

The Usual Chaos

A World Full of Deceit

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My son, Aric, and I watched a movie this week: *The Usual Suspects*. I am not recommending the movie because of its excessive violence and foul language, but to me, its message resonated with the current situation we are going through under the coronavirus cloud that we are all living through. It is kind of metaphor that lets us know what we are dealing with in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I don not want to give you a full rundown of the movie, but here are just a few things that may help you to understand what I am talking about. In *The Usual Suspects*, we follow a gang of criminals as they pursue “one last score” together. About a third of the way through, the scene moves from New York to Los Angeles, and not long afterward, the narration of events shifts from a more universal viewpoint to the gang’s lone survivor, a crippled man named “Verbal.” He is called that because he talks too much. At least that is what he said. A detective from New York has flown into Los Angeles and bullies Verbal into telling him what happened the night before when the gang had assaulted a ship, its crew, and all the heavies who were guarding it and its cargo. The ship had burned, and everyone had died—except for Verbal and one man who had been burned pretty badly and suffered life-threatening burns.

In a scene at the very end, the detective looks at a corkboard that had been behind him throughout his entire interrogation of Verbal. It was a typical police corkboard, full of mugshots, lists of names, newspaper clippings, bits of physical evidence, string tying one piece of information to another, as if it was following a particular case, and so on. And he notices details on that corkboard—names, descriptions, places—that match details from the story Verbal had just told him: names of people that were helping him (or not helping him), doing this or that. Even little side stories came from details he had found on this corkboard. The viewer realizes immediately that Verbal, the criminal, had made up a lot of the tale he had told the detective! It was right off the top of his head. He had stolen the story from the corkboard! He had taken little details from corkboard and put them all together—mashed them up—and told him this story.

It dawns on the viewer that Verbal is a *very* untrustworthy narrator. In his entire story, only a few facts are true and verifiable: Many people died (and autopsies would later show who they were), the ship was burned, and Verbal and the other man survived. That is about all you know from the entire story that is probably true. Everything else was either totally false—made up on the spot—or half lies (or half-truth, depending on whether you are a “glass is half full” or “half empty” person), or subject to interpretation. In the end, what we find is that we cannot trust any of Verbal’s story at all. We cannot trust a word of it. All we have is death and destruction and a whole lot of lies—and no one who can tell us what really happened or why. You are left with dozens of questions at the end of the story. You just do not know, because you cannot trust Verbal. We are left guessing and frustrated at the end of the movie.

The Usual Suspects is a spectacular metaphor for our present situation with coronavirus. People have sickened and died, lives and wealth have been destroyed, yet we find ourselves unable to trust a word of what those-in-the-know (supposedly) are telling us about it. From Trump to Fauci-Birx to the CDC to the WHO to China to media outlets to governors and mayors and doctors and private

citizens—we cannot rely on *any* of them to tell us the truth! We cannot independently verify *anything*, it seems. They are *all* "Verbals." They are all untrustworthy narrators. Everyone of those has an agenda. Everyone has a fiefdom he or she is trying to protect. Everyone has a cause he or she is trying to advance.

Even statistics and raw data are being manipulated. Some places in Florida were reporting ten times the number of positive cases of coronavirus, and getting away with it for I-do-not-know how long. But they were saying 94%, 98%, 96% positive, when it was 9.4%, inflating the numbers by a factor of 10. Other places are counting untested, *possible* cases (due to exposure) as actual cases. In this, a person is tested, and he comes out positive for coronavirus. Well, he has a wife, and three children, and he talked to his neighbor over the fence. Now, that is not *one* positive case, that is *six*, because his wife, his kids, and his neighbor are considered possible cases, and therefore *his* number goes up as not one but six. Which is stupid.

The media emphasize cases and downplay deaths, striking fear in their audience that things are worse than they are, and failing to mention that around 99% of its victims survive, and most of them survive it without lasting complications. But, not, we have to talk about the people who go in and get killed by ventilators because they cannot take the pressure after so long, or they have weak lungs. I posted on Facebook the other day a picture of David standing over Goliath (this was from the Babylon Bee, a satire site), and the caption says, "Historians have now figured out that Goliath died from Covid."

I have been beating this drum for at least 15 years, at least since my "Man's Greatest Challenge" sermons in 2005, and I know I had spoken about it before. In that sermon (Part One), I quoted novelist Michael Crichton, who had written:

The greatest challenge facing mankind is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda. Perceiving the truth has always been a challenge to mankind, but in the information age, or as I think of it, the dis-information age, it takes on a special urgency, and importance.

We must daily decide whether the threats we face are real, whether the solutions we are offered will do any good, whether the problems we are told exist are in fact real problems, or just non-problems.

I believe that that applies very well in this case of coronavirus. What is happening with coronavirus is the usual chaos among mankind following the dictates and the direction of Satan the Devil, the master of deceit, who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). As God's people, we need, not only to be aware of the overwhelming deceit in and by the world, but also to ignore it, rise above it, and seek the truth.

Who is the only One we can rely on to give us the truth? Our God. He is the only One we have absolute certainty in to speak to us the truth, to give us the facts. He does not lie to us. If He says pestilence is among the beginning of sorrows, then so be it. That is the way He has set things up. We can deal with it in faith, trusting Him to lead us through it in health—and if not, then we trust God to do what is best for us and our families.

Perhaps the best thing we can do right now in this time of chaos is to turn off the news. Quit reading those voluminous articles that try to tell you "the truth" (from their perspective) of what is going on, whether you get it from Facebook or Twitter or some right-wing group or some left-wing group. Stop

reading them. You are just making yourself frustrated. Quit cheering on one political party or the other. That is in God's hands. God did you call you to be a cheerleader, or to vote, or any of those things. He called you to be His disciple and to live this life. And just trust Him, that He is going to make sure that we make it through in the way He wants us to make it through. There are plenty of other, more positive and profitable things we can do with our time right now.