

# COVID-19: Why Did God Close Your Church?

(A Message to the Members of the Body of Christ)

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*(Preached on Saturday Evening, April 18, 2020)*

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

(Philippians 3:17-21)

An article entitled “A Lamentation for Churches Closed at Easter by the Coronavirus Pandemic”, published on RealClearPolitics.com, sums up a recent phenomena that has only just begun. Listen to this.

“The ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was last closed during the Black Plague of the 1300s. Then came the coronavirus pandemic.

“And now [a video circulates](#) across social media of the caretaker, a Muslim man whose family, it is said, has reverently tended this holiest of all Christian churches since the 1100s.

“[Now visualize this.] The caretaker closes the doors. The heavy bolts fall into place, sounding like a hammer thudding on the hearts of the Christian world just before Easter.

“Coronavirus is most certainly not the Black Death. But the doors of churches are closed just the same.”  
([https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2020/04/08/a\\_lamentation](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2020/04/08/a_lamentation))

[for churches closed at easter by the coronavirus pandemic 142892.html](#))

Why? The churches are closed all across the world, but why?

The Greek word for *church*, *ekklisía* (ἐκκλησία), in the Bible means God's called out people, right? Jesus, in Matthew 21:13, said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer. Yes, he said that. Then why is God allowing those who called themselves "his people" to no longer meet in what they identified as "his house?"

Is there not anyone *else* asking these questions, or must *this* ministry, as it is written in Isaiah 40:3 (and repeated in Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; and Luke 3:4) be the only "*voice of one crying in the wilderness?*" Regardless, *someone* needs to ask these questions, and *someone* needs to bring out the answers that are surely given in the Word of God.

Why, as part of this rapidly spreading world-wide pestilence, which the world has so glibly labeled "COVID-19" and yet so hauntingly cannot escape.. why, as a component of its ravaging effects, has God allowed the churches to be closed? Why does He not, at least in *this* particular, intervene and cause that each "house of prayer" be *reopened* so that prayer, *much* prayer, all across the planet, might be made? Is it perchance that he *doesn't want to hear their prayers, as if he detested the very site or sound (or even smell) of them?*

As it is written and as He has said,

*"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies."* (Amos 5:21)

How has it come to this? Yes, even to the point where the words of our Savior, so painfully uttered as he carried his cross, are for *us*.

Listen:

*"But Jesus turning unto them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* (Luke 23:28)

The answer? The answer is simple, as is always the case with the duty of the created to the God of the Universe who created him. A hymn encapsulates it as "Trust and Obey", but the word of God is, of course, so much more precise. So, let us *hear* the Word of God, which speaks so clearly and which, being so divinely recorded, shall *forever* say this.

"But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers." (1 Samuel 12:15)

"Not obey the voice of the Lord?"

"Rebel against the commandment of the Lord?"

"*Then* shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers?"

The heights of surrendered rejoicing in God *versus* the depths of disobedient depravity. Who is it that leads the Christian church to either one or the other? Who indeed? Who else but the leaders: the ministers of the church of God: the pastors, the preachers, the priests.

Thus are the greatest rebukes to be preached in the Bible... preached against *them*. The most scathing messages of the Old and the New Testament, *including* that large percentile of our Lord's earthly ministry:

- Confronting criticisms against the pastors of his day.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" is the theme of our Lord's greatest rebuke, as recorded in Matthew 23:8-39. A rebuke, which for *too long*, has been wrongfully deflected *away* from where our Lord intended it be sent: *not* chiefly to the people, but rather to the speaker himself; to the man *behind* the pulpit: to you, o' ye "ministers of God." (2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

And suddenly the confused life of King Saul becomes clear. Yes, that portion of Scripture which so many ministers would rather see ripped out of the Bible *than to have it read, or even worse preached*.

But, brother minister, take heart! Let us hear the Word of God together, and let us be reprov'd, be affected, and repent, and return to being that "city that

is set on a hill" which "cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14) that we *should* have been and must now *be*. Come look into the mirror and see *yourself* in Saul, King Saul; the preacher, the leader of that greatest congregation of God of his time. Dare go with us through the decline of *his* life to find the rising of your own. Dare to find in him what is wrong with you, so that you may turn around and lead your people back to your Savior.

As it is written, and as he has said,

*"Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matthew 4:17)

*"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."* (Psalm 30:5)

## **I. A preacher gone wrong starts out right.**

*"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."* (Philippians 3:17)

### **A. You were humble in the beginning of your ministry.**

*"And Samuel said, 'When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?'"* (1 Samuel 15:17)

### **B. You were hungry in the beginning of your ministry.**

*"And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, 'What aileth the people that they weep?' And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.*

*"And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, 'Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.'" And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent."* (1 Samuel 11:5-7)

### **C. You were humane in the beginning of your ministry.**

*"And the people said unto Samuel, 'Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.'*

*"And Saul said, 'There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.'* (1 Samuel 11:12-13)

## **II. A preacher gone wrong stops obeying the Bible.**

*"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:"* (Philippians 3:18)

### **A. You were warned by the Word of God.**

*"If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and*

- *obey his voice, and*
- *not rebel against the commandment of the LORD,*

*"Then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:*

*"But if ye will*

- *not obey the voice of the LORD, but*
- *rebel against the commandment of the LORD,*

*"Then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers." (1 Samuel 12:14-15)*

### **B. You were tested by the Word of God.**

*"And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him." (1 Samuel 13:8)*

*"And Samuel said, 'What hast thou done?' And Saul said, 'Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.'" (1 Samuel 13:11-12)*

### **C. You rebelled against the Word ("the commandment") of God.**

*"And Samuel said, 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.'" (1 Samuel 15:22-23)*

### **III. A preacher gone wrong steers his people astray.**

"Whose end is destruction." (Philippians 3:19a)

#### **A. You lead the church into stagnation.**

"Saul chose him three thousand [3,000] men of Israel; whereof two thousand **[2,000] were with Saul** in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand **[1,000] were with Jonathan** in Gibeah of Benjamin: **and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.**

"And **Jonathan smote the garrison** of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And **Saul blew the trumpet** throughout all the land, saying, *'Let the Hebrews hear.'*

"And all **Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison** of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And **the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.**

"And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand **[30,000] chariots**, and six thousand **[6,000] horsemen**, and **people as the sand which is on the sea shore** in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven." (1 Samuel 13:2-5)

#### **B. You lead the church into splitting.**

"And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him." (1 Samuel 13:8)

"And Samuel said, 'What hast thou done?' And Saul said, 'Because I saw that the people were scattered from me...' (1 Samuel 13:11)

"And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And **Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six [600] hundred men.**" (1 Samuel 13:15)

### **C. You lead the church into spiritual confusion.**

#### **1. Fear**

"When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for **the people were distressed,**) then **the people did hide themselves** in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits." (1 Samuel 13:6)

#### **2. Faithlessness**

"And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and **all the people followed him trembling.**" (1 Samuel 13:7)

#### **3. Faltering (losing strength or momentum)**

"And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and **the people were scattered from him.**" (1 Samuel 13:8)

#### **4. Fading away**

"And Samuel said to Saul, '**Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.**

**"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."** (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

### **IV. A preacher gone wrong stops the work of God.**

“Whose God is their belly.” (Philippians 3:19b)

**A. You hindered the work by focusing on yourself.**

“So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.” (1 Samuel 13:22)

**B. You hindered the work by focusing on ceremony.**

“And **Saul said unto Ahiah, ‘Bring hither the ark of God.’** For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

“And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and **Saul said unto the priest, ‘Withdraw thine hand.’**” (1 Samuel 14:18-19)

**C. You hindered the work by focusing on what you had to say.**

“Then answered one of the people, and said, *‘Thy father straitly **charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day.**’* And the people were faint.

“Then said Jonathan, *‘**My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.**’*

*“How much more, **if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?**”* (1 Samuel 14:28-30)

**V. A preacher gone wrong steers his people into evil.**

“And whose glory is their shame.” (Philippians 3:19c)

**A. You steered the people into your own sins.**



"Then they told Saul, saying, 'Behold, the people sin against the Lord, in that they eat with the blood.' And he said, 'Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.'" (1 Samuel 14:33)

**B. You steered the people into your own lack of faith.**

"And **Saul asked counsel of God**, 'Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel?' **But he answered him not that day.**" (1 Samuel 14:37)

**C. You steered the people into your self-will.**

"For, as the Lord liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.' But there was not a man among all the people that answered him." (1 Samuel 14:39)

**VI. A preacher gone wrong stops the work and brings confusion!**

"Who mind earthly things." (Philippians 3:17)

**A. The people are forced to choose between you and God.**

"And the people said unto Saul, 'Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day.' So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not." (1 Samuel 14:45)

**B. The people are forced to think *your* work is the work of God.**

"And he **gathered** an host, and **smote** the Amalekites, and **delivered** Israel out of the hands of them that **spoiled** them." (1 Samuel 14:48)

**C. The people are forced to endure your cause instead of God's.**

"And there was **sore war** against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and **when Saul saw** any **strong man**, or any **valiant man**, he took him **unto him.**" (1 Samuel 14:52)

**Conclusion:**

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”  
(Philippians 3:17-21)

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**Outline:**

**COVID-19: Why Did God Close Your Church?**

- I. A preacher gone wrong starts out right.
- II. A preacher gone wrong stops obeying the Bible.
- III. A preacher gone wrong steers his people astray.
- IV. A preacher gone wrong stops the work of God.
- V. A preacher gone wrong steers his people into evil.
- VI. A preacher gone wrong stops the work and brings confusion!