



Covid-19 in Alice: Synthesizing Church growth with pandemic movement using the approach of Exodus 7-12

Ebenezer Ayodele Idowu
Department of Theology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Fort Hare
Private Bag X1314 Eastern Cape, 5700 South Africa
E-mail: ayodeleidowu69@gmail.com

Abstract

The remarkable Old Testament quest of the ten plagues that crushed the land of Egypt and its people in Exodus Chapter seven to twelve has enthralled some to look for clear clarifications for an account of tragedies that befall one populace yet save another. In fact, scriptural researchers in a 21st century interpretation of the Old Testament assert that from a verifiable angle, the plagues take after common occasions notable in the Middle East, save for their patterns and quick progression. Investigations of past disasters may lead one to moderate the effect of replications. In this specific situation, a causative theory of Old Testament plagues, is looked at which has present day general wellbeing recommendations. To relieve the current pandemic issue, the researcher contends that it is useful to reinforce fundamental instruction in less fortunate districts like Alice (Eastern Cape Province, South Africa) and to empower ecological data declaration for pulling in more individuals' deliberations regarding the pandemic problem. Moreover, normal investigation abilities in helpless regions and truly heavily affected areas must be improved for exploring administrative infringements and breaking the fear of conspiracy theory which is being rumoured. The intricacy in this investigation is a system to consider a chance of present day repeating of pandemic (Covid-19) and their effect upon the development of the Church in these last days through a systematic literature review methodology. This investigation takes a glimpse at the different reactions of some Christian Church members to the happenings in five specific areas with the development of the Coronavirus 19 infection and the resulting lockdown of the region. The information gathered for the investigation was broken down utilizing a socio-historical approach. It is reasoned that the trust individuals have in the Church must be a positive addition through standard, straightforward, and exhaustive interchanges that balance the dangers and advantages of public health interventions.

Keywords: Pandemic, plagues, epidemic, growth, conspiracy theory

Introduction

In a few months, the Covid-19 (coronavirus) outbreak has inflicted chaos on our way of life globally. Governments have mobilized to stop the spread of this pandemic. A million people to date have died and millions have been infected. The world continues to be severely challenged by the effects the virus. Alice a small town in South Africa that is named after The Princess Alice, daughter of the British Queen Victoria and which is in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa has clearly also been affected.

One Hebrew word for plague is *daber* (דָּבַר). It is often translated as “plague” or “pestilence.” Another word for plague is *makkah* (מַכָּה). The term *makkah* sometimes connotes other concepts besides what we understand as plagues. In the Old Testament, a plague often appears to have a natural cause as in a “pestilence after the manner of Egypt” (Amos 4:10). At other times, a translated word for plague appears to be more like a direct strike from God as in “nega” (נֶגַע) where Exodus



11:1 (ESV) says, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt."

In the New Testament, we see the term plague functioning in a similar manner. There are several words translated as "plague" in different versions, including *loimos* (λοιμός), and *plege'* (πληγή). *Plege'* is the most common word for plague in the New Testament. Though not always to be understood as God's judgment upon a group of people, the terms sometimes describe one. For example, Jesus used *loimos* when he said of Jerusalem, "There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences" (Luke 21:11). (Clay, 2020)

O'Leary, Jalloh and Neria (2018:3), suggest that different outbursts of pandemic infections, for example, Ebola or the Coronavirus, have provoked numerous inquiries as to why God permits, or even causes pandemic sicknesses and whether such diseases are an indication of the arrival of the last days. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, portrays various events when God brought plagues and ailments upon His people and on His foes "to prove sovereignty" (Exodus 9:14, 16). He utilized sicknesses on Egypt to compel Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites from their servitude, while saving His people from being influenced by them (Exodus 12:13; 15:26), accordingly shows His sovereign authority over illnesses and different torments (Zevit, 1976:195).

Zevit further stated that it is now and then difficult to envision our cherishing and kind God showing such fierceness and outrage toward His people. Notwithstanding, God's disciplines imposed, consistently have the objective of human atonement and rebuilding. In 2 Chronicles 7:13–14, God said to Solomon, "When I shut up the sky so that there is no downpour, or order grasshoppers to eat up the land or send a plague among my people. In the event that my people, who are called by my name, will lower themselves and implore and look for my face and abandon their mischievous behaviour, at that point will I hear from heaven and will excuse their transgression and will heal their land."

Summarily, the presence of pandemic ailments may, or may not be attached to God's particular judgment of sins committed. It could likewise essentially be the after effect of living in a fallen world. Since nobody knows the hour of Jesus' return, people should be cautious about saying worldwide pandemics are evidence that we are living at the end of days. For the individuals who do not know Jesus Christ as Saviour, worldly pandemics ought to be a reminder that life on this planet is brief and can be lost at any second.

According to Kang et al. (2020:14), there is a religious philosophy accompanying each plague which suggests that there is a human need to comprehend such huge affliction. Maybe like nothing else, a pandemic uncovers the weight of human activity, our unending risk and without any doubt, our duty to God. For the vast majority of individuals, public self-mutilation and retribution is a special extraordinary and awful type of religious fanaticism. Hence, in the Western world, individuals actually have methods of slamming themselves, and one another, despite plague, disease and the dread they sow; pandemics still perpetually provide some religious clarification. If we are confronted with fear and uncertainty we need to review the current state of coronavirus in Alice and reflect on what makes a strong Christian response to this threat. What should we be doing?

If in the Old Testament God himself ordered lepers to be banished from the community and compelled to live outside the city to prevent contamination (Leviticus 13–14), we must do the same with this dangerous pestilence so that anyone who becomes infected will stay away from other persons, or allow himself to be taken away and given speedy help with medicine. Under such circumstances it is our duty to assist such a person and not forsake him in his plight... . Then the



poison is stopped in time, which benefits not only the individual but also the whole community, which might be contaminated if one person is permitted to infect others. (Luther, 1999).

Background of the study

"Pandemic" and "epidemic" have become very normal aspects of our expressions, striking concern into our souls and creating social frenzy on a large scale for many of us as never observed before. People realize that a pandemic is a disease whose occurrence influences the whole world, and at this point, the majority of us have heard that "endemic" signifies an illness is consistently found in a given territory of the world (Goldingay & Goldingay, 2020:197).

In 165 CE a plague swept through the mighty Roman Empire, wiping out one in three of the population. It happened again in 251 CE when 5,000 people per day were dying in the city of Rome alone. Those infected were abandoned by their families to die in the streets. The government was helpless and the Emperor himself succumbed to the plague. Pagan priests fled their temples where people had flocked for comfort and explanation. People were too weak to help themselves. If the smallpox did not kill you, hunger, thirst and loneliness would. The effect on wider society was catastrophic. Yet following the plagues the good reputation of Christianity was confirmed, and its population grew exponentially (RZIM, 2020).

Christians did not have any armed intellectual answers to the problem and did not enjoy a supernatural ability to circumvent pain and suffering but it was the church that offered people a loving, stable and sound social environment. People reacted towards others as Christ would have reacted to them which is what is required in the Alice region and elsewhere. In these questionable and alarming times, maybe it is educational to recollect one of history's most exceedingly awful pandemics, and to find out about the prevalent circumstances that delivered it. The world has heard the shocking tales of the manner in which a pandemic, the plague, desolated Europe in the fourteenth century. However, the plague's belongings were not felt distinctly in Europe using any and all means, and indeed, it did not begin in Europe. The bacterium that caused the Bubonic Plague was and still is endemic to the steppes of North-western China and Central Asia, where it has flourished for quite a long time with rodents as its hosts (Farrer, 1970:112). Farrer argues that the plague broke out in Central Asia in 1331 CE, and was conveyed to individuals by the bites of bugs that had lived in contaminated rats' hideouts. It gradually ventured to every part of the Silk Road toward the east and cut down the powerful Mongol Empire. Nobody knows the number of millions it murdered in China. However dependable assessments place China's populace in 1200 CE at in excess of 120 million, yet in 1400 at just 65 million. Clearly, the plague represented a lot of that dazzling decrease. Moving toward the west, the Bubonic Plague cleared out whole clans that lived and traded along the Silk Road, and its annihilation was significant over the 4000-mile-stretch of the world's most prominent shipping lanes. Muslim pioneers to Mecca carried the plague with them and conveyed it back to their countries. India, the Middle East, and North Africa were also ruined (Farrer, 1970).

The plague arrived at the Crimean Peninsula by 1346 CE. Unnerved Crimean vendors fled the locale, crossing the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. They brought the bugs—and the plague—with them to Italy. In Europe the plague transformed into another structure (Pneumonic Plague) that could be moved from an individual to another when somebody who had been bitten by insects (and in this way had the Bubonic Plague) went close to another person (Levi, 2008:58). This process was endlessly more infectious and brought demise in less than three days. The plague in a split second crossed the Alps and hustled across Europe from 1347 CE to 1350 CE. It killed as much as 40% of Europe's populace i.e. 40 million individuals in under three years (Levi, 2008).



Methodology

The investigation approach permits close associations with respondents and their settings' (Gedzi, 2012). The information collected from the research originated from a field interviews with a small sample and review of relevant extant literature. Data was additionally acquired from important secondary information, including the Holy Bible. The latter separately involves the interpretations on the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament. This is essential because the study falls under the area of Christian Ethics of which the Bible entries are explicitly a point of reference.

Problem statement

Coronavirus calls us to hear again from our forbearers, who looked to Scripture's portrayals of God's office in the midst of catastrophe as a compass for their own lives. One story is the tale of the plagues visited upon Pharaoh and Egypt at the hour of the Hebrews' redemption from bondage. Could this story help us to perceive how God thinks about the world during our own troublesome time? The ten infections which follow (Exodus 7:14-12:26) cause financial, regular and individual difficulty and pulverization. The extraordinary worldwide wellbeing emergency being confronted today is influencing all nations and changing lives and vocations. In a wide range of emergencies and critical crossroads, this change causes political agitation. In addition, both youngsters and older people rushed to make a move and react to the necessities of others. The equivalent is occurring now during the Covid-19 pandemic. While consideration is as of now centred on those that are infected by the virus, there are numerous signs that the pandemic will have enduring consequences for socio-cultural, religion, financial, political and multidimensional effects on the countries of the world for some time to come until a suitable vaccine is developed.

Research Question

What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church during this lockdown with special reference to the Alice region of the Eastern Cape Province?

Research Objective

To analyse the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church within the area of study.

Review of Literatures

Kottek (1996:587) states that the term plague alluded not to irresistible illness brought about by animals, insects and birds in addition to a few distinct pestilences. The investigation is identifying with the references in the Bible and latest scientific proof concerning some irresistible ailments like Coronavirus 19 infection. Likewise, a few observations with respect to potential associations among likely irresistible pestilence infections, and the ten Plagues of Egypt are described.

In the Ancient World, the presence of plagues was oftentimes connected to war and famine and it frequently followed them; the effects of famine were regularly observed due to disease occurrences, and especially if these occasions had caused a negative demographic impact, with the ensuing troubles in finding an adequate number of workers for farming activities. The idea of disease was notable in the Judaic World. A few infectious illnesses are cited in the Talmud, among these a significant proof is that which was attributed to *askara*, a term viewed as relating to diphtheria, an extremely infectious and perilous sickness for both young and old (Norton & Lyons, 2002: 1950).

It is extremely hard to see how much the scriptural passage has target components or how much the readers are mentioned to be devotees; scriptural portrayal has no clearly "Scientific" target, rather it has the aim of activating faith to accept God; His intercession is viewed as the reason for Israelites' freedom (Griffin, 2000: 449). Griffin, answering to a past report, where it



was expressed that the plague was obscure in traditional occasions, detailed that his feeling motivated him to think this ailment was definitely known in outdated times, when the principal version of Holy Bible was completed (Freemon, 2005:436).

Subsequently, to help his suspicion he cited a few sections of the Old Testament (Book of Samuel), in both of the interpretation named Septuagint and Vulgate, where it was accounted for how the Philistines were rebuffed by Lord. He expresses that in the Vulgate, the accompanying expression is composed "... and rats showed up in their territory, and demise and destruction were all through the city"-1Samuel 5:6. In the Septuagint interpretation, this idea is extended all the more obviously: "He harassed the individuals, both young and old with an episode of tumors", moreover it was likewise cited that the site of the tumors was "*in the groin*". Consequently, the Philistines, who captured the Ark of Covenant, sent it back, conceded their blame and gave a contribution of "five gold tumors and five gold rats as per the quantity of the Philistine leaders of their urban communities" (Russell, 2000:553). As per these scriptural references, the writer on the issue reasoned that the plague was detected in time past and since then a negative relationship with rats was declared to exist (Holland, 2000:322).

In the Hebrew Bible, it was frequently critical to address the reason for an illness through a custom, more so than finding a cure medically. "I hear many whispering, 'Terror on every side!'" (Psalm 31:13) tells is, and God is the redeemer One might not have authority over their destiny; however, ceremonies offered some suspicion that all is well and good amidst disasters. During Covid-19, numerous religious individuals have gone to their religious reactions. Others have drawn in with activities that makes care and connection critical. They do not legitimately address the pandemic but tend to rather offer them enthusiastic alleviation. People have consistently looked for solutions to their misfortunes when trouble comes. It tends to be consoling to believe that things occur for an reason and something can be learned from disorderly circumstances. In addition, various clarifications permit individuals to make their own reactions adapt to the insignificance. Perceiving this human need to justify emergency encourages them to comprehend different clarifications that people keep from giving for the pandemic.

Sabbatani and Fiorino (2010:199) argue that, the Hebrew word for a plague or pandemic is suspended, despite the fact that in the Old Testament's connection, a noun is used to promote the suffering and action words meaning torment. Normally, the subject of those action words is God, so He is the person who brings plagues, however not perpetually so. Israel realized that occasionally pestilences are just one of those things. The variety relates to the manner in which the Old Testament talks about, for instance, barrenness and ailments.

As shown by Trevisanato (2005), God is answerable for all such occasions, yet the Old Testament is at any rate as intrigued by the way that a portion of his activities are more intentional or greater for his definitive reason as others. At the point when he acts intentionally or with specific reason, the demonstration may then be a rebuke. In any case, the narrative of Job and numerous other Old Testament stories mirror the mindfulness that one must not accept that something turning out badly should be a reaction to individuals accomplishing something incorrectly (it is a fantasy that the Old Testament mostly makes a tight connection between transgression and calamity).

The tales realize that something other than what is expected might be going on, and that frequently we do not have the muddled idea of what it is. Additionally, while Christians regularly think of God as a judge and accordingly as bringing judgment, that language infers an illustration from law that fits Western reasoning and culture, and yet it is not the Old Testament's default symbolism. Thus, in this article the researcher argues in favour of reproof instead of judgment.

The author additionally depicts another view pondering over of a serious inquiry: Were the infections in the Old Testament a biological impact or heavenly intervention? It is extremely



simple to excuse the diseases as a tale when defied with regular occasions, for example, volcanic eruptions, thunder, and desert dust storms driving beetles into Egypt. All things being equal, there are numerous issues with attempts to break down verifiable occasions from contemporary records. Frequently it is hard to work out where or when they occurred. In this occurrence, the period for the infections of Egypt is at some point between the years 1570 BCE and 1440 BCE, subject to whoever is expounding on them.

Azar (2012:44) directed that, Eusebius Pamphili (263-339 CE), the primary Church historian, accepted the particular date to be 1446 BC. Besides, there were the Thera volcanic eruptions in around 1630-1600 BCE, one of which is portrayed as the biggest on record, and however it was 1,050 kilometres (650 miles) away from the northwest piece of Egypt. Also, the position of the author about this is that the eruption happened many years prior to the Exodus experience. Accordingly, the eruption would just have caused a portion of the diseases, in the event that one or other of the dates is not right.

The current investigation on the Old Testament plagues offers a potential unifying theory of interrelation of a solitary atmospheric event with a progression of untimely atmosphere changes causing all disasters. Proceeding with investigations of verifiable depictions in old sources, which could yield new experiences into contemporary climatologically related health risk chances on the planet. Located beyond the limit of central environmental change, Alice region in Eastern Cape Province would not have been comparably influenced. The investigation is structured to consider a chance of present day repetition of comparative pandemics and their impossibility to miss negative effects upon basic public administrations like inter alia churches, synagogues and mosques.

Individuals renounce different exercises and go to considerable lengths to be as spotless as could reasonably be expected with the goal that they can genuinely assemble to help one another. Without this ethical help, as the residents of Alice can bear witness to, perhaps it will be the case that the life of a South African can immediately become deplorable. Indeed, even non-Christians who shun church going can value the significance of keeping up with help to a network of shared mutual care and support as the correct ethical human stance.

Theoretical framework

Barkun (2016) states that conspiracies are "real undercover plots" arranged or potentially organized by "at least two people". The theory of conspiracy is "a scholarly build", a "layout forced upon the world to provide the presence of events". The theory can be spelt out within a neighbourhood or worldwide, zeroed in on single events or covering various episodes and whole nations, locales and times of history. Conspiracy theorist/scholars consider themselves an uncommon beings who are endowed with special thought that isolates them from the majority who accept the official record (Van Prooijen & Douglas, 2017:325).

Once more, conspiracy theory is a method of comprehending a circumstance, and it follows that such convictions are progressively prone to the degree that individuals experience vulnerability or an absence of control (Byford, 2011:25-27). This declaration would give a clarification to why conspiracy theories rise in cultural emergencies: People regularly experience such circumstances as being wild, and consequently, they are a reason for generous vulnerability and uneasiness among residents. Additionally, it is regularly simple to interface cultural emergencies to the intentional offenses of antagonistic gatherings, making it likely that numerous residents think about the mystery of conspiracy development when things go awry.

Morgan (2020) reveals that, conspiracy theories are basically obvious: coherent/logical inconsistencies, proof demonstrating the inverse, even the total non-appearance of confirmation make little difference to the conspiratorial clarification since they can generally be represented as far as the conspiracy. The absence of confirmation about a plot, or any sure verification against its reality, is complicated and taken as proof of the insight of the



mystery secrecy behind the order. It is viewed as affirmation of the conspirators' capacity to hide their conspiracies.

Trower (2012) says 5G is possibly answerable for the fast spread of a pandemic like Covid. He believes that it corrupts the immune system and that powerful forces in the worldwide broadcast communications industry are concealing the risks. Not many months back, Trower was essential for a little minority with these outrageous and unwarranted perspectives. Nonetheless, the entirety of that changed when Covid-19 spread around the world. Big names, with huge followings, begun recommending there could be truth to these unwarranted cases by sharing the conspiracy theory into the majority.

From that point forward media transmission's specialists have been spat at, compromised and pursued down the roads. Telephone poles have been light setter throughout the world, taking steps to cut off fundamental messages all at once of worldwide crisis. However, what precisely are the cases that are fuelling these conspiracies? To begin with, there is the case that 5G has caused the infection. We can dispose of this immediately. Researchers affirm that Covid-19 is sent by means of respiratory droplets, and they rush to bring up that you cannot communicate droplets through 5G waves.

As per Morgan (2020), the most common of the apparent multitude of theories is the proposal that 5G debases the human immune system, and this has helped spread Covid-19. Initially, huge numbers of the hardest-hit nations as of now have no 5G foundation. Iran to date, has more than 114,000 affirmed cases and no 5G poles. Besides, the theory that 5G is risky to the immune system is the very same case we saw when 2G, 3G, 4G and WiFi were put in place. 5G waves are important for the electromagnetic wave and the truth of the matter is confirmed that the higher recurrence of radiation toward the end of this spectrum poses threats.

Morgan (2020) further expressed, these high-recurrence waves are "ionizing", which means they can cause harm to human bodies internally if their introduction is excessively rapid. Take X-Rays for instance. These enter the body deep down and are used for clinical imaging, so a patient's introduction must be restricted. 5G is in a band of low-recurrence waves, similar to WiFi, that are "non-ionizing". The irresistible weight of scientific proof has demonstrated that non-ionizing radiation does not result in inward harm of body cells. In this manner, in the event that we tune in to the science, the straightforward truth is that 5G cannot be behind the pandemic, either by spreading the infection or by debasing our immune response (Morgan, 2020).

According to Winter and Reed (2020:5), the consciousness of the contrasts between investigations into genuine conspiracies and conspiracy theories is significant in light of the fact that contemporary fake culture flourishes with the recognition that by one way or another this differentiation is fluffy, or even non-existent. However, the distinction could not be all the more genuine or socially and politically significant. Nonetheless, conspiracy scholars are brokers in fabrication. They offer a specific measure of solace, which makes them appealing to people. Therefore, they perpetually lead to an impasse, away from genuine answers for cultural issues, which are more numerous and more volatile than any conspiracy scholar cares to envision.

There are worries about conspiracy theory, which are:

- Why it is so difficult to be honest about Covid-19?
- How the news changes the manner in which individuals' reason or think.
- Why is the dread of Covid-19 changing individuals' spiritual lives?

Nonetheless, there are designs covered up in their abnormality. The most recent reasoning recommends that conspiracy theories be separated by a sort of normal choice, which permits those that fit certain fundamentals to spread quickly through our social orders – while others



are restricted to the vaguest corners of the web. What makes a conspiracy theory and theorists engaging to the majority? There is a need to train individuals about the issues confronting them – and how to fix them from a biblical perspective.

Exegetical summary of the ten plagues in Exodus 7-12

According to Ehrenkranz and Sampson (2008:31), the Book of Exodus in the Bible portrays ten Egyptian plagues that occur in Egypt where there is Pharaoh. Are these Biblical plagues conceivable on any level? There is something remarkable about this Egyptian torment as introduced in Exodus in the Bible. They are unique in relation to the condemnations to Israelites as referenced in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Some have associated the Egyptian sicknesses to common wonders that were conceivable in antiquated Egypt. At the point when the subjugated Israelites looked to leave Egypt, Pharaoh said 'No'. The Lord at that point came to force his hand with ten plagues and placed plagues upon the Egyptians until Pharaoh finally yielded (Ford, 2007).

Ford (2007) describes further that the denunciations in the condemnatory arrangements of Leviticus and Deuteronomy have been demonstrated to be important for a load of customary condemnations utilized during the scriptural period in the topographical territory reaching out from Israel to antiquated Mesopotamia. In addition to the fact that they are confirmed in the Torah (the Five Books of Moses), and additionally in the prophets; they likewise show up in the "curse" areas of contemporaneous old Near Eastern agreements.

Subsequently, these "curses" reflect the kinds of things that could, and probably did, happen in this geographical area because of natural or humanly imposed calamities. Perhaps, a series of natural disasters occurred in Egypt in a relatively short period of time. Egyptian religion would have had to explain it. A connection between these debacles and different Egyptian divinities (communicating their disappointment) framed the thinking (Friedman, 2015:8). Regardless of how Egyptians deciphered these catastrophes, Israelites could have acknowledged the idea that they were supernaturally caused however they would have seen them as challenges between their supporter, Yahweh, and the Egyptians' gods. The aftereffects were decisions against the gods of Egypt and their natural delegates (Blumenthal, 2012:255).

However, traces of this stage in the development of the tradition can be found in the Biblical narrative. During this, the interpretative stage, the plagues were theologized, providing cosmic meaning to the natural phenomena even as they were removed from the realm of what we would call "nature." The Plague traditions, which were maintained orally by the Israelites until sometime after the establishment of the monarchy, continued to be reworked in the land of Israel (Pritchard, 2016:441). There, far from the ecological situation of Egypt, some phenomena natural in Egypt would have appeared inexplicable to them and they were viewed as being fantastic, thus inviting imaginative embellishment (Zevit, 1976:193).

Consequently, the Israelite traditors i.e. those who passed on the tradition, were no longer familiar with the Egyptian cultural milieu in which the disasters had been theologized and made meaningful by their ancestors. These traditors, therefore, made them meaningful within their own worldview by connecting the plagues, which initiated the emergence of Israel as a covenant community, with the creation of the world (Blumenthal, 2012:258).

Summarily, the author deduced that this event would have had an immediate and significant effect on both the Egyptians and the Israelites. People should have in mind that the ten plagues purpose was to prove to the Israelites who God was, and that He had a direct influence on the natural world as well as the spiritual. God was introducing Himself to the Israelites. The Egyptian topic is imperative to the Israelite's establishment in Canaan. Egypt had consistently been the motherland to the predecessors of the Israelites, at whatever point their lives were undermined by war, starvation, or illness they generally run for wellbeing into Egypt. God was demonstrating to the Israelites that even the powerful Egypt was no



counterpart for His outstretched arm. Again, the researcher is of the opinion that the Covid-19 pandemic is really calling men in this age to return to God for the end is seriously close for the world.

A series of questions were posed to participants purposively selected relating to the issues at hand. The sample size was limited and ideally 15-20 people should have been interviewed, but is considered to be adequately representative. The researcher coordinated the process of the conversation and asked the questions, and the respondents responded to those questions. Questions were asked as worded for all respondents in order to avoid misinterpretation of the question. Interviews are an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings (Stuckey, 2013). Ethical considerations were observed and no one was coerced or incentivised for their voluntary participation. The interviewer controlled the order of the question, as in the questionnaires below, and could judge the spontaneity of the respondents as well. The questions asked follow:

Analysis and Discussion

Question 1: Can we meet with you sir?

Participant 1 from Gaga location: I am one of the church members in this location for the past twenty years. My house is about one kilometre to this church. My wife, children and grandchildren are all here with me since the lockdown started. In fact, I have a full house now.

Question 2: How long have you been worshipping in this Church location?

Response: More than twenty years now

Question 3: What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church in your location?

Response: Uncertainty arises in situations that are observable but incomplete, as found in the Covid-19 crisis' practicality in this state of limited and valid knowledge. The crisis response is impossible to exactly describe. Its state of affairs, future outcome and the more than one possible outcome holding undesired effects and significant losses are troubling and evident, no matter how much we try to keep it at arm's length. My people, human nature operates in the presence of unpleasant events by predicting that whatever comes ahead will not be in our best interest. In the tension and discomfort of uncertainty, we tend to fill in the blanks with worst-case scenarios and outcomes. By nature, we want options and when choices based on knowledge and a full complement of fact are unavailable; we rely on what we believe rather than what we know in order to reduce the anxiety of the unknown.

Question 4: Are you hooking-up with on-line service programme regularly?

Response: There is room for hiding, where is the money to buy data always. And, for how long are we going to keep on bordering the church? Therefore, our on-line service is intermittent with other fellowship members.

Question 5: Can you briefly compare the Church attendance on-line and that of physical appearance in your location during level 'five' and 'one' of the pandemic?

Response: Nothing can be compared with physical appearance of the brethren coming together to worship God than to be on-line where no proper monitoring or discipline is adhered to. Level five of the pandemic was a serious issue because it was so hard to see people on the street let alone of places of worship. Church attendance was very poor on-line for our people had to struggle for basic needs of life first.

Question 1: Can we meet with you sir?



Participant 2 from upper Gqumashe location: I am a father of two children working as a security officer at the University of Fort Hare. I worship with this church location.

Question 2: How long have you been worshipping in this Church location?

Response: This is my seventh year

Question 3: What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church in your location?

Response: The coronavirus crisis causes all of us to suffer during this unique moment in history when the entire planet is suffering the same thing at the same time. Optimistically, our ability to move through this period of globally connected suffering will produce spiritual, mental and psychological growth. He explains further, the will to endure will produce a new kind of character within us all. The character will be one we share with all of our sisters and brothers around the planet. From now on, we'll all have a common experience to reflect upon and stories to share: How we missed our families and friends, how we struggled with isolation, how we worried about our jobs, security, and economies and ultimately death, how we overcame it all.

Question 4: Are you hooking-up with on-line service programme regularly?

Response: No, I have not been participating in on-line programme with the Church.

Question 5: Can you briefly compare the Church attendance on-line and that of physical appearance in your location during level 'five' and 'one' of the pandemic?

Response: There is no doubt about it; the physical appearance of Church member's attendance is better and higher than the number attending on-line during the level two of pandemic and after.

Question 1: Can we meet with you madam?

Participant 3 from Selemansi location: May I use this medium to thank God for sparing my life till this time. I was infected with Corona in May, but God healed me totally. I am a member of this very Church location single-handedly nursed three children who are in other provinces and two grand-children are currently with me now.

Question 2: How long have you been worshipping in this Church location?

Response: Over forty-two years.

Question 3: What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church in your location?

Response: Church services, fellowship gatherings and other religious services, including funerals, have been suspended for months now, in keeping with government rulings to curb the contagion. The government announced that the locations, municipalities, provinces must go under lockdown; all religious services throughout the country, including those at mosques, shrines, disco halls and taverns, were cancelled until at least August 15, 2020 when the level two started. All travel restrictions within the provinces were relaxed in the whole country. However, for believers, religion is a fundamental source of spiritual healing and hope. It is a remedy against despair, providing psychological and emotional support that is an integral part of well-being. It is also an antidote to loneliness, which several medical experts point to as one of the most worrisome public health issue of our time.

Question 4: Are you hooking-up with on-line service programme regularly?

Response: I only have little knowledge of how to operate my cell phone but to hook-up on-line for Church services seem strange to me.



Question 5: Can you briefly compare the Church attendance on-line and that of physical appearance in your location during level **'five'** and **'one'** of the pandemic?

Response: Since lockdown started, there are no Church services either on Sundays or week days. So, the on-line programme one is not known to me if any of such things exist.

Question 1: Can we meet with you madam?

Participant 4 from Golf Course: I am a university health worker, mother of two children with a responsible husband from another country. Also, a member of this location Church newly founded.

Question 2: How long have you been worshipping in this Church location?

Response: Just getting to twenty-five years.

Question 3: What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church in your location?

Response: We should re-learn and learn more on the best way to support others and ourselves to reduce the feeling of disconnection and dejection that social distancing has caused during this pandemic. The inquiry relies on how much danger is sensible for association while as yet being aware of the risk of the infection. It will be another beat that requires individual idea and attribution of significance to each move that we make. In this manner, so many health workers are experiencing moral injury seeing the volume of enduring cases brought about by the infection. I hear these incredible essential workers struggling to move from a position of 'it did not have to happen this way' to 'this is what it is and has a tremendous impact on us all.' That is a hopeful stance as it allows people to determine new meaning in their work. The last element of agency is based on practicality and the making of judgments about personal actions taken during the pandemic.

Question 4: Are you hooking-up with on-line service programme regularly?

Response: Well I may be fortunate to know more of what it takes to serve God in a time like this but some are less privilege to be informed of what it is. In one word, I enjoy hearing and seeing my people on-line as we fellowship together.

Question 5: Can you briefly compare the Church attendance on-line and that of physical appearance in your location during level **'five'** and **'one'** of the pandemic?

Response: As I formerly said, many are less privileged because they do not know how we managed the network and manoeuvre to Zoom platform for Church meetings. Therefore, talking about the on-line of a thing is very awkward to aged people and young boys and ladies are not even interested.

Question 1: Can we meet with you madam?

Participant 5 from Alice: I am a health worker in this area and this is my Church. My only son is married and resides in another province. Presently living with my two grandchildren and one aunty taking care of them.

Question 2: How long have you been worshipping in this Church location?

Response: More than ten years

Question 3: What are the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the growth of the Church in your location?

Response: Today the threat coming from a virus that makes no distinction between unbelievers and believers, but the major tension between religion and secular authorities is still there. In our location where only about 20 percent of the population attend weekly



meetings, churches are being treated as providers of nonessential services, like movie theatres, taverns and concert halls. That has started extraordinary responses among certain individuals, who consider fellowship meetings as especially fundamental when an undetectable and unavoidable danger strikes. What is the contrast between a modest bunch of individuals gathering in a congregation, keeping securely at good ways from each other, and gatherings meeting at eateries, bars or riding the tram? The inquiry is a viable one however alludes to a fundamental strain around religious opportunity that the health related crisis is re-establishing. Notwithstanding, the pressure between physical wellbeing and spiritual comfort is somehow debilitating. In any case, there is something pitiful about this time, the strain has scarcely been treated as something genuine, to be really wrestled with in all fairness.

Question 4: Are you hooking-up with on-line service programme regularly?

Response: I am not a Church person. Mostly, I fix my laundry work on Saturday or Sunday morning. So, I serve God at will by listening to Pastors on television.

Question 5: Can you briefly compare the Church attendance on-line and that of physical appearance in your location during level 'five' and 'one' of the pandemic?

Response: Sincerely, the number of people physically present in Church location is commendable than on-line program in our location. I think the best person to ask is the Pastor because I cannot use one Sunday to judge since the Government has eased the tension of congregant attending the services in level two of pandemic.

The researcher put up all the participant responses and came out with the following: It is important that the public be informed of the need for hygienic measures, and that there be accurate information, including the uncertainty of the effectiveness of the recommended interventions. Such information needs to be provided in the less advantaged locations such as Alice in Eastern Cape Province.

In past epidemics, misinformation has been rampant, and this has led to substantial public anxiety, to reliance on word of mouth for knowledge, and to the purchase of ineffective and expensive products for treatment (Rosling & Rosling, 2003: 416). The situation raises issues of distributive justice because ineffective or inaccurate communications have the greatest effects on marginalized members of society, as they are the least likely to have access to alternative credible sources of information and are the people for whom wasting resources would have the greatest adverse effects (Gostin & Powers, 2006: 1053).

Furthermore, a consideration for personal dignity implies that individuals should be equipped with adequate information to make knowledgeable decisions about their own health. Public education campaigns should be grounded in the science of risk communication, as the acceptability of health measures is vital to community adherence. In addition in most Christian denominations, Christian ethics applies to Christian faith and positive servant leadership motivations based on deep spirituality which is required to link in a manner which allows for the desired principles, standards, and procedures for actions and a set of divinely stimulated virtues to be in place with relevance to all social and also economic activity and this calls for good and effective Church leadership (Nicolaidis, 2020). The information disseminated through public education campaigns should be accurate, clear, uncomplicated, not sensationalistic or alarmist, and as reassuring as possible.

Recommendation

The brief analysis through the literatures on the pandemic outbreak in the nations of the world affirms the function of resident objections in directing the controllers to discover conceivable answer for the deadly diseases outbreak problems. Substantially more investigations are clearly important to help the resident's grumbings as a compelling method of public investment in environmental management in order to silence the conspirators and their



theories. Christians need to be fully aware that they are God's people and he truly cares for us all and we thus need to be tuned-in to His will (Nicolaidis, 2010). The future investigations should include larger samples of respondents via surveys and we should the need for remember clear-cut explanations of environmental grumbling of individual residents for any diseases outbreak. The measurement of functions, directly and indirectly, of citizen's complaints for improving the social infrastructure performances in the locations to combat the outbreak of diseases must be properly considered by their leadership structures.

Martin Luther viewed epidemics as a temptation that tests and demonstrates our faith and love: "our faith in that we may see and experience how we should act toward God; our love in that we may recognise how we should act toward our neighbour." Through faith in God and out of love for neighbour, Christians must contemplate how they can contribute to the physical and spiritual care of those who are vulnerable, self-isolated, sick, or dying in the Alice area. Luther stated that "We must give hospital care and be nurses for one another in any extremity or risk the loss of salvation and the grace of God." (Luther, 1999). God knows what is happening and very intimately involved in this and all situations. God sees every feature and is merciful (Psalm 145:9). We need to continue to trust him despite the disorder that is around us.

Conclusion

In the Old Testament we encounter very strict quarantine regulations for those suffering from infectious diseases (see Leviticus 13). If Christians follow government and medical advice and foreexample severely reduce all social contacts, this is not an expression of unbelief but is rather calling us to act wisely and, especially practice neighbourly love.

This investigation has shown the significance of human action in both established and neighbourhood networks within the Alice area. It has indicated that the spatial co-event of a potential ailment vector and people varies altogether among the tormented regions and follows the built up pandemic rate. This pattern offers a hint of the conceivable relationship of the pandemic outbreaks and human frequencies of being infected with the virus in the same locality. The interviews show that the trust individuals have in the Church must be a positive and that this can be achieved through standard, straightforward, and exhaustive interchanges that balance the dangers and advantages of public health interventions. These outcomes, call for plague or pandemic investigations receiving a total geographic viewpoint that incorporates human movement measurement. The teachings of Holy Scripture need to be considered more as lessons for believers. In addition, the basic results are of general wellbeing importance since they may help in managing plague investigation, as well as control programmes by encouraging individuals to dodge contact (social distancing) with each and one another at home, get-togethers, working environments, and so forth. As Christians we need to always accept our own wickedness and wrongdoing and specifically when we feel we are right and have done nothing wrong and should not be ill. So we need to acknowledge we do not stick to social distancing or perhaps do not wear masks we should Christian virtue necessitates a constant skepticism as to the correct content of our character.

Notwithstanding new difficulties presented in the twenty-first century by expanding hazards for the development and quick spread of irresistible illnesses, isolation and other public health tools remain fundamental to general wellbeing readiness. Actually, these measures, by their disposition, require careful regard for causing partiality and bigotry. The outright trust individuals have in their Church must be increased through customary, straightforward, and complete interchanges that balance the dangers and advantages of public health interventions. Fruitful reactions to public health crises must regard the important exercises of the past. Christians can, through our diverse actions and faith, fight against this Covid-19 enemy, through prayer and love.



References

- Azar, D. (2012). Lebanese amber: a "Guinness Book of Records". *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia ad Didacticam Biologiae Pertinentia*, 2(1), 44-60.
- Barkun, M. (2016). "Conspiracy Theories as Stigmatized Knowledge". *Diogenes*: 039219211666928.
- Blumenthal, F. (2012). The Ten Plagues: debunking Egyptian polytheism. *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 40(4), 255-8.
- Byford, J. (2011). *Conspiracy theories: A critical introduction*. Springer, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 25–27.
- Clay, B. (2020). COVID-19—a Biblical Plague? Answers in Genesis. Available online at <https://answersingenesis.org/coronavirus/Covid19-biblical-plague/>
- Ehrenkranz, N. J. & Sampson, D. A. (2008). Origin of the Old Testament plagues: explications and implications. *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 81(1), 31.
- Farrer, A. (1970). *A Celebration of Faith*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp 112–116.
- Ford, W. A. (2007). *God, Pharaoh, and Moses: Explaining the Lord's actions in the Exodus plagues narrative*. Wipf and Stock Publishers: Oregon, USA.
- Freemon, F. R. (2005). Bubonic plague in the Book of Samuel. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 98(9), 436
- Friedman, I. (2015). "And Upon all the Gods of Egypt I Will Execute Judgment": The Egyptian Deity in the Ten Plagues. *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 48(1), 8-18.
- Gedzi, V.S., (2012). 'Property Relations and Women's Access to Courts among the Anlo and the Asante in Ghana'. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(29), 121-137.
- Goldingay, J. & Goldingay, K. S. (2020). Thinking with the Old Testament about the pandemic. *Theology*, 123(3), 191-197.
- Gostin, L. O. & Powers, M. (2006). What does social justice require for the public's health? Public health ethics and policy imperatives. *Health Affairs*, 25(4), 1053-1060.
- Gøtzsche, P. C. (2020). The coronavirus pandemic: Can we handle such epidemics better? *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 113(5), 171–175.
- Griffin, J. P. (2000). Bubonic plague in biblical times. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 93(8), 449-450.
- Holland, B. K. (2000). Treatments for bubonic plague: reports from seventeenth century British epidemics. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 93(6), 322-324.
- Isbell, B. A. (2013). *The past is yet to come: Exodus typology in the Apocalypse*. South-Western Baptist Theological Seminary.
- Kang, L., Li, Y., Hu, S., Chen, M., Yang, C., Yang, B. X., ... & Chen, J. (2020). The mental health of medical workers in Wuhan, China dealing with the 2019 novel coronavirus. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(3), e14.
- Kottek, S. S. (1996). Epidemics in ancient Jewish lore. *Israel journal of medical sciences*, 32(7), 587.
- Levi, D. (2008). Did God Deprive Pharaoh of Free Will?. *Philosophy and Literature*, 32(1), 58-73.



- Luther, M. (1999). Luther's Works, Vol. 43: Devotional Writings II, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 43, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 119–138.
- Marr, J. S. & Malloy, C. D. (1996). An epidemiologic analysis of the ten plagues of Egypt. *Caduceus (Springfield, Ill.)*, 12(1), 7.
- Morgan, A. (2020). What is the truth behind the 5G coronavirus conspiracy theory? | Culture Clash in.
- Nicolaides, A. (2020). Contemplating Christian ethics and spirituality for sound leadership in organisations. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 101, 2020)
- Nicolaides, A. (2010). The Laos tou Theou - an orthodox view of the 'people of God'. *HTS Theological Studies*, 66(1), 1-5.
- Norton, S. A. & Lyons, C. (2002). Blister beetles and the ten plagues. *The Lancet*, 359(9321), 1950.
- O'Leary, A., Jalloh, M. F. & Neria, Y. (2018). Fear and culture: contextualising mental health impact of the 2014–2016 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. p.3.
- Pritchard, J. B. (Ed.). (2016). Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement. Princeton University Press. p. 441.
- Rosling, L. & Rosling, M. (2003). Pneumonia causes panic in Guangdong province. 326 (7386): 416.
- Russell, W. M. S. (2000). Plague, rats and the Bible. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 93(10), 553
- RZIM (2020). Coronavirus: A Biblical, Historical Perspective. Available online at <https://www.rzim.org/read/rzim-global/coronavirus-a-biblical-historical-perspective>
- Sabbatani, S. & Fiorino, S. (2010). The plague of the Philistines and other pestilences in the Ancient World: exploring relations between the religious-literary tradition, artistic evidence and scientific proof. *Le infezioni in medicina*, 18(3), 199-207.
- Stuckey, H. (2013). Three types of interviews: Qualitative research methods in social health. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 1(2), 56.
- Trevisanato, S. (2005). *The plagues of Egypt: archaeology, history and science look at the Bible*. Gorgias Press.
- Trower, B. (2012). Barrie Trower: Microwaves in Weapons and Wireless Telecommunication. *YouTube Oct, 9*.
- Van Prooijen, J. W. & Douglas, K. M. (2017). Conspiracy theories as part of history: The role of societal crisis situations. *Memory studies*, 10(3), 323-333.
- Winter, D. A. & Reed, N. (2020). Unprecedented Times for Many But Not for All: Personal Construct Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 1-10.
- Zevit, Z. (1976). The priestly redaction and interpretation of the plague narrative in Exodus. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 66(4), 193-211.