

Has God Ever Directly Or Indirectly Caused Sickness Or Disease?

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1984 (Rev. 86,92)

Introduction: Has God ever directly or indirectly cause sickness or disease? This question has been raised by many pastors and many secular news reporters during the outbreak and spread of AIDS.

In bringing the topic of God's involvement with sickness and disease into discussion with the recent AIDS epidemic, the following illustrations will reveal the public's perception. David Black was quoted in the Rolling Stones magazine, "a scourge never appears unless there is a reason for it."

Dr. Charles Stanley, once president of the Southern Baptist Convention, replied to a letter he received saying he, "did not believe God was out to destroy the homosexual through disease."

Phil Donahue while discussing AIDS on his television show said preachers who stir-up homophobia are in danger of going to hell.

Could such diseases as "AIDS" be a judgment upon a sinful lifestyle that affects both the guilty and the innocent?

Background to sickness and disease from the Bible

There are several facts that need to be pointed out concerning sickness and disease:

1. Sickness and disease entered the human race as a result of Adam and Eve's sin.
2. Not all sickness is a direct cause of sinful acts, John 9:1-3.
3. Some sickness is a result of Satan's work which God allowed, Job 2:3-9.
4. Some sickness and some diseases are the act of God. (information in this article)

The question is, does God directly send or indirectly allow sickness or disease to come upon a society? If so, why?

1. GOD'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN SENDING SICKNESS AND DISEASE

The Bible records several illustrations of God directly sending sickness or disease upon a particular culture. God does send sickness or disease for at least three reasons.

A. To challenge those nations who follow gods other than "the True and Living God."

1. Of the ten plagues poured out upon Egypt, Exodus 9:9-10 records boils sent directly by God upon the Egyptian people. Numbers 33:4 reveals the plagues were judgments upon the gods of the Egyptians. God directly caused physical disease as a judgment upon people following false gods.
2. The nations or people who would not follow the Lord would experience plagues and sickness, (Deuteronomy 29:22-26).

B. To punish Israel for the disobedience of not following and obeying God.

1. Disobedience to God's commands brought life-threatening sickness and disease, (Deuteronomy 28:20-35). (KJV "consumption" is Hebrew "shahepet" which means "wasting away.")

2. God punished Israel as a nation for not following Him and not obeying Him, (Micah 6:13). (KJV "sickness" is the Hebrew "hala" for "sickness or disease.")

C. To chastise Christians who have not practiced self judgment.

The failure of the Christian to understand the Lord's body causes sickness and even death, (1 Corinthians 11:30). (KJV "sickness" is the Greek "apostoi" which means "illness or sickness.")

2. GOD'S INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN SENDING SICKNESS AND DISEASE

The cry of society today is that "nothing is right or wrong and as long as I do something in the privacy of my home it is no one else's business to judge me." God has set up a moral law and to disregard His moral law will bring certain consequences both to a life and a society.

A. What is sown will produce the same kind of results.

God has set in motion within nature a cause-and-effect system called the "law of the harvest," (Galatians 6:7-9).

B. Decisions to follow evil will bring evil rewards.

Jerusalem and Judah decided to follow after wickedness and as a result they received the reward for following after evil, (Isaiah 3:8-11).

C. There are consequences to sinful choices.

Paul wrote that certain sinful practices will bring wicked consequences and that individuals receive in their lives the due penalty for personal sinful actions, (Romans 1:24-32).

D. Sickness can be a warning device concerning sinful choices.

David tells of his sickness in Psalm 38:5-8, 18. David's health declined because of sin and brought him to the place of repentance.

Conclusion: It is clear from the Bible that God has been involved both directly and indirectly with sickness and disease.

The question concerning the AIDS epidemic is this, "Is God involved directly or indirectly?" The world refuses to accept the fact that:

1. God has a moral standard for His creation.
2. God has the sovereign right to judge sin.
3. God is very active in His creation and involved with His creatures.

Concerning God's involvement with sickness and disease either directly or indirectly there are at least two incorrect statements that need to be addressed.

1. God couldn't be involved with sickness and disease when innocent are involved!

The Bible does not teach this concept.

A. David's sin with Bathsheba produce an infant son who was innocent yet God gave the infant a sickness and he died, (2 Samuel 11:2-4, 12:7,10,15,18).

B. Gehazi had a sinful lifestyle of greed and God gave him a disease as a result of his continued personal sin, (2 Kings 5:16-27). This disease was passed on to his future generations who were obviously innocent.

2. God wouldn't judge a society by giving it a disease that could be passed to others!

The Bible does not teach this concept either.

A. Because of adultery, a plague killed 24,000 people, (Numbers 25:1-9).

B. Pagan worshippers who practiced sodomy and prostitution brought God's ark into their house of worship. God judged them with bleeding bowels and bleeding secretions in their private parts, (1 Samuel 5:1-12).

C. Jerusalem practiced sodomy and prostitution, as those around them did. Thus, God smote them with an incurable disease of the bowels, (2 Chronicles 21:12-19).

Could AIDS be a divine judgment either directly or indirectly upon individuals that affects both society and innocent individuals? It could be, but only God knows for sure. Proverbs 3:7-8 provides an answer to God's direct or indirect cause of sickness and disease, "Fear the Lord and enjoy health."