study took into account the frequency and intensity of all the natural disasters in our world. That study shows a very rapidly rising number:

1980’s—300 per year

1990’s---490 per year

2000’s---900 per year

One reason to consider them as a group instead of individually is because one disaster—like drought—affects others disasters---like tornados. The stronger the drought, the fewer the tornados. But when we do consider them as a group, we discover some startling facts: natural disasters have risen startlingly since 1990. The Borgen Project, a non-profit organization focusing on world poverty, has labeled the increase in disasters worldwide as ‘skyrocketing’. The fact of the matter is that the severity and cost of the disasters have been rapidly increasing and ‘record disasters are becoming commonplace’

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

I think many of us remember parts of Alabama and Mississippi and 2 500-year floods in consecutive years!!

It seems rather obvious that God is shouting at us through increasing natural disasters that “Jesus is coming soon!”, yet few seem to be hearing the message even in the Christian community.

Revelation 16 is very clear that when God sends the final judgments on the earth and has His angels pour out the final 7 bowls of judgment in an attempt at redeeming those who will believe that they will all be acts of nature:

1. Pandemic on those who followed the Antichrist
2. Sea is ruined and all sea life dies.
3. Rivers and springs, fresh water sources, all ruined.
4. Sun cranked up to high and the land scorched.
5. An attack on the Beast and Antichrist producing total darkness
6. The Euphrates River stops flowing to allow all demonic forces to assemble.
7. An earthquake that reshapes the earth is released.

I am sure that to the very end of those bowls of plagues there will be people trying to solve what is going wrong so they can reverse and restore the earth as they knew it and want it. That is why it is so important that Christians—you and I—keep our eyes wide open and literally watch what is happening in our world. God is not a God of surprises, nor a God of vindictiveness. He warns, He calls, and He desires that everyone be saved.

One last thing I think we are to learn from the Pandemic is simply this: science will always prove the existence of God. Our world has made some rather sad moves the past few centuries that seem to pit science against God—but I want you to realize that they have not stood the test of time.

Carl Sagan said over and over “the cosmos is all there is, and all there ever was” and said it so many times that it sounded like wisdom to other cosmologists and became the accepted teaching of the science world; however, you only have to look at the point where the Hubel Satellite was able to take the picture of the birth of our universe and the big bang produced a cosmos in less than a second out of nothing. Matter was not eternal, but created.

Second, the concept of evolution was offered as a way to circumvent a creator and it worked.

Although no true anthropologists would believe that a series of evolutionary mutations produced the humans we have, they still speak of evolution as the process whereby primitive man evolved into the humans of today. It is really not a change of species—it is a progression of humanity. Sigmund Freud maintained that he could explain man’s inner psychology in merely naturalistic or therapeutic terms instead of viewing it as a manifestation of sin.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

All were attempts to circumvent God, but one thing I want us to realize tonight is simply this:

Their assertions were not based on knowledge that could be gained through observation or measurement—it was not based on science. Rather, they conjured up hypotheses reflecting their own desire to eliminate God and man's need for God from the discussion.

Now, the same scientific community that cannot countenance the very idea of a God they cannot see, taste, touch, smell, quantify or measure in any way is suggesting that the universe that we see, quantify and measure cannot be all there is. Respected scientific publications are printing articles from leading scientists of our day that have come to realize that their previous assumptions about our universe just can't be true.

I spent a part of one session talking about how the universe is actually speeding up and not slowing down and collapsing as the scientific community speculated. It is interesting that scientists now talk of "dark holes, dark energy and dark matter", as a way to explain what is not happening the way they thought it would happen. Once again areas that cannot be seen, tasted, touched, smelled, or even defined.

For those who have rejected the supernatural, only physical senses remain. The truth is this world and all that happens in it will never be explained by just physical senses. Our world, our universe, and all that it entails is the home of God, the created handiwork of God and to study it without taking into account the effect that God and His power has on the world will never be productive.

That is my final word of advice for you tonight when we look at "*What are Believers to Learn from the Pandemic?*" We are to learn what God wants us to learn. We are to move so close to Him that we see and hear what He wants us to see and hear and we know His care will never leave us without an eternal home with our Savior.

I want to close tonight with that grand sweeping passage in Isaiah that speaks of the omnipotence of God—and how we are to worship Him not question Him—how we are to serve Him not avoid Him—and how we are to glorify Him not degrade Him. Come close to Him—He will never move away from you!!

Isaiah 40:10-15 NIV 10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? 13 Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? 14 Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding? 15 Surely the nations are like a

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Or as the Bible says—“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 11: How to Develop a Rock-Hard Faith and Trust?

Tonight, I want us to look at what it takes to develop a rock-hard faith and trust in God. How can you be so grounded in Jesus that nothing ever moves you off of the rock of belief in Jesus as your Savior where you built your life—or as Jesus said your house! I think that rock-hard faith is absolutely essential because we live in a day where what happens in our conservative Churches and what is said in our worship centers does not even remotely look like what is said in the rest of our land. In my lifetime, I have never seen a deeper divide than now-- between those who believe Jesus is there Savior, the Bible is God's Divine Word; and God created and controls His universe; compared to the rest of our nation. You cannot make a strong Christian statement in almost every work place; where you go to school; where you do business; or even where you recreate without someone challenging you about what you said. We are a nation that is fast moving towards a time when the only legal place to quote everything the Bible says and say it the way the Bible says will be in our houses of worship or in the sanctity of our own homes. What has led our nation to such a place?

Well, Paul takes time in the book of Romans to explain. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul tells us how rebellion towards God starts and where it will take a person, a nation, and even an entire culture unless something stops the downward spiral.

It begins Paul said with ungodliness; we have moved from a nation that frequently quoted Scripture and offered prayers to Almighty God in almost every gathering of the Revolution to one where God is to be referred to in the most general of terms in public life and is not really allowed to be a part of any of our public schools.

