

Biblical Paradigm for Continuous Management of Covid 19: An Expository Analysis of Exodus 12: 1-13 in the Nigerian Context

Ogunrinade Adewale Olukayode,
Olowoyeye Emmanuel Olurokan &
Samuel Oluwasegun Kolade

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Abstract

The droning of the novel coronavirus pandemic has drummed hard around the globe. Experts have come to terms on the ravaging effects of the virus and the way forward. The popular mythical indifferences of coronavirus amongst Nigeria leading to unrealistic perception of the presence of the pandemic is crucial for the study. Currently, the initial threats and emotions fashioned around the presence of the virus is not as magnified, as it was during its inception. This abrupt relaxation is not the same in the Western world, where there are continuous awareness and protocols, regarding the virus. Stakeholders have tended to look at the issue from socio-psychological dynamics without complementing it with the spirituality of the biblical paradigm in making the guidelines sacrosanct for the religious mindset of the Nigerian people. The study adopts descriptive and expository methods of data analysis. The study will further create awareness of the biblical paradigm for the continuous management of coronavirus in Nigeria. It is discovered that there is a blend of measurements promoted by secular dynamics that are in conformity with Exodus 12 for disease control. This can be used for the management of coronavirus in Nigeria where the reality of the virus is becoming oblivious in social, religious and economic interaction. This paper therefore, recommend firmness and compliance towards the effective outcome of the pandemic control through collaborative efforts and constant reminders by the government and the church.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Covid 19, Exodus, paradigm, and Nigeria

Introduction

The latent outburst of the corona virus is an acerbic global pandemic with its wild flings of terror around the globe. On its attendant scourge of deaths, the ordeal became such an uninformed punch, with ripple effects on human multi-dimensional developments. Initially, the devastating effects of the pandemic were demonstrated with the dust of managerial information, successively rolled out from social, health and economic outlets on daily basis.¹

The genesis of the global appearance of the pandemic begs not to differ, as there were junks of information littering the Nigerian space with pinnacle of cases, deaths, unrest and intimidation in the air. While de-exonerating the shade of misinformation of the virus in Nigeria, the Ogun state Governor Dapo Abiodun has once remarked that: “contrary to the erroneous belief, this virus is not for the rich or elite alone. Everyone is at risk”.² In fact, the politics of obscurity, played around the confirmation of cases then, dramatically made some query the volatility and capacity of the pandemic.³ Plying a satisfactory lane on the level of suspicion that revolves around the scenario may not be too misleading. However, largely reducing corona virus to mere mythical narrative could be tantamount to sitting on a keg of gun powder.

It has been observed that majority of the masses are living their everyday life without the consciousness and apprehension of the exigencies to curbing the ravenous pandemic, provided by the government. There is a drastic reduction in the popularity of the protocols observation in the religious, economic and social interactions of the Nigerian People in the recent times. This could not be quantified with the Western world where there are insistence on the management of the virus, even when there are adequate palliative measures in handling it. From moderate biblical conviction and pandemic management, the researcher intends to relate the precautionary

measures in Nigeria with Exodus 12: 11 as part of divine pandemic control for the Israelites in Egypt. This research adopts descriptive and expository methods so as to pry the dimensions of the government as divine control measures, meted out to manage corona virus in Nigeria. A cursory look into the nature and reality of corona virus in Nigeria becomes germane under the subsequent inquiry.

Corona Virus in Nigeria: An Overview

The corona virus, which has been described as a family virus known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases is a prevailing global pandemic.⁴ Before its entrance into Nigeria, it has been a scorching communicable outbreak as it epicentered in the West, claiming myriads of lives on daily basis.⁵ It was officially confirmed in Nigeria on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus.⁵ On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, and this time was a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen.⁶ Since then, the virus has aggravated tension and increased on daily basis.

As at 4th August 2020, the spread of novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) in Nigeria continues to record significant increase as the latest statistics provided by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control revealed Nigeria now has 44,433 confirmed cases. On the same 4th of August 2020, 304 new confirmed cases and 14 deaths were recorded in Nigeria, having carried out a total daily test of 1,601 samples across the country.⁷ From the current information on the pandemic in Nigeria, 44,433 cases have been confirmed, 31,851 cases have been discharged and 910 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. A total of 289,133 tests have been carried out as of August 3rd, 2020 compared to 287,532 tests a day earlier.⁸

Apparently, there is no state in Nigeria that is immune from the experiential index of Corona virus. According to the National Center for Disease Control, the 304 new cases are reported from 19 states-

FCT (90), Lagos (59), Ondo (39), Taraba (18), Rivers (17), Borno (15), Adamawa (12), Oyo (11), Delta (9), Edo (6), Bauchi (4), Kwara (4), Ogun (4), Osun (4), Bayelsa (3), Plateau (3), Niger (3), Nasarawa (2) and Kano (1).⁹Meanwhile, the latest numbers bring Lagos state total confirmed cases to 15,414, followed by Abuja (4,087), Oyo (2,782), Edo (2,317), Rivers (1,859), Kano (1,598), Delta (1,529), Kaduna (1,498), Ogun (1,411), Plateau and Ondo (1,243), Enugu (846), Ebonyi (808), Kwara (790), Katsina (746), Borno (628), Gombe (620), Abia (602), Osun (584), and Bauchi (565).¹⁰

Furthermore, the contagious level of the virus in some states is less intense. The current report of National Center for Disease Control has that Imo State recorded 469 cases, Benue (356), Bayelsa (342), Nasarawa (341), Jigawa (322), Niger (226), Akwa Ibom (221), Adamawa (176), Sokoto (154), Ekiti (152), Anambra (135), Kebbi(90), Zamfara (77), Taraba (72), Yobe (67), Cross River (58), while Kogi state has recorded 5 cases only.¹¹ There have been radical approaches on the part of the government and medical experts to curb the spread of the virus in Nigeria. The earliest phase of the virus witnessed a move of the pandemic control. President Muhammadu Buhari took to his heel when he directed the cessation of all movements in Lagos and the FCT for an initial period of 14 days, which took effect from 11 pm on Monday, 30th March 2020.¹²

The movement restriction, which was extended by another two-weeks period, was partially put on hold with some businesses commencing operations from May 4.¹³ On April 27th, 2020, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari declared an overnight curfew from 8 pm to 6 am across the country, as part of new measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19. This comes along with the phased and gradual easing of lockdown measures in FCT, Lagos, and Ogun States, which took effect from Saturday, 2nd May 2020, at 9 am.¹⁴

On Monday, 29th June 2020 the federal government extended the second phase of the eased lockdown by 4 weeks and approved interstate

movement outside curfew hours with effect from July 1, 2020. In addition, on Monday 27th July 2020, the federal government extended the second phase of eased lockdown by an additional one week when the populace were no longer feeling the impact of the restriction as the best alternative. Ever since then the tension of the virus has been further aggravated on the statistics of increments than that of 2020 evidence.¹⁵ As part of the analgesic to wade off the corona virus, the government totally banned all social and religious gatherings. Later the government partially open religious and social gatherings with provisions of guidelines like social and physical distancing, use of nose guide and use of hand sanitizer. However, the concern of this study is the negligence of the people towards the possibility of being infected by the virus in the recent times. This is because there is no grip on further compliance of the presence of the virus, as there are no more internal sensitizations on the virus, in light of economic and social interactions of the Nigerian people. The disregard of the precautionary measures is the betrayal of divine injunction, which is not different from Yahweh directives for managing outbreak of pandemic in Egypt. Hence, a need to examine Exodus chapter 12 in the light of corona virus paradigm for pandemic control. This will further heighten the seriousness of the use of nose mask, social distancing, washing of hands and use of sanitizer as divine measures for the safety of the people.

