



Prayer Letter

May 2020



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The “Globalization” of the Plague

The pandemic that began in Wuhan, China in January this year has spread swiftly. It was named by the World Health Organization as a new coronavirus. As I write this article, almost half of the world’s population has had orders to stay at home, with more than two millions infected and 134,000 deaths. Since the outbreak of the virus, epidemiologists have worked hard to find the source of infection, infection mechanism and containment methods. Politicians have also worked hard to exploit this global outbreak from the perspective of international politics. In the words of the Secretary-

General of the United Nations: “The new coronavirus pandemic is the biggest crisis facing the world since World War II. It is also the biggest test that the United Nations has faced since its establishment. It may bring about an unprecedented economic recession and intensify instability and conflict ...”

This pandemic has become a threat to everyone in the so-called “global village”. Over the years, the term “globalization” has become more well-used. According to the definition by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2000, “globalization” refers to “trade and

international transactions, the flow of capital and investment, population movement, and knowledge spreading.” The developments of the past few decades have led people to believe that, with the pace of industrialization and further development of science, technology, communications and transportation, human history will definitely become more and more globalized. Everyone will automatically become a member of the “global village”, and people from different regions or even countries will become communities.

When this becomes a reality, will humanity be able to solve the problems of poverty and inequality, and deal with some major global issues like climate warming? As cultures become more integrated, will our hope of achieving permanent peace within cultural diversity be fulfilled? Taking China as an example, since the country opened up to the world in the 1980s, it has quickly become a “world factory” and consumer market - hundreds of millions of Chinese people have escaped absolute poverty. China has thus become the most successful participant in the United Nations Millennium Development Project. A few years ago, the Chinese government set 2020 as the target year for China to eliminate absolute poverty.

But the sudden arrival of the new coronavirus this year has made people look at globalization from a completely new perspective. Because of globalization, a controllable regional epidemic can spread globally. Because it was not contained regionally, everyone is threatened by disease and death.

In spite of China locking down a number of cities, the pandemic infected all of China and the world. As I write, 190 countries and regions around the world have identified traces of the new coronavirus. Because of global connections, the virus has been unstoppable. Some countries have repatriated their people from overseas, and closed their borders to stop the movement of people internationally. Many countries have ordered a shutdown of social activities to stop the spread of the virus. Apart from a few commodities, international trade has been halted. International students from all over the world have put their studies on hold and gone home. In just a few months, the positive outcomes of globalization seemed to have vanished.

What kind of globalization might exist after this pandemic? There are dozens of plagues recorded in the Bible, and without exception, they all relate to the sinful behavior of people. Moreover, the plagues all stopped when people came to God

Prayer Points

May 2020

1 Today is International Labor Day, and also the beginning of the first long-weekend holiday of the year. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many laborers are worried that their factories or companies may be closed and they might be laid off. Please pray for China in the aftermath of the coronavirus outbreak.

2 People have been expecting the pandemic to recede or disappear as it gets warmer. Please pray for all whose lives have been affected by the virus. Pray that more people will find real peace in the Lord.

3 In Wuhan the 76-day-long lockdown was finally lifted on April 8. The local residents, however, are still living under the shadow of the pandemic. Please pray for them.

4 Pray for Wuhan churches. Some churches have lost members during the epidemic. Pray that these churches will be strong in faith and a blessing to their local communities.

5 Pray for the family members of Wuhan healthcare workers who lost their lives in the epidemic. A number of those who died were Christians. Pray that the Lord will comfort their family members and that the church will know how to care for them.

6 Pray that churches will be able to start their normal meetings soon. Currently, they are not permitted to gather. Some people may stop attending church for fear of being infected.

7 Please pray for pastors and church workers in Wuhan who have been intimidated by the authorities. They will face the same kind of pressure after this crisis passes. Pray that God will continue to strengthen them.

8 Pray for Wuhan residents who have undergone a long time in lockdown. After the lockdown was lifted, people from other places still reject them. And many suffer from anxiety and emotional breakdown. Pray for God's healing.