Paul says the next step is unrighteousness; and almost every major moral decision since 1970 in the United States Supreme Court has taken the moral standard away from what the Bible states and has given it to the popular opinion of the nation. Roe vs. Wade was only the beginning as we have watched a series of moral judgments that climaxed in the legalization of gay marriage. We may swear on the Bible to testify in court; but our courts have turned their back on the Bible when it comes to what is legal and moral in the United States of America. We are kidding ourselves if we really think that a majority of America believes what we believe.

Paul says the next step is the suppression of truth. I have referenced this several times in the study of the Pandemic; but it is so obvious that I need to repeat it!

Our children are taught untruths at elementary, junior high, high school and college levels that have never been proven by scientific facts and are in all honestly—often disproved by the facts of science. That our nation continues to teach evolution in a day and age when DNA alone proves that one species could not morph into another species is deception at the strongest level. That is only one example. There are more examples where humanism and humanistic principles have replaced

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Christian principles—you can take almost every area of our sexual life and moral standards and look at the laws of the land and see that they are not based on any facts or proof, but simply that they are more tolerable to a nation that no longer accepts a Creator or a God. When we offer nothing of an intelligent, thoughtful rebuttal to these mistruths and false hypothesis---we encourage our own children and grandchildren to think of the church as a worn-out institution with unscientific ideas that is not in touch with the real world. That allows our own families to become enamored with socialism—the division of all material possessions in a systematic way that allows theoretical equity. This and other humanistic principles are given in such a way that they glorify what man can do if man only divides the wealth. When was the last time you heard an intelligent and forceful presentation on what God expects each man and each woman to do to better the world and His kingdom? The Scripture is clear, we are to work as unto the Lord and not be governed by a group that maintains power by making sure the wealth is divided. How far are we from the “bread and circus” events of the Romans which were massive moves by the government to win the support of the people by giving them whatever made them feel good? We all know where that leads—it caves in on itself and that nation is doomed.

Finally, Paul says that corrupt nations and people will worship the creation and not the Creator. Isn't that where we are? If we confine the talk about God and Jesus to worship centers and homes and let the rest of our nation give the credit to what we have done as a nation—how far are we away from seeing the creation as leaders and Savior and the Creator as unneeded and archaic.

Paul then tells us in Romans chapter 1 that God responds to this kind of rebellion against Him and His Word. He steps back and lowers His great hedge of protection to force the nation back to the help and stability that God can give.

Where do nations go when they taste that first drink of the lowered protection of God? Almost, all nations immediately go to new and loose morals and values in the areas of sexual relationships. Whether it was the children of Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai awaiting the 10 commandments and the laws or God or the United States trying to wade through the unpopular Viet Nam War and the social unrest of the nation in the late 60's and 70's—the move has always been the same—take off the barriers on sexual behavior and let the people do what they want to do.

But even more telling is what Paul says happens then. If the nation will not turn back to God and allow the Judeo-Christian laws and standards to rule the nation—then God takes another step back which allows sin to multiply and the result Paul says is a plague of homosexuality, the ultimate rebellion against the sexual plan of God for His creation.

Finally, Paul says if the sin continues unabated then, God will finally give them over to a depraved mind. A place where right is called wrong and wrong is called right. A place where sense is replaced by sins and no act of depravity is too far or too bad. They do this even though they have been taught

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

these things are wrong and they will commend others who practice the same depraved acts. They will applaud those who follow suit.

Why do we need a rock-hard faith? Because what I described from Romans 1 is the country that you and I now live in. We are a nation that flaunts Christianity when it serves the purpose of winning elections or getting legislation passed, but truly does not have Christian morality or Christian ethics on any meaningful level. We have to withstand the very forces of disguised evil in our land and teach and lead our children and grandchildren to follow God. Even in the most wicked environment ever written about, the days of Noah, Noah was able to lead his sons and their wives to accept God Jehovah and get on board a large boat for safety—when they had never even seen rain. Lot lived in a very wicked and sordid town, Sodom but he was able to lead his daughters to accept God Jehovah and flee the city while it was being destroyed. Were these perfect people—far from it, some of their humanness creates some very disturbing stories in the book of Genesis, but they had a rock-hard faith in God and it took them through the disasters of their day. God is not looking for perfection and then He will steer the Corona Virus away from His perfect people; God is looking for those who believe in Him and trust Him to lead them through this time of a world-wide pandemic to safety with Him.

That is the battle that you and I are seeing all around us. US Attorney General Bill Barr recently waded into those waters with a strong speech on the inheritable right of religious liberty written into the foundation of our nation. This was October, 2019. His speech was labeled “Terrifying” by the Washington Post and Paul Krugman of the New York Times denounced it because he said it “smacked of bigotry.”

What he said that got them so inflamed was, an assertion that the Founders of the United States believed that since mankind has an “infinite capacity to rationalize evil, the moral values essential to the American system of government must not rest on human speculations, but “they must flow from a transcendent Supreme Being.” He quoted John Adams, “We have no government armed with the power which is capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”

He affirmed that our Founding Fathers were Christians who based their new form of government “on the Judeo-Christian moral system” that corresponds to the true nature of man. He summarized that system as consisting of “two great commandments—to love God with your whole heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself”.

Here is the part I really want you to catch tonight—he said, “Modern secularists dismiss this idea of morality as other-worldly superstition imposed by a kill-joy clergy”. “In fact,” he said, “Judeo-Christian moral standards are the ultimate utilitarian rules for human conduct”. He said, “Those rules are like God’s instruction manual for the best running of man and human society.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

I was 'amening' him over and over as I read this report but I totally agree with his final summary when he said, "Religious liberty is under attack in America today and how determined we must be to uphold this religious liberty and direction for our nation written into our Constitution. One final thought—he concluded— "law is being used as a battering ram to break down traditional moral values and to establish moral relativism as a new orthodoxy." The problem is not that religion is being forced on others—but—the problem is that irreligion and secular values are being forced on people of faith."

So, the main attack on our faith today is not from those who stand and oppose the Church and Jesus Christ—but it is from those who have modified the standards that Jesus has asked us to live by and made that the popular and often legal laws of our land. We need a rock-hard faith to weather the storms of secular arguments about the validity of our moral standards and about how to deal with this great pandemic crisis as it surges again in Arizona and other destination states.

There's an old saying that contains great advice for our nation today, "When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." Over the last 3 ½ months, our nation has been pushed into a hole. After riding an economic boom for the last few years, we suddenly find ourselves in a public health crisis, potential economic disaster, and a very uncertain future.

How do we as Christians react to this negative news and the mounting scenarios of fear and potential disaster? We must firmly stand on the Rock of truth—God does not desert His faithful children—and we must speak the truth to one another.

When we warn people that God may send remedial judgments on our land, the world looks askew at us and most of our nation including many Christians do also. We often revert back to the language we hear in our conservative Churches and that we speak to each other—about the United States being a Godly nation—even a Christian nation—deserving of our full support in what it is doing. But relaxed moral laws, abortion on demand—even to the ninth month, legalized homosexual marriage, and the way we mistreat our elderly in health care and financial protection—scream otherwise! We no longer follow the Biblical rules of God in each of those areas and many more.

So, how will God react? The Bible states it clearly when it says, "*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows; whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*" Galatians 8:7-8

So, I feel we are no longer a Godly nation—we do not live by Biblical teaching and they are not the basis of the laws of our land. And we certainly are no longer a Christian nation. When I was eliminated several years ago from the list of Pastors who prayed before each City Council meeting, it was because I closed my prayers with—and now In the Name of My savior Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen. I had gotten three pages of material original written for the state of Massachusetts that clearly instructed me not to use the name of Jesus Christ in any part of my prayer. I can promise you we are not a Christian city at the highest level and they will do whatever it takes to keep one of "us

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Christians” from using His name in any good way at their business meetings. You can in no sense of the imagination say Phoenix is a Christian city as far as the leaders and governing bodies are concerned.

But Scripture is also clear that God is patient and merciful, “God is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” II Peter 3:9.

We need to speak truth to those who are not saved or secure in their salvation. We need to call them to repentance and salvation in Jesus. This is not time to offer platitudes of empty hope. We do not need to fall in line behind Oprah and declare that all we need is “Faith in faith!” No, we need faith in the same Lord that she worshipped as a girl—we need faith in Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, today and forever. As disease and economic storms rage—we must point everyone to the foundation of all who have a rock-hard faith and trust—Jesus Christ the Lord.

I’m sure when we grew up in Church and sang the song, “The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock” that none of us wanted to be that “dude” who built his house on the sand. Yet, that is what the world, our nation, and many non-Bible based Christians offer—a smattering of the laws of God often modified to endorse sin and create a false idea that we are somehow still a Christian nation—because a few words sneak into our speeches and rulings.

But even when we know the truth, it is easy for our human emotions to betray us in fearful times. Watching the news and seeing others react so belligerently or fearfully. When our greatest natural problems turn into political hardball—it often leads a Christian to despair and discouragement about speaking.

But many Biblical heroes also experienced moments of despair when they lived through trying times. Joseph is a perfect example of how to overcome trying times and still be faithful to your witness. Joseph, as we all know, had some trouble growing up. He was a little arrogant, was daddy’s favorite, and made a habit out of belittling his brothers by telling them the messages God had given to him. This climaxed with the 10 older brothers selling him to slave traders.

For many men this would have been the end of the story, but since Joseph was a man God had laid His hand on to do His work; (God knew the heart of Joseph), and by the time Joseph reached the land of Egypt and was purchased as a managerial slave, he had his life figured out and also what God wanted him to do as an adult.

Joseph was falsely accused of attempted rape and his owner had him put in the white-collar part of the prison. The thing that Joseph does at this point is where I want us to see a parallel to our working our way through our trying times with COVID 19. Joseph kept his relationship with God. I can not stress that enough. More than anything else at this time, we need to work hard on strengthening our

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

relationship with God and gain the wisdom, control, and peace that only a strong relationship with God can bring.

Then Joseph set out to do the best he could on the jobs that God sent his way. The first was to interpret the dreams of the King's baker and the King's Cupbearer. This man who his brothers sneeringly called the dreamer used this special gift from God to help others. Although unrewarded even for the accuracy of his dream interpretation, Joseph continued to stay close to God; worked hard to help make the part of prison he was in a good place to live; and waited for what God had for him to do. I would say the same for us. Do not let a good deed go undone by you at a time when a good deed has the highest impact possible. You want to change and bless your community through this time, then minister to them and their needs.

Finally, when the King—we now call them all Pharaohs—had a dream he needed interpreted; the cupbearer for the Pharaoh, back in the palace remembered Joseph. Joseph used the special gift God had given him to save the land of Egypt and to eventually save his own family and his own brothers that had sold him into slavery.

I feel, if each of us will look to God for what He wants us to do for Him; we will be amazed to know that God has families, friends, and others that He wants us to also help save. Prayer, faith, sewing, cooking, fixing, repairing, --whatever gift God has given to you—use it for the greater good of all those you touch and you will see that like Joseph God will allow you to do more than you ever dreamed you could do. This is a time to serve and not boss. We have enough banty roosters parading around telling us what to do and what not to do; we do not need to confuse the situation even more with all of our advice. We need to stay close to God and serve. We will change our world by acts of service, worship and love; we will never change our world by bossing!!

Paul and Silas in jail in Philippi changed that city by prayer and praise. What they could not do by preaching and teaching; God allowed them to do when they hung in the prison, beaten and in shackles—and said it is time to sing “How Great Thou Are” and let's follow that with “Amazing Grace”—God heard and literally shook up the world of Philippi and a Church was born there that has lasted even today.

Rock-hard faith is the only thing that will change hardened and crusty hearts and it is the only thing that will help us survive and maintain our faith in a nation that has moved away from God and Jesus Christ.

And we can each have it. We never get too old to have rock-hard faith; we never get too physically feeble that we have to give up our rock-hard faith; and we never get too outnumbered that we have to surrender our rock-hard faith and trust in God.

Hold on to what works—as Louisa Stead said in the great old hymn:

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

“Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word; Just to rest upon His promise, just to know, thus saith the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus how I trust Him, How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er. Jesus, Jesus, Precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more.”

With the signs of the times multiplying all around us, this is no time for wavering faith or flagging trust. Christians are in for perilous times ahead—even in America. If you’ve already put your faith in Him, know that you can trust all of His promises—including His promise to come again soon! ~!!

Our Jesus said it would happen when He foretold, “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” John 20:27, 29

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 12: Pandemic Theme—My Hope is Built on Nothing Less than Jesus Christ

The irony of the pandemic is what we have lost. I see quite a parallel to the plagues of Egypt and the attack on the idols of our land. As many of you know, each of the 10 plagues that Egypt suffered were attacks on one of the pagan gods the Egyptians worshipped. God stood each god up and what it stood for or represented and He showed that a plague could negate that god and what the god was supposedly going to do.

I read an article I want to quote:

“In three short months, just like He did with the plagues of Egypt, God has taken away everything we worship.”

- *You want to worship athletes; I will shut down stadiums and arenas.*
- *You want to worship musicians; I will shut down theaters.*
- *You want to worship money; I will shut down the economy and collapse the markets.*
- *You want to worship your own bodies; I'll close the gyms.*
- *You want to worship your own intellect and pat yourself on the back with your academic accomplishments, I will close down your schools.*
- *You want to place your trust in friends and not in Me, I'll make sure you can't meet with them physically.*
- *You don't want to seek My face and worship Me, I will make it where you can't go to church.*

If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” II Chronicles 7:14 Did you know that verse 13 speaks of breaking a plague that has been sent?

Maybe we don't need a vaccine. Maybe we just need to take this time of isolation from the distractions of the world and have a personal revival where we focus on the only thing in the world that really matters—JESUS!”

A question I heard often when the pandemic first became obvious about 3 ½ months ago was, “Why would God allow COVID-19?” That question seems to be on everyone's mind again as the COVID cases in Arizona have spiked and almost all of us know or are related to someone who has had COVID or even died from it.

Generally speaking, one of God's purposes in trials is to get the world's attention off themselves and onto Him, their Creator and Savior—which is the biggest part of the answer to this question.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Millions are asking that question right now, believers and non-believers alike, which means that God is on their minds

Let me just share some Scriptures that speak of God's desires for His creation of people.

- 1) God desires for all people to earnestly seek Him and find Him, discovering that He is actually close to us, Acts 17:26-28
- 2) God desires us to sense our own weakness and neediness so that we put our trust in Him II Corinthians 12:9.
- 3) God desires people to fear Him with proper reverence and awe. Proverbs 9:10
- 4) God desires people to love Him more than their own lives Matthew 10:37, John 12:25
- 5) God desires people to show love and gratitude for the Savior by loving and helping fellow humans, especially the suffering. Romans 15:1, James 2:14-17
- 6) God desires to shift our focus and affection away from the temporary, troubled world to our eternal, heavenly home. Colossians 3:1-2, Hebrews 12:1-

This is a great time for some vital self-examination. Have I put things in front of Jesus? Do I have to look around my top priorities to see where Jesus fits into my life? How often do I read the Living Word? How frequently do I pray and is it adoration of Jesus or mostly asking for what I want? Do I spend time in adoration of Jesus, or do I give my adoration to my favorite stars, athletes, musicians, or others? I would encourage you to stop and check because we are at a time, when we will have to set that standard it will not be set for us.

I read about the edict that the mayor of Louisville, Ky. put on the Churches in his town. He banned a drive-in worship service on Easter Sunday morning. Let me tell you the story from the ruling of Judge Justin Walker a U. S. District, he wrote:

On Holy Thursday, an American mayor criminalized the communal celebration of Easter. That sentence is one that this Court never expected to see outside the pages of a dystopian novel, or perhaps in the pages of *The Onion*, (a satirical newspaper.) But two days ago, citing the need for social distancing during the current pandemic, Louisville's Mayor Greg Fischer, ordered Christians not to attend Sunday services, even if they remained in their cars to worship—and even though it's Easter. The Mayor's decision is stunning. And it is 'beyond all reason—unconstitutional.'" The judge further pointed out that the mayor was allowing drive-through pickup of alcoholic beverages. He then proclaimed: "If beer is essential, so is Easter."

I quoted Attorney General William P. Barr last week and recently he said: "In times of emergency, when reasonable and temporary restrictions are placed on rights, the First Amendment and federal statutory law prohibit discrimination against religious institutions and religious believers. Thus, government may not impose special restrictions on religious activity that do not also apply to similar

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

non-religious activity. For example, if a government allows movie theaters, restaurants, concert halls and other comparable places of assembly to remain open and unrestricted, it may not order houses of worship to close, limit their congregation size or otherwise impede religious gatherers. Religious institutions must not be singled out for special burdens.”

These are bright lights in our nation as far as continuing to press for religious liberty and that the Church has the open freedoms that it deserves. A much more common thought of our politicians and judges is what New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently said:

“Our behavior stopped the spread of the virus. God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that. We did that.”

I am afraid that the government will not be the ally of believers and the Church for giving us lasting hope during the Pandemic. But should that surprise us? Jesus said to obey the leaders of the land, in Romans 15, He never told us to worship them or look to them for all your sustenance and deliverance. Jesus is still the only one who is 100 % right and able to move you forward in hope. That is why I say again, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ.”

But it is an eerie time. Carol Swain, the Christian columnist recently started her article about the pandemic quoting from the Bill and Gloria Gaither song, “The King is Coming.”

“The market place is empty, no more traffic in the streets, all the builder’s tools are silent, no more time to harvest wheat. Busy housewives cease their labors, in the courtroom no debate. Work on earth is all suspended, as the king comes through the gates.”

The song was written to tell about the imminent return of Jesus Christ, but the description she said could be applied to the current pandemic. She then added some thoughts about the spiritual significance of the pandemic:

“The unusual cessation of human activities in the world’s busiest cities cannot be explained by the facts surrounding the current global pandemic. We have had far more serious pandemics happen without the world ceasing its activities. SARS and MERS—The worldometer’s 2 percent death rate for the coronavirus is slight compared with the fatality rate of SARS—10% and MERS 34%”

This professor and columnist added:

“The global shutdown strikes me as a divine warning . . . God is the master of perfect timing. Nothing happens by coincidence.”

She went on to say,

“America was founded by men who sought to establish a nation that would share in the covenantal blessings of ancient Israel. Charters and states constitutions, the Mayflower Compact, Sunday Blue Laws and our system of justice with its requirements for due process and the rule of law---all speak of the influence of the Bible. Increasingly, our nation has strayed away from her

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Judeo-Christian roots. . Broken vows have led to confusion and chaos. We are on a collision course with the God of the Bible, who assures us that He changes not."

Unfortunately, many of America's religious leaders have been silenced out of fear, or they preach and endorse a false gospel that is contrary to what the Bible says about sin and its consequences. Good is called evil, and evil is called good, (Isaiah 5:20). As a people we have repeatedly broken the moral laws outlined in the Judeo-Christian Bible. In the Old Testament national sins brought national judgment. We are told that innocent blood cries out from the grave (Genesis 4:10)

Abortion and the spilling of innocent blood continues during the pandemic. Lawlessness is rampant in the United States. We have the transgending of young children. There is rampant adultery and fornication among Christians and open calls for the celebration of alternative lifestyles that include homosexuality, polygamy, and polyandry, accompanied with demands for the decriminalization of pedophilia and bestiality. Morally, we are a broken people. Clearly, the end times prophesied in the Bible are nearer now than ever before."

Let me share one other article about the pandemic tonight. It was written by Deborah Homelster, a Christian homemaker in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. She said,

"What if everything this world revolves around has been put on pause? What if everything that distracts us has been set aside for a specific purpose? What if, in the midst of this horrendous epoch in human history, the author of time is granting humanity a 'time out?' What if for one brief time in human history, humanity is being given 'extra time.'? And, if so why? What if it is to enable us to consider why we are here, to be given the time (and the absence of busyness) to genuinely consider the most important matters in the entire universe? It's time to ponder good and evil, if mankind can have peace, where do we go when we die, and why? Is there really any hope? And what if we only have a short window of time to find the evidence that answers these questions and many more besides? Is there anyone who has the power to take something horrendous, something more wretched than COVID-19, an instrument of pain and death, and use it as a means of accomplishing something so beautiful, so momentous that the greatest minds that ever lived, could not have conceived of it? It has happened once before. . .on a Friday, some 2,000 years ago, when the most painful instrument of death devised by man was turned into the most wonderful, beautiful gift ever offered to man. The Roman cross became the instrument used to produce the cure for the virus that leads to eternal death and separation from the One who created us, making it possible to have a relationship with Him who loves us more than we could ever begin to imagine. . ."

The proof? The first day of the week following that Friday, the One who took my death was raised from the grave to prove that the Cure worked, and that is the Cure He offers to ALL, who will come to Him and ask for it. Because He lives, I and all who accept His payment for the Cure will never experience eternal death. His name is Jesus the Christ, the only Son of the living God.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

I would say again, *“My Hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ.”*

It is easy like to Psalmist in Psalms 73 to believe that the unrighteous and those who oppose God and act out of malice fare well in the world. Maybe, you have thought the same through this COVID-19 crisis. How fair is it that people who break the rules of wearing a mask and not distancing 6 feet from each other seem to be impervious to COVID. But that lasted only so long and then we all suddenly realized they are not only catching COVID—they are the ones who bring it home to their loved ones and inflict this terrible disease on those they love. I want us to realize that God is always aware of what we do and how we act. But like the Psalmist, we may feel that our doing the right thing is not really getting us anywhere, until one day we see it is getting us everywhere. I just spoke today to one of our dear friends who reads this weekly study because they are not able to get on it on Tuesday nights. They had had a terrible piece of information about their family and were grief stricken. They could not get ahold of any of us who would pray with them, and in their despair reached out to God and He confirmed and reaffirmed for them that He is truly the one in charge and He has already taken the concern they had and is solving it. The Psalmist says it so well, when he writes that those who stand away from God and mistreat others--- God is quite aware. He “places them on slippery ground; He casts them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed completely swept away by terrors! They are like a dream when one awakes.”

Look at the contrast the Psalmists says happens for those who come to Him, take the right hand that He offers and lets Him lead them through the difficult times like COVID 19. He writes,

“My heart and my flesh may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... As for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge, I will tell of all your deeds.”

Our God is very capable of bringing a remedial judgment on our nation yet protecting His children all the time. I would remind you that, *“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ.”*

Our country at this time is offering a variety of answers on almost every aspect of the pandemic. We have states that have totally opened; states that have opened and closed; states that are pointing out how poorly other states are doing their opening; and then they almost always unanimously declare that we cannot shut the country completely down again. It is hard to always decided what is being said—the economy, the health, the need for education, the threat of being at school, the loans, the rent, the unemployment, the hospital bed shortage, testing, the size of the next stimulus, etc.

This nation is full of yes's and no's at this time and often without too much order in how they are addressed. Paul spoke about a time in his life when the people he was addressing, the Corinthian church felt he was saying, “yes, yes” and then “No, no”, I feel that is what our nation and its leaders are saying to us and all the time trying to make political points even while switching what they are saying. It is at that point in II Corinthians 1 that Paul contrasts our earthly stands and advice with that of Jesus. I want to listen carefully as I read:

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

II Corinthians 1:19-22 "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No", but in him it has always been 'Yes" For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so, through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

When we do not know who to believe in what is being said today---trust in Jesus. Every promise that God has ever made will be fulfilled in our life by Jesus Christ. Can you stop with me and just think of how wonderful that is? I really do not have to worry about my afterlife—Jesus has promised that He will go and prepare a place for me to be and if He goes, He will come again to get me. I do not have to doubt that my sins are gone and forgotten—Jesus has said that He will separate them from us as far as the East is from the West. He will take our sins and bury them in the deepest parts of the ocean. In other words—I do not have to worry about them ever again. If they are forgiven, then they are forgotten by God. That is a promise God has made both in Jeremiah and in the Book of Hebrews. He will forgive our sins and remember them no more.

Just think of some of the promises that Jesus will fulfil in our life that are in the Bible: Joy; lighter burdens; shared yoke with us—in other words—Jesus will help us pull through the most difficult of times—, peace, hope, His eternal love, His presence; His healing; His deliverance; His handling of those who oppress or injure us; and the list almost never stops. But what Paul says is essential to where we are today. "No matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Jesus Christ.

No wonder we say, "My hope is built in nothing less than Jesus Christ."

It is the author of Hebrews that spells out this constant protection and salvation that comes from Christ in words none of us can misunderstand. He is contrasting the need for daily sacrifices of the Old Testament priest with the one complete sacrifice of Christ and the results. The sacrifice of the priests lasted only until the next day when they had to be offered again, but the sacrifice of Christ will last in what it does to eternity. Let me share that scripture with you: Hebrews 10:11-18

"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again, and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins (speaking of the High Priest—Jesus Christ)—he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy spirit also testifies to us about this. First, he says, this is the covenant I will make with them after that time says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds. Then he adds, "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."

So, once more we say, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ."

Reading, *The Pandemic: A Modern Version of the Book of Job*

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

WEEK 13: Where Do I Focus My Energy and Help?

We have been on a thirteen-week study to see how the power of Jesus lines up against the power of the pandemic. We have seen that Jesus has total power and that for this pandemic to be happening; God has had to let down the hedge of protection over the land. We studied the power of the pandemic and what can be done to help stop it. Finally, this month of July we have studied what is our response as Christians to be to the pandemic?

I said last week that I think the Christian theme for the pandemic is the words of that old hymn, *“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less than Jesus Christ”*; and because I believe that is true with all of my heart, I want us tonight to look Biblically and seriously at the question, *“Where Do I Focus My Energy and Help?”*

The Church has not always had the same reaction to pandemics. The first major pandemic after the Church was born in 33 AD was the Antonian Plague in 160 AD, and many medical authorities believe this was the first occurrence of small pox. It rocked the Roman Empire and especially attacked the city of Rome. The second was the Cyprian Plague in 246 AD and this was a much worse plague. It destroyed over ¼ of the city of Rome and almost as high of a percentage in the entire empire. Think of a pandemic that would kill almost 2 million people in the valley of the sun! It could have been the first occurrence of scarlet fever and it was devastating.

The reaction of the Church in both of those early pandemics was one of help and encouragement. While the pagan religions did not know how to act or react to these plagues—after all like most pagan or secular religions, have a focus all about the person and how the worship of that deity can give them a better life. So most pagan priests, members, and those associated with the temples – merely escaped the cities and fled into the unpopulated areas of the countryside. However, the Christians stayed, ministered to the people, buried the dead, fed the starving, and helped to keep the cities from total collapse. It was so significant that the Roman historian Eusebius wrote, *“The deeds of the Christians are on everyone’s lips and they glorified the God of the Christians.”* It was so significant that Julian the Emperor of Rome commanded his pagan priests—most under the hire of the Roman government to mimic the Christians. He chided his state paid priests for the fact that they did not do anything to help the people as the Christians did. He commanded them to mimic the Christians in their deeds so they could refill their temples. Because the official temples of the Roman Empire were emptying fast and the Christian Churches were filling up fast.

The next major pandemic was the Bubonic Plague in the Middle Ages, approximately 1346-1350 AD. Since much of Europe was Christian and many nations in Europe had state Churches with state supported ministers and pastors; you would think that the Church rose to the occasion with great help and encouragement. But that is not true. We do not have historical quotes from this Dark Age for the continent of Europe or for the Church. However, many Christians—not sponsored by the

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

Church helped hold their towns and cities together. Once again, they fed the people as they could, care for the sick, and buried the dead. This plague was so dramatic that at times, those helping were dying so frequently that whole cities were abandoned to the Black Death. It did spark a revival in the church that carried over the next few hundred years and many credit this religious resurgence and growth to the birth of the Renaissance Age. It was time when Christians rose up in the arts, leadership, and science to totally change the continent and propel it forward.

Other major pandemics have occurred in the last 100 + years. The major one being, the Spanish Flu in 1918 which infected 30 % of the world. Again, Christianity was a major force in the world but again it was the efforts (tireless efforts) of many Christians on an individual basis that helped cities, towns and nations survive this terrible time. The Church was present and assisted but did not unite enough to make the world-wide impact that it could have made. The world was in a precarious position—World War I was just winding down; the economies of Europe were in shambles and it was difficult to see how any massive united effort could be sustained. Ironically, it was not a great motivator for a revival—except in the holiness movement that produced great growth in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches; the rest of the Churches in the United States did not experience revival until the economy collapsed in 1929 with the collapse of the stock market.

I wonder what history will say about the response of Christians and the Church to COVID-19. Will we be a game changer like the early Christians were? Will we help to sponsor a revival like the medieval Christians did? Will we just ride this pandemic out and wait for an economic collapse before the nation turns back to God like many in the 20th century pandemic did?

I feel we have the power to make the difference in our city and our state. I think we can do it two ways:

1. We can make sure the Church where we worship has our time, attention, and money needed to impact the area around our Church, and if we do not feel they are doing enough, then we should donate directly to the work that God has placed on our heart to fund, and direct our gifts to the charity in the name of our Church.
2. We can pray about and analyze our place and time and direct our help in specific areas that God lays on our heart. If you think food is the most important now—then let God direct you to help those who can feed our community. If you think it is medicine or medical supplies then find an organization or group that is securing those items and give to them. If you think it is testing, then get involved in helping to get testing to all the people.

*** Many will feel that their small gift will not make a difference and so will not give directly to the causes on their heart—but I would remind you that the widow's two mites has been held up by our Lord as the supreme gift through the ages. I am afraid that we might feel the need is overwhelming and therefore not give; but again, I would remind you that God can take a little meal and a little oil in

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

a time of famine and turn it into food for three people as long as they have a need. God tells us to give, to go, to help, to encourage---He doesn't measure how large it will be.

Paul addresses the Philippian Church and encourages them to forget their differences, to make amends with each other, and realize that the time of the Lord's coming is near. It is a time for action not a time for arguments. He goes ahead and reminds them that they need to think like Christ and not like a selfish person. Christ has given us a new way to look at life when He said, "*A new command, I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" John 13:34

Did Jesus ever say, I think I will not heal anyone today because I do not want to show favoritism and if I can't heal everyone in this area it will cause dissension? Of course not, He healed all who came to Him in faith and sought Him to heal them. I would encourage us to think on what is pure, what is admirable, and even what is praiseworthy and let our help and energy go to that need. To be able to discuss why we should not support any of the helping agencies is not discernment---it is often just plain old selfishness. You are just coming up with a better sounding reason than "*I just don't want to help.*" But the result is the same---you keep all your resources and neither you nor the need is blessed.

But that need to help may not be the biggest need that comes out of the pandemic. We have millions who are unemployed right now or living on less than full wages, we have unemployment benefits being decreased, and thousands of businesses declaring bankruptcy. I heard yesterday on CNBC---not known for pessimistic news since they want to pump up the stock market---that as many as 1/3 of the restaurants in the United States may close during the pandemic. This does not include retail stores, malls, mom & pop shops, and hundreds of other businesses that depend on customer flow to keep going.

We as a nation look to our government to take care of all of these needs, but it could come at the great price of inflation that could remove the value of all of our savings or deflation that would bankrupt the Medicare and social security systems and leave our challenged and elderly populations vulnerable to staying independent. The stimulus package has already added 4 trillion to our national debt and with a second stimulus we will at least hit a 6 trillion figure. Add that to the 24 trillion-dollar debt, the US had before the pandemic stimulus and we see part of the problem. The other part of this problem is that is not the true level of debt for our national government. When you add to that our government's unfunded Medicare and Social Security promises, plus pensions, and health care liabilities, the total debt of our national government before the pandemic came to over \$124 trillion, or a total of \$802,000.00 per taxpayer. Detailed statistics are available on the National Debt Clock at w.w.w.truthinaccounting.org.

How are we covering the cost of the stimulus package---we are selling treasury bonds and printing money? When Sharon and I got married we rented a downtown apartment in Mt. Pulaski, Illinois

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

over a business for \$50.00 a month and her parents had just purchased a tri-level home, three bedrooms, 3 ½ baths, for \$21,000.00 in Decatur, Illinois. When the US moved away from the gold standard the inflation rate went to 11% and in 1981 the inflation rate went to 14% and the new Church, I was leading, sold Church bonds for 14 and 15 % interest. A ten-year note could almost triple your money in the life of the bond. Let me explain how inflation can destroy a retirement in another way. In 1967 the average income per household in our nation was \$6,900.00 and today it is \$63,000.00. That means that \$8,000.00 in 1967 has the same purchasing power as \$62,125.00 today. If that kind of inflation would return, it was 1.5% in 2019; we would have thousands of our seniors and other people unable to keep a home or live an independent life-style. We may need to reevaluate where we will be needed to help in the economic aftermath of the pandemic.

Then there is the threat of deflation which would be produced by bankruptcies and defaults on national, city and state levels. We are living in a dangerous time when we simply kick the can down the road and expect future generations to pay for what we are spending today.

Paul in the 4th Chapter of Philippians writes of the dire times he had been in when he was writing this letter from prison. He did not have any resources and no church except the Philippian church was sending him any monetary help. But it was also in that context that Paul writes the challenge to each one of us as we view the need our fellow Christians could soon have. He wrote, *“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.”* (Philippians 4:13)

Maybe this is the time we quit being content to live within our means and we start living below our means so we can save up money to help those who will have a need. Maybe it is time we worry less about how much we will leave to our children hoping they will support the charities that you have supported all your life, and you put those charities in your will. Maybe this is the time we consider our financial blessings, not something you earned but something that God has given to you and from which He expects you to be a good steward.

We would not be the first nation that went from prosperity to bartering in a few short months. We know that after World War I, the German people with a devastated economy and no banking system left intact were trading wheelbarrows of fairly useless German currencies for a loaf of bread and the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Communist government—in 1992—had people fill the sidewalks of Moscow setting up card tables from which they traded farm products for clothing and other essentials. Why? Because no store in Moscow had any food, clothes, or other essentials left for sale. Both were arguably one of the two strongest economies in the world at the time of their collapse. It may be that God has even greater acts of service in mind for His people to do if the economic hardships are severe for our nation.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

But you say, how can that be—we are such a wealthy nation—yes, but in debt to the third generation; we have churches on the corners of most of our towns and cities—yes, but are they helping shape the policy of our nation; we have an average of 5 Bibles in every home in America—yes, but are they being read and followed; and we have the greatest media and written testimony about Christ the world has ever seen—yes, but are they guiding our nation? I am reminded of that great scripture in Luke 12:48, *“And from everyone who has been given much, much shall be required. . .”*

Paul concludes that great fourth chapter of Philippians saying that the gift that the Philippian Church had sent him was enough to meet all of his needs. I pray that we will be conscious enough of our need to help take care of our brothers and sisters that we will also give and give where it is needed. Because the blessing will not just be thankfulness from the one you have helped, the blessing will be one from God. Paul gives this great summation of what will happen to you when you give unconditional help to a person in need, *“And my God will meet all your needs, according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.”* Phil 4:19

Let me also encourage you to focus your energy and help on the preservation of Christian values and the restoration of laws that support what the Bible teaches.

We can see why that is essential. Our nation was founded as a Christian nation, committed to Christian values, and God greatly blessed us. I regret that the removal of slavery was voted out of our original constitution and so the words were right, *“all men are created equal”* but the actions were not. I also regret that landowners were more valued than non-land owners and that women were not considered educated enough to vote—but none of those biased and bigoted stands made it into our founding documents—they only ended up as refuse of the political debates behind the scenes, and slowly and painfully were changed.

But within my lifetime much of that original moral compass was changed. We no longer face due north and use the teachings of the bible as the base outlines of our laws. From the mid 60's on when the Cultural Revolution hit our nation we descended into a moral cesspool of sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, and abortion on demand, legalized gambling, rampant blasphemy and a flood of pornography. Our national motto at the time was, *“If it feels good, do it!”* We adopted a hedonistic lifestyle and mislabeled a lot of moral areas of our nation.

We went through some very negative times: the defeat in the war of Viet Nam; the plague of STD's—including AIDS which produced death for many, the natural disasters in the form of monster earthquakes, killer tornados, hurricanes, and devastating floods. This did not include the years of drought, the eruption of Mount St. Helens, 9/11 and the adoption of same-sex marriage.

It is time that we bring hope to those we know and those who are around us by standing for Christian values and practicing them in love. I can think of nothing more vital for us to do during the pandemic

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

than to stand on what has brought us to a sense of peace when those around us who are not at peace and share those values where possible.

This leads to a frequently asked question— ‘What is the prophetic significance of ‘Global Warming’? The answer is global warming is never mentioned in the end-times. I think that is true because I think we have a misconception about global warming that make a discussion almost impossible.

I would like to frame the discussion with two caveats that I seldom ever hear mentioned.

1. As Jack Kinsella, a scientific researcher and a writer for the Hal Lindsey Foundation made this observation. He noted that 96% of all greenhouse gasses and other so-called global warming emissions originate naturally from the oceans that cover 5/6's of the earth's surface. As he said, “that leaves only 4% to divide up between human activity, volcanoes, rotting vegetables, cow flatulence, etc.” It is estimated that the human portion of that 4% is 14%, and 14% of 4% is .056%!
2. Even the advocates of global warming have recognized the absurdity of their claim that humans are responsible for the earth's warming, so, Global warming has morphed into ‘Climate Change’,” Harold Ambler, writing in the Huffington Post points out, “The term ‘Climate Change’ is a redundancy because the climate has always changed and always will.

Scientific charting has shown that the earth can be divided into the following climate periods:

1. The warm Roman Optimum—200-400 AD
2. The cold Dark Ages—400-900 AD
3. The warm Medieval Period 900-1300 AD
4. The Little Ice Age 1300-1850 AD
5. The Modern Warm Age—1850—now

I would point out that the Bible does prophecy that a super-hot time is coming when God will envelop the earth in fire to cleanse the earth and burn away the pollution of Satan's revolt as well as the accumulation of sin effects upon the earth and the atmosphere of the earth through the ages. It will occur at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus, and out of that fiery inferno will come the New Earth, which will serve as the foundation for the New Jerusalem where the Redeemed will live forever. The heat of the bowl destruction in Revelation points more to a nuclear war that will destroy overnight a third of the earth and many major cities of the world.

Where should I focus my energy and effort at this time? I feel three areas:

1. Pray and seek God and then help in every area that He lays on your heart. Pray much more than just protect me Lord—pray Lord what would you have me do!
2. Build up a reserve that you can use to help those who suffer economic collapse through the after-effects of the pandemic.

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

3. Keep strong Christian standards and values as the guide for your life, as the direction for how you treat others; and for the example that you give to those who you meet.

God bless each of us as we make a difference in our COVID-19 world.

**I have one more question to answer that has been sent to me on prophecy. It is from Sandy McCarthy and revolves around the ashes of a red heifer—which are to be used to sanctify people who have come in contact with a corpse in the Jewish faith. Her questions are:

1. Are their perfect red heifers in Israel now?
2. What is the time frame from their birth, sacrifice, to building of the Temple?
3. Do they have to be produced by totally natural means?
4. Time frame from the construction of the new Temple in Jerusalem to the end of times?

In the Old Testament, Numbers 19:1-22, God gave to Aaron and Moses an elaborate plan to cleanse people who come in contact with a corpse and some of the conditions around being with a corpse. It would be an unblemished red heifer—unblemished as well as totally red—the Orthodox Jews believed that meant less than 2 black hairs could be found on the female cow. She was to be unyoked-never worked and would be slaughtered, not sacrificed, outside of the camp. Her entire body would be burnt along with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and the ashes were to be gathered and mixed with water as directed to remove the stigma—uncleanness from physical contact or being present with a corpse.

Sounds like a strange item to make the top ten of the prophecy lists for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, but it has. The Orthodox Jews who are intent on rebuilding the temple and restoring sacrifice are trying very hard to find or produce that red heifer. So, much so that they have genetically bred and worked with the red Angus cattle and have what they feel might be the right red heifer. They will follow the rules of Numbers 19 and store these ashes to use when the temple is rebuilt and the sacrifice system is restored—their announced plans.

Answer to the questions:

- 1) Yes, I feel the perfect red heifer could be in Israel now?
- 2) The New Testament never defines when the Temple will be built, but we know by Revelation 13 the Temple was built, in action, and controlled by the Beast and the Anti-Christ.
- 3) The Bible does not specify that breeding practices neutralize the perfection of the red heifer. We only have to look to the actions of Jacob—Israel and his father-in-law Laban to realize that God can be in on the action of breeding certain types of animals.
- 4) The new Temple is clearly in operation in the last 7 years of Tribulation in the Book of Revelation; we do not find another New Testament reference to when the Temple will be

HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Thomas Haney

built—I do not feel the third Temple of Ezekiel will appear until the Millennial Kingdom and it will be the home of Jesus for that 1,000 years.

It is very interesting that the Orthodox Jews and especially the Temple Institute pursue the perfect red heifer because they believe

that the world has become so polluted that all who want to enter the sacred places of the temple will need to be purified in the ashes/water of the red heifer, and they believe that the Temple can not be rebuilt until the red heifer is found, her ashes are stored, and they are available to use.**

PHILIPPIANS 4 SUMMARY

- Rejoice in the Lord Always (vs. 4:4)
- Do not be Anxious, Receive the Peace of God (vs 4:6-7)
- Think on Excellent & Praiseworthy Things; whatever is true, noble, right, pure and lovely. (vs 4:8)
- Be Content in Every Situation (vs 4:12)
- Do All Things thru Christ who Strengthens Me (vs 4:13)
- God will meet all My Needs (vs 4:19)
- The Grace of Jesus will be with Your Spirit (vs 4:23)