

God and Terrorists

Isn't it strange that God and terrorist organisations have something in common: they are both keen to claim responsibility for atrocities.

Take the oft-quoted verse from 2 Chronicles for example, where God says, "Suppose I restrain the heavens and there is no rain and suppose I command locusts to eat the country and if I send a pestilence on my people and my people, who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways and I hear from heaven and I forgive their sins and heal their land (1)."

We don't like this talk. God didn't send the pandemic, we say. It's just a natural result of the fall. Or perhaps we say, that's the god of the Old Testament - I believe in the god of the new Testament.

It's hard to find examples of plagues and pestilences in the Old Testament which God does not claim as coming from him (2). Very little happens by chance. When we read in a rare isolated instance, "Someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armour," it sounds like bad luck, but in the previous chapter, it has been made clear through prophecy that God has decreed disaster for King Ahab (3). It only looked like chance.

Hoping that God has changed his character between the Old Testament and the New will not work for those who follow Jesus, because it is quite clear that Jesus knew and related to the God of the Old Testament. He lived his life by the book. He even quoted a Psalm when he was on the cross – my God, my God, why have you forsaken me (4). You can't reinvent God to suit your preferences.

Rather than being coy, it would be better to say clearly that God has sent the pandemic. God has everything under control. He orchestrates everything.

The question then arises as to why. It saddens me that I have heard so few asking this, the all-important question of our time. I have reflected on it a lot, and I suggest that James chapter five verses 1 to 6 is a good place to start.

It also saddens me that maybe one reader in twenty will take the trouble to Google this passage let alone reflect on it. We'd rather be watching Netflix. Don't we care about the world we live in? Don't we care about people?

Please get in touch and argue with me!

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1. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.
2. See www.pennantpublishing.co.uk/ttj_natural.htm
3. 1 Kings 22:23 & 34 in context. See also the fascinating Exodus 21:12-13 where "God lets it happen".
4. Psalm 22:1.