9 Pray for believers and ministers in Wuhan who are participating in evangelism following the outbreak. Currently their main tasks are to visit and care for family members of the deceased. Pray that God will grant them wisdom to carry out their ministry, and to

bring God's love to those who are grieving.

10 Today is Mother's Day - pray for all mothers. After schools were closed, many mothers have needed to take on responsibility for home-schooling their children. May God grant them strength and wisdom.

11 Business in China is gradually resuming, but many companies are facing a grim future due to lack of demand. Please pray for anxious business owners, especially those who are Christians.

12 As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, many companies have closed due to lack of orders. Pray for a Christian businessman named J. He had to close his business and lay off his employees. Pray for wisdom, so that he will make good decisions.

13 Please continue to pray for a businessman named Q, who started a project to support full-time house church ministers, in rural areas and third-tier cities. So far he has managed to allocate enough funds. Praise the Lord that many believers have been moved to make contributions - pray that more people will participate in this great ministry.

14 During the coronavirus outbreak, many rural churches did not have internet access and they continued their conventional Sunday worship secretly in small groups. During May, many of their meetings will have to be cancelled because this is a busy month for farm work. Pray that God will bless and guide rural churches after the coronavirus outbreak is over.

15 Churches which were the first to have online worship and ministry have acquired some good experience. Some larger urban churches are combining conventional worship meetings with online ministries. Pray that the Lord will use Chinese churches to bless churches around the world after the pandemic.

16 Please pray for the theological education in China. Online teaching can easily be monitored by the authorities and internet access can be cut off without warning. Online theological education is more challenging than online church meetings. Pray that God will sustain and guide those who serve in theological education.

17 Today is Sunday: please remember pastors who are continuing their ministry online.

Pray for spiritual insight to enable them to teach online effectively.

18 Please pray for a family living in a minority area - they have not been allowed to host meetings or visit neighbors since January, and their ministry has been seriously affected. Their two teenage children are not doing well spiritually, due to lack of outdoor activity and fellowship. Pray for God's sustenance and provision for this family of faithful workers.

19 Please pray for a Christian high school student who has just arrived in the US to attend school. His mother is accompanying him. They had found a home-stay family, but then the school closed and all teaching is conducted online. They are strangers to the US and unable to travel. They wonder whether they should return to China soon - pray for God's peace in their hearts.

20 The pandemics forced many schools in western countries to close, and many Chinese students have needed to return to China before finishing their studies. Pray especially for teenage students. Whether returning to China or staying overseas, may God protect them and provide for them.

21 Please continue to pray for a rural pastor in north China called L. His village is no longer in lockdown, but whenever he goes out, his ID is checked. Such strict measures have made fellowship with church members very difficult. Pray for God's protection.

22 Many migrant workers delayed at home by the coronavirus outbreak and have finally returned to their work locations. But many companies have closed now due to lack of demand. Some of these workers have been forced to return home again for the busy farming season. Please pray for these workers, that they can quickly adjust to life back in the countryside.

23 Currently, all travellers are subject to ID checks. This creates a huge challenge for house church workers. Please pray that the church would continue to grow, in spite of such strict surveillance.

24 The pre-existing national surveillance system has been further upgraded due to the coronavirus outbreak. Many Christian activities have had to be suspended under political pressure. This includes inter-city fellowships, indigenous mission, theological education, caring programs for the elderly and ministries to the marginalized. Pray that God will

continue to work powerfully through Chinese Christians in these difficult circumstances.

25 China's surveillance system is continually being upgraded, and the authorities are able to monitor every detail of every person's life. This has led to distrust among Christian family members, even pastor's families. Pray that Christian leaders will maintain their spiritual disciplines and integrity before God and men.

26 The end of May is usually a very busy time for primary and secondary graduating students, as they are studying hard to prepare for the junior and senior high school entrance exams. This year, students have had to study online, which demands a lot of self-discipline. But some students are addicted to electronic games. Pray for Christian students to be able to balance their studies and leisure time wisely.

27 Pray for Chinese students who had planned to enroll in schools overseas. Since their exam dates have been postponed, they will have to spend extra time preparing, and this will be expensive for their parents. As a result, some students have given up their plans to study overseas. Pray for Christian students and parents

to clearly understand God's plan at this difficult time. May He guide them to make the right decisions.

28 Pray for Christian students from rural areas. While waiting to sit entrance exams for overseas schools, they have been living with home-stay families in the city. This has brought a heavy financial burden to their parents. Pray for God's provision.

29 The National College Entrance Exams are scheduled for July 7, 2020. Please pray for the final-year high school students who have been studying hard during the coronavirus outbreak. Traditionally, many of these students go to temples to burn incense to Buddha or to consult fortune-tellers. Pray that more students will encounter Jesus Christ, and find true hope in Him.

30 International Children's Day is this weekend. Many urban families would normally take their children for an outing, or buy gifts for them. Pray that families will be able to enjoy quality time together and be protected against the virus.

31 Many churches will celebrate "Children's Day" today. Pray that God will bless and prosper children's ministries.

(Continued from page 2)

and repented. “Then the Lord answered David’s prayer on behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.” (2 Sam 24:25).

Today’s pandemic will not end by the confession and repentance of one nation. Christians all over the world have been asked to join in a prayer movement initiated by Wuhan church in January, confessing their sins publicly. Because this is a pandemic, we the Church are all in this “plague” together. Should we all come before God together, reflect on our own sins and repent, so that our compassionate God will end this “plague”? This is a great opportunity for all Christians to fall down before their Creator God, to confess and repent. We certainly should confess our sin of pursuing material gain. We should also confess that, while claiming we want to improve people’s lives, we are really more interested in satisfying our own greed. Perhaps we thought that globalization would strengthen our own reputations – for this too we should confess and repent.

Although globalization has been a much talked about concept in recent decades, it is not in fact a new concept. When Abram was called to go to the Promised Land, God’s call to him was in the context of all mankind (Gen. 12: 1-3). And so we even see the concept of

globalization in the Old Testament.

In addition, the Great Commission commands us to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28: 19-20; Acts 1: 8). Although first century people were not yet aware of the “ends of the earth” in the same way as we are today, we can see how explicitly the Great Commission points towards globalization. Globalization with the goal of profit making can be contrasted with gospel globalization this is what humanity needs most of all.

Of course we must be careful not to insert modern concepts into the Bible, or to explain globalization in an exclusively Christian way.

The “Great Qin Nestorian Popular Chinese Stele” was engraved in the second year of Tang Jianzhong (781 AD), and recorded that Nestorianism came to Chang’an, China in the ninth year of Zhenguan (635). It spoke of the more than 100 year journey of Nestorian Christians in China:

**The true way, wonderful and indescribable,
Result noticeable, Named Nestorianism.
But the way of wisdom cannot be propagated without a holy.
The Holy cannot grow without the way.
If way and holy are joined together, the empire is in order.**

From these words, we can tell that the Nestorians who went to China during the Tang dynasty had a clear sense of commission. They had a vision, and saw that “if the Way and the Holy are joined, the empire will be in order”. This was one expression of the globalization of the gospel, in China during the Tang Dynasty.



For the global Christian community, commitment to globalization is not something in the future, nor is it motivated by the convenience that international trade brings. In the past few years, during my travels to different provinces and cities, I have often heard Christians reflecting on their journey to faith, and different people repeatedly speaking about a foreigner they met while studying in Wuhan. He impressed them with his humble, yet enthusiastic spirit, and the way he loved his children. Many students considered him trustworthy and a model for their own lives. This foreigner devoted his life to serving Chinese students and friends in Wuhan.

I found this foreigner’s grave in a cemetery in Wuhan. He lived in China, died in China, and was buried in China. I saw this evidence of a wonderful Christian who was dedicated to cross-cultural gospel ministry. At his graveside, I was reminded of the Bible verse that says “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)”

Only the gospel can change people for the better, and as it becomes more globalized solutions can be found to some universal problems.