

Covid-19 Vaccines

**To vaccinate or not to vaccinate that is
the question**

by

Philip Venables

Introduction

The vaccines to prevent Covid-19 infection have been very prominent in our news media, and in our lives, over these past weeks and will be so for the foreseeable future it seems. In the UK a vast number of people, over twenty six million (as at 19th March 2021), have now had the first dose of the vaccine. There is much material online though, which would be encouraging people not to have the vaccine. Many are wondering, many are concerned and many are putting it off. Then there is the prospect of "vaccine passports" which means you will only have access to certain facilities and spaces if you have had the vaccine. As Christians we want to honour the Lord in all our ways; so what are we to do?

Framework

We believe that God in His Word has provided us with a full and infallible guide to provide guidance on the many perplexing issues that we face. Therefore, as we look at the matter of Covid-19 vaccines it must be in His Word that we find all the commands and principles that we need to guide us in reaching a decision.

Created of God

In Psalm 139:14-16 David observes:

I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me,

Quite simply God has made us. Wisdom thereby would dictate that we, as His creation, should, to put it quaintly, follow the Makers' instructions. Not to do so is folly.

Effected by sin

Were it not for the fall, and the consequent tyranny of sin, there would be no illness in the world and we would not have to bother with Covid-19, or any other disease for that matter. The reality is though, that we have many diseases around and they can effect ourselves and our communities with potentially (and actually) devastating consequences.

We must seek God first

The LORD himself establishes the principle in Matt 6:33; **"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."** We should put God first in everything, including our physical health. It should be our "natural response" to make sure that this is the case and so we pray about everything. Moreover, our blessed LORD said **"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and first commandment."** (Matt 22:37-38). God must be first!

King Asa of Judah had a good reign (see 2 Chron. 14:2). However, his death was somewhat inglorious:

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the

forty-first year of his reign. (2 Chron. 16:12-13).

With King Asa the matter of priorities is seen in sharp profile particularly with regard to seeking remedies for our physical maladies. Asa was not wrong to go the physicians for help. His failure came because he only sought the physicians for help.

The wrongness of merely seeking physicians without seeking the LORD is further hinted at in the experience of the woman with issue of blood in Mark 5:25-29:

And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Continual seeking of physicians had made her grow worse. However, when she sought the LORD she was better immediately; perfectly healed.

Should we seek medical assistance at all?

The conclusion may be drawn from the foregoing examples that we must not seek medical assistance at all. Rather, the argument goes, we must just go in faith relying on the Lord and all will be well. However, I believe that this is overstating the matter. The issue is not that of either seeking medical assistance or not, but rather that of priorities.

Let us look at the example of Luke whom Paul refers to as "**the beloved physician**" (Col. 4:14). Nowhere do we read that he had to give up his medical work when he became a follower of the Christ. Rather, he was still known as a physician. This was, no doubt, because he still used his skills for the benefit of people's health.

Paul also urges Timothy to "**No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.**" (1 Tim. 5:23). Evidently, Timothy had some stomach problems and wine was the best known medicine for that.

We conclude, therefore, that seeking medical assistance is not wrong in itself. However, it should only be sought whilst giving priority to seeking the LORD as regard to our health. And in doing all this we should remember that His kingdom and His ways should come first and not our comfort. We should always remember as Isaiah observes "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**" (Isaiah 55:8-9)

But should we not solely rely on the LORD?

This is a lie of the devil. The reason I am so strong in asserting this is because this very approach was used by the devil in his temptation of the Lord Jesus. Let us look at this in Luke 4 where in vv 9-13 it is related as the final temptation of our Saviour after He had been forty days and forty nights in the wilderness:

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you', and" "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

One tactic of the evil one, which he regularly uses, is to overstate one truth at the expense of another truth which counterbalances it, but never contradicts it. Satan quotes from Psalm 91 and encourages Jesus to rely solely on God. Thereby, Satan asserts, He will be kept from all danger and prove Himself to be the Son of God.

However, whilst not denying the truth that we should rely on the LORD as a priority, the Saviour brings in the counterbalancing truth that we should never tempt God. We should never unnecessarily put Him to the test. So we never walk unthinkingly in front of oncoming traffic saying "the LORD will protect me". That is tempting God.

The kernal of all this is that, whilst giving priority to a trust in Himself, God requires us to use all legitimate means to secure and maintain the good health of ourselves and others.

Accordingly, there is surely a strong argument that we should use all available means to prevent ourselves getting the potentially very harmful Covid-19 virus, Avoiding inoculation for Covid-19 and just relying on the LORD with all the possibly disastrous consequences, is thereby considered both foolish and dishonouring to the Lord.

Are we not the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Yes, of course the Christian is. Paul in 1 Cor. 6:19-20 states:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

This is a remarkable truth and hard for us to take in, but it is really true, the believer actually has God dwelling within him. Paul's point in 1 Cor. 6 is that, as a result of this, we should be very careful what we actually do with our bodies. In connection with the issue of vaccinations then we should think about what we are actually bringing into our bodies.

This is no doubt something we should think carefully about

So should we introduce any foreign elements into our bodies?

Obviously we have to in order to provide ourselves with nourishment from food! Nevertheless, we should surely exercise care in what we actually consume into our bodies. A staple diet of McDonalds and Burger King is surely going to bring harmful consequences in the medium and long run.

However, where do we draw the line? Some time ago I looked at my loaf of white bread from Tesco and saw that it contained (among other things): "Emulsifier (Mono- and Di-Acetyltartaric Acid Esters of Mono- Di-Glycerides of Fatty Acids)" and "Flour Treatment Agent (Ascorbic Acid)". All I can say is that I do not know what those things are, I just trust Tesco that they are not retailing things that are harmful to me!

I think this is vexed issue regarding what we are actually putting inside our bodies. I do not know the answers here, but I think it is too easy to say that we will not inoculate ourselves or our children or whoever because we do not want to put the vaccine into our or their bodies. We need to remember that we are continually putting foreign elements into our bodies anyway. Nevertheless, I think we should perhaps be

more thoughtful about what foods we are eating and what generally we are taking into their bodies. But, forgive me I veer towards another issue.

Herbal / Chemical Medicines

Instinctively I have an inclination towards consuming natural herbal materials as against manufactured chemical materials. However, I wonder whether such a conclusion is wholly well founded. For is it not true that some natural materials, such as cannabis, can be very dangerous indeed?

Also all materials, even those made through human ingenuity, are all made through the superintending design of our God. As the LORD says in Isaiah 45:5-7

I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things.

Have Not The Covid-19 vaccines been produced too quickly?

Before examining some of the impact of the vaccines, let us consider one of the issues that has been raised concerning the Covid-19 vaccines and that is the speed with which they have been developed, approved and distributed. The reason why it has all happened so swiftly is because of the size of the need.

Hear what Dr David K Vallance has to say about this:

Vaccines normally take a few years to develop, so when the COVID-19 vaccines arrived in just a few months people assumed that corners were cut and the whole thing was rushed. Under normal circumstances, vaccine manufacturers go through a long serial process: design, phase-1 safety testing, phase-2 efficacy testing, phase-3 volunteer testing, licensing, marketing, and then production. But COVID-19 vaccine developers, aided and underwritten by government programs like Operation Warp Speed in the U.S., compressed the whole process like a pirate's spyglass: they were freed from red tape, eliminated dead time, and ran safety trials, efficacy trials and production lines concurrently. Preset safety standards, as rigorous as for any previous vaccine, were not cut (1).

This is the explanation for the swiftness in the delivery of the Covid-19 vaccines.

Money, Money, Money

Although I do not want to be questioning the correctness of the certification process for the approving of these vaccines, I do want to be aware of the potential for the relevant pharmaceutical companies to reap vast revenues from their use. All I can say is that this should just make us all the more wary to make sure that all is being undertaken in an above board way with all the appropriate research and authorization. I am not aware that there has been any cutting of corners or compromise in any stage of producing the vaccines, but let us not be ignorant of the fact that there is a lot of money involved for Pfizer and AstraZeneca etc.

Harmful / Beneficial Characteristics

We are then led to consider whether or not the material, which constitutes the vaccine, is actually harmful or beneficial to the human system. Here we have to confess that we are left in the hands of the experts.

- What about the altering of our DNA?

Dr David Gorski says this

When considering claims about a novel disease such as COVID-19 and vaccines against it, we must also consider the totality of what we know about biology, especially molecular biology, and how a potential vaccine works in assessing the plausibility of alarmist claims about vaccines like those developed by Moderna and Pfizer. Claims that mRNA vaccines like these can “permanently alter your DNA” (or make you “transhuman”) fail miserably on that score (2).

Also Dr Alistair Henry has articulated how the vaccine is only in the body for a short space of time and has no lasting impact upon the body (3).

- What about there being a microchip being inserted in our bodies?

This is really a similar matter to that relating to the DNA. Dr Henry clarifies the matter by stating that it is purely organic material in the vaccine (4).

- What about the Mark of The Beast?

This is similarly related to statements above appertaining to the microchip issue. To clarify, what we are dealing with here, is the mark of the beast as described in Revelation 13:16-19:

Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

The supposed connection here revolves around the issue of the microchip. Is the microchip the mark of the beast?

Initially let me assert that we speculate about prophetic issues unnecessarily if we conclude that a microchip is the fulfilling of the mark of the beast prophecy. There is nothing in the text to indicate that it is.

Further, let us be clear, that if there is no microchip, as has been established above, then there can be no mark of the beast connected to the vaccines.

Quite simply though when we exegete Revelation 13:16-19 we see what is happening there is “in your face” stuff; there is no subterfuge happening. The subtle interfering with our beings by the clandestine inserting of a microchip into our bodies is far from what is going on in the aforementioned passage. When we read of people being **marked on the right hand or the forehead** then we rightly construe this to mean something that is out in the open.

Obtaining the mark unknowingly through the taking of vaccines and subtle insertion of a 666 sign is not what Revelation 13:16-19 is talking about.

Are there any dubious activities which are associated with the production of the vaccine?

Here we hit upon a very delicate issue. It is that of the connection between the Covid-19 vaccines and abortion. Moreover, here we venture into technical matters in which we most certainly need the help of experts. Controversy appears to arise concerning the HEK293 cell line. Joe Lewis writes of this as follows:

HEK293T is a widely used immortalized cell line that was made from fetal tissue acquired in the Netherlands in the 1970s. The records pertaining to the origins of HEK293T were lost, so it is not known whether the tissue came from a spontaneous miscarriage or an elective abortion.

Again, it's important to distinguish between "fetal tissue cells" and "cells derived from a long chain that arose from cells in fetal tissue." The HEK293T were derived from cells that came from fetal tissue but the cell line no longer contains fetal tissue cells. (5)

Dr John Wyatt expands upon the matter somewhat further and says:

The problem is that the cells were obtained from a human fetus (unborn baby) who was legally aborted in the Netherlands in 1973. Another manufacturer is developing a vaccine using a cell line PER.C6 which was also obtained from a fetus who was aborted in the 1980s. (6)

So where does this leave us? It is established from scripture that the life of a human being commences at conception. So for example David can say "**Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my did mother conceived me.**" (Psalm 51:5). As a general principle then the taking of a life from a mother's womb cannot be countenanced. Thus we would want to have nothing to do with being involved in anything which encourages this activity. I say this because in doing so one is essentially encouraging the taking of life.

Do we thereby totally distance ourselves from the Covid-19 vaccines which are presently being used in the UK, because they are derived from the growth of the vaccine on aborted human tissue?

In order to answer that, we need to consider what actually causes the availability of the human tissue. If babies were being taken from the womb and being slain specifically for the purpose of making tissue available for the growth of the vaccine then, I suggest, that would be totally abhorrent and we could not have the vaccine because we effectively become accomplices with evil. However, if the vaccine is produced from a cell line derived from tissue of a baby which was not specifically killed in order to procure material for the purpose of procuring the vaccine, then that is a very different matter.

I do not want to be involved in semantics, but I suggest that this does provide us with a way to maintain a clear conscience whilst using the vaccine. It appears that the cell line used in the Covid-19 vaccines was not specifically accrued for the purpose of the vaccine production. Again let us hear from Joe Lewis:

For example, if the abortion was conducted in order to harvest tissues that were to be used for the purpose of creating a cell line, then it would clearly be immoral. But in the case of HEK293T, even if an abortion occurred it was not carried out for that reason, and the tissue was acquired for the purpose of medical research only *after* the death of the child occurred for other reasons. This has significant consequences for determining whether such research is either licit or immoral. (5)

And finally on this point these are the words of David K Vallance:

We must also consider that (sic) our pro-life stance means regarding the dignity of *every* life. Refusing to accept a vaccine distantly linked to a 1970s abortion will jeopardize not only our own lives, but also the lives of our loved ones and neighbors. People whose vaccine refusal leads to further COVID-19 deaths can hardