

COVID-19

Vaccine

2019-nCoV

Injection Only

Living Before our Creator and Judge

By David Robertson

“We have a vaccine!” And so the world rejoices and looks forward to getting back to normal. “There has been a tremendous cost this year because of Covid – firstly in lives – over 900 Australians have died”; says the commentator on the ABC news even as I am writing this. What strikes me about these statements is that ‘normal’ appears to be a world in which no one dies, and that the commentator seems to forget that this year there will be 160,000 deaths in Australia this year – the death rate will not increase because of Covid. Yes, Covid is real and horrific and we should do what we can to alleviate its spread and effects. But we need to remember that the real world is a world where everyone dies, and where everything dissolves.

John Owen has a wonderful sermon on 2 Peter 3:11 which is as relevant as anything you will hear about this crisis and to be honest, is as good a Christmas sermon as you will hear this Christmas. The following is a summary which I hope you will find helpful.

2 Peter 3:11 “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives”

It is madness and folly for human beings to pride themselves in anything on earth, given that all dissolves. “Everything you see in the world of order, of power, they are all but endeavours in the creation itself to free itself from this state of vanity, to preserve itself as long as it can from dissolution”. Even the mountains – which seem to stand forever shall be dissolved.

But especially human beings. All our powers, riches, glory, wisdom, gifts – they are all like grass and all will be dissolved. All political alliances, religions, countries and ideologies will

be dissolved. Politicians and leaders think that they can band together to save the world – to prevent it from dissolving . But they will fail.

Everything is unstable. So where can we find certainty and stability? “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” (Isaiah 40:8). “In this fading condition of all things, you would come to anything of stability, it must be in the stability of the word of God, that abides forever.”

We have a great interest in things that dissolve. Surely it would make sense to have an even greater interest in what will not dissolve?

Owen notes that it is when nations think they are secure, that dissolution comes upon them. It is when people are ‘eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage’ that disaster often strikes. Or when people are given over to the temptations of life, sin and wickedness. When we become aware or have a sense of some impending disaster, we look to other things to give relief and not God.

Owen argues that God is so good and tender towards mankind, that he does not delight in bringing judgement and always gives providential warnings. God uses wars, persecutions, famine and plagues to cause us to seek him. But his greatest warnings come in his word.

“A man that is not utterly stupid cannot sometimes but wonder and stand amazed why it is that mankind should be so secure when judgements are all around them”. Owen argues that this false security in an insecure world is the work of Satan.

Apart from the sense of security being a sign of an approaching

judgement, the other sign is “a universal corruption of life in all sorts of persons... there is a general corrosion and corruption of life and manners”. Add to that an increasing persecution of the church. “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilence, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you.” (Matthew 23:34-36).

“I could name many other signs; - visible apostasy, the love of many waxing cold and God taking away some of his servants from the evil to come”.

Owen does not leave it there. How should we live when we are faced with crisis and dissolution? We should recognise that Christ is in it and live holy lives which are worthy of him. We look for the return of Christ. We long for it. How long O lord? How long? But when he comes what will he expect of us? “Christ comes not to gratify men’s lusts; he comes not to exalt them in the world...Christ comes to make us more holy, more humble,

more mortified and weaned from the world.” We should live as if Christ were coming every day.

It will be a time of salvation but also of judgement. Then we will discover who is for real.

I found all of this really helpful in our current circumstances. In so many ways life seems surreal. But Christ is real. This Christmas may we know the reality of Christ...and may we remember the truth expressed in Newton’s great hymn – *Amazing Grace*.

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.*

David Robertson.