Exodus Chapter 12:1-13 in the Quest for Corona Virus and Infectious Diseases Control

The pitch of significance, as contained in Exodus, exclusively set up a distinctive pattern of theological magnificence in the anal of Israel nationalistic formation. The laurel is meritoriously unleashed on the piece just as J. H. Hertz remarkably put it that: “nearly all the foundations of which Jewish life are built (the Ten Commandments, the historic festivals and the leading principles of civil law) in Exodus.”¹⁶ Its prominence arose from its unique and universal

viewpoints which “radiates benefits and life-changing truth to all humankind.”¹⁷ From no other book has mankind learned laws more beneficial, comprehensive, and succinct than the Ten Commandments in Exodus, which added the seasoning of significance to it.

The outstanding motif in Exodus is the demonstrative rays of redemption and nationhood that echo throughout the book. Wilbur Fields in a more lucid form avers that “the theme of redemption sums up much of the history and message of the book of Exodus.”¹⁸ Basically, the term has been conventionally adopted to express the theme of the book through accompanied grammatical metaphors employed in the use of redemption. However, the focus of this study in chapter 12, according to Arthur Pink is catalogued within the method of redemption which elapsed to chapter 18.¹⁹ The method of redemption in chapter 12 provides safety rules and directives for the emancipation of the covenant people of Yahweh. The command is clear if they want to be immune from the pandemic in the same environment where Yahweh will terrify their foes, leading to freedom.

The passage is the retrospect of the Passover. The fanfare of the Passover is aptly borne out of the need to pronounce divine immunity on Israel. The first eight verses bring to fore, the timing and direction of the season with specification on the sacrificial object. The timing was to be situated within the community of Israel for painstaking consideration of the pandemic control. The guidance for the control of the impending pandemic appears with strict internalization of animal sacrifice with a reminiscent imprint in the community of faith. The timing was consecrated as the first month for Israel. Originally, *Shebat*, the Almond blossoming month was the first before it was particularly changed to Abib, based on divine injunction (Zech. 1:7, Ex. 12:2).²⁰ Not only was the month declared as the sacrosanct month of beginning, but also the tenth day of that month must be attached with specified animal sacrifice and eating procedures (Ex. 12:3-6).

The word *Tamiym* used for “without blemish” in conventional Hebrew connotation is largely used in the qualification of the perfection of the *Torah* which is complete and morally pure. More so, the usage in this context is diverted to the perfection displayed by the lamb which is thoroughly scrutinized within the space of the examination.²¹ Apart from making this presentable before Yahweh, there was a thoughtful intelligence for a considerable hygienic and health possibilities because of the latter consumption of the animals. In short, Yahweh was concerned about the consumption of His people, such that they should eat from the trust and tested animals that will keep their healthy living. The procedures initiated for pandemic control was to be celebrated further in the lunar calendar of the people. The control of the pandemic was symbolic with the colouration of the lamb’s blood on the door-frames of the houses, roasted and eaten along with bitter salad greens and unleavened bread. As for Ralph W. Klein, “the blood serves as a sign first of all for the Israelites, importantly a sign for Yahweh, who will see the blood and pass over each Israelite house”.²² From Vv7-10, there was an indication of the tenacity of the guidance, safety measures and the channel for building resistance against the outburst of the pandemic.²³ The Hebrew word *Dam* popularly used for blood had been used from both pictorial and numeric values in the ancient Israel. In this context, it was used as a prevention from life termination; a resistance from the spate of predatory activities that are on hunt of penetration to terminate life.²⁴ This sounds like a measurement of prevention against germs in modern sense. This is attached with some level of sanity evident in clearance and burning of the waste products from the sacrifice. The timing of the season was a fixed one with divine eyes on the object of sacrifice and modalities.

The subsequent verses from 11-13 moved from the timing and identity of the sacrificial objects to the resistant procedures and exigent outfit for the process and control. The word *Labash* for “fully dressed” was used in the *Pual* verb intensive passive, revealing the intensity of

the coverage. It could be interpreted as fully armed, following details and protocol for disease control.²⁵ The community must appear in a distinct manner if they really want to nail the pandemic to the cross of oblivion and stay different from the uninformed Egyptians. They were readily informed to take precautions that will be fit to manage the post pandemic period; when there will be massive record of unprecedented deaths among their Egyptian host. The kits for the control and immunity process are clearly stated with the inclusion of “fully dressed, wearing of sandals and walking stick” before the immunization dishes (Ex. 12: 11).²⁶ The meal of immunity should be taken with urgency and full kits of resistance because the night will feature the outburst of divine pandemic that will strike throughout the land of Egypt. The urgency of those instructions leans on the path for divine boast for pandemic control among the Israelites.

The divine extrication of the Israelite is evident on the application of those preventive measures that will safeguard them from the Angel of destruction. They must follow instructions and put on the necessary kits for the control and pandemic resistance when the Angel will strike the land. When the Angel of destruction that will be passing through the land sees all the applications of divine directives, particularly the mark on the lintel, they will not be infiltrated in the pandemic. Moreover, this biblical paradigm could be used to enhance the firmness of the prevention against corona virus, when there is correlation of the instructions given to the Israelites with the directives given by WHO (World Health Organization) in Nigerian context.²⁷ This could be established by looking at the divine directives in Exodus 12 in the light of serious mechanism, put in place to address the corona virus pandemic. The consonance of those divine directives could be situated within the applications of those injunctions in the subsequent consideration.

Biblical Paradigm for Corona Virus in Nigeria: Lesson from Exodus 12

There is a lucid connection between divine mechanisms adopted by Israel and the strand of correlations with contemporary measures against corona virus. The biblical paradigm is positively situated in the light of the current handling method for corona virus in Nigeria. The Israelites were given the timing and specification of the object of sacrifice just as there were indications on what to use to curtail and build resistance against the virus. The idea of specification, timing and Passover remembrance in Vv.1-5 is in tandem with constant awareness on the need to live a healthy life, by proper examination of what to eat, taking hygienic precautions and food selection that will boost the immune system.²⁸ This should be a continuous observance that will be astronomically utilized as guidelines or manual for healthy living.

The timely instruction to take special care of the animal in V.6 has a hygienic implication, in the totality of health concern and resistance through clinical trials that will see to the fitness and authenticity of the prescribed analgesic. This is ably represented in the clinical trials adopted by health agencies before sanction or ratification of the intake of drugs and foods.²⁹ After the ratification, the object is now fit for use and control. The divine instruction in the examination of animal in V.6 is a biblical reflection of the appropriate clinical trial for authenticity. The aftermath of the ratification further divulges the contents of the object for prevention. The animal was not only meant for consumption after the examination but the blood was also a preventive measure against the strike of the pandemic. The smearing of blood, as indicated in the Hebrew use of *Dam* in V.7, speaks constructively on the level of domestic intervention against the virus by ensuring that there are provisions of water basin filled with water, alcohol-based hand sanitizers and napkins at the entrance of the house. This merged the smearing of blood and the contemporary protocol of Covid-19 on common level of compliance. The usefulness of the animal for

consumption and prevention in V.7 also reflects the multi usefulness of substance consumption. The inference of the multi-dimensional use of drugs and foods in the text is highly amenable.

The pressing tone of V.8 on the roasting and eating along with bitter salad sounds like the echo of immune boosting heralded by medical experts and researchers.³⁰ The introduction of logic into the verse makes one avers that specific foods in the text could be located within the frame of immunity and prevention against diseases. The position of modern science and research on salad greens is that it promotes long term health because of its anti-oxidants, which help to prevent chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease.³¹ The implication of the salad greens is largely on health consciousness and prevention from chronic diseases, which is an undisputable divine instruction in the text. In other words, Yahweh wants His people to be free from any sort of chronic diseases by specifying the type of anti-oxidant food that will work towards their prevention for necessary antibodies.

Verse 11 is aptly related with the contemporary guidelines to tackling the current corona virus pandemic. The line of correlations is notable with the instruction on the “fully dressed” that could be interpreted as fully covered or covering the sensitive areas that are liable of breeding infection. The touch of ‘fully dressed’ is relevant with fully armed, following details and protocol for disease control in the Covid 19 experience. It is appropriate that one must be fully armed if the virus is to be eradicated by ensuring full compliance to the details of the corona virus protocols. The current relevance of this text is the insistent use of nose mask for covering against the transmission of corona virus.³² The wearing of sandals might also be equated within the shape of protective kits for protection against virus. The use of dress and sandals sends the message of being fully armed with coverage against any form of penetration, air moisture or contamination. The use of hand sanitizer also adds to the details of the prevention as it could

be laced with “walking stick” systematically. The sticking of a thing could be blend with conforming oneself to the consistent use of detergents and alcohol-based sanitizer for frequent disinfectant of the hands.³³

The process involved in divine injunction from the specification, timing to food selection and prevention of the body is geared towards the imminent pandemic in V.12 resulting from the strike that will be unleashed on Egypt. The preparation and strict observance of the divine guidelines in accordance with the text could be used as paradigm for managing coronavirus in Nigeria. The secular guidelines for controlling corona virus must be considered in the light of spirituality that is unleashed on Israel in Egypt. These spiritual measurements can be considered in the constructive management of corona virus in Nigeria when information and compliance are given much attention.

From this inference, there is the need to align the guidelines in managing the pandemic with the basic principles of disease control that outplayed in Exodus 12. The Nigerian policy makers and masses will mean well, when proactive mindset is given to the intelligence, application and compliance of corona virus control in the light of biblical parameter in Exodus 12. This will further reduce the presence of corona virus to mere insignificant ailment that would be tackled with sort of precautions and prevention tips. The approach will situate sanitary and simple hygiene coupled with health consciousness into our economic, religious and social activities that are being overlooked in the recent times. That dramatically explains the biblical submission for disease control, akin to the presentable logic of the corona virus control, particularly in Nigeria. Thus, a substantial drop of suggestions will further stem the guidelines in the light of biblical paradigm for the management of corona virus in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations beg for urgent attention in Nigeria. There should be pro and post corona virus updates at every stratum of professional intelligence for profile review and documentation in order to forestall future unforeseen circumstances through seminars, workshops and symposia. The reality of corona virus should not be played with; the popularity of the virus being a virus that is meant to affect the noble and not the poor of the society should be discarded. There should be continuous urban and grass-root sensitization on the need to tackle corona virus and other infectious diseases that have come to stay with us, by observing the laid down rules by the government and the church.

The stakeholders should not use the presence of the pandemic to play politics and for pecuniary gains in any case. The control of corona virus should be viewed from the biblical paradigm in terms of immune build-ups, intelligence, application and compliance. There should be consciousness that the virus is largely becoming an endemic thing, therefore, there should be continuous update and protocol compliance at every human interactive sessions. Thus, there is a stance of contribution from biblical constituency on the modalities to managing corona virus in Nigeria. This must be proficient, proactive and practicable in operation for total control of the corona virus pandemic and related life-threatening diseases. This side of consideration is timely and considerable for the joint responsibility of managing the virus by other stakeholders. From this point of consideration, one may now conclude.

Conclusion

The biblical paradigm for the management of coronavirus, evident in Exodus chapter 12 is profoundly relevant in terms of compliance and intelligence. The dynamics induced from divine directives from Yahweh is a positive one in the collaborative effort in the fight against

corona virus in Nigeria. Those guidelines from the standards of the timing, specification, examination, immunity boasting and kits are all inclusive in the contemporary terminologies for managing pandemic, particularly the corona virus. The confirmation of these is provided in verses 11 and 12 which duly stressed the control through clinical trial, immunity framework, proper food and drug intakes, coverage and protection of hands against germs. This is reflected in satisfactory adoption of biblical paradigm in Exodus chapter 12 which could be used as a point of educating the masses on the need to tackle the corona virus with logic and spirituality. The virus is endemic and should be approached with the consistency of observing its protocol in economic, religious and social interactions of the Nigerian populace.

Endnotes

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Ogunrinade Adewale Olukayode is a professor in Department of Religious Studies, Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.

E-mail: wale.ogunrinade@gsu.edu.ng

Olowoyeye Emmanuel Olurokan (PhD) is a lecturer in Department of Religious Studies, Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.

E-mail: biodunolowo2000@yahoo.com

Samuel Oluwasegun Kolade is a doctoral student, Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin, Nigeria.

E-mail: sammykolade@gmail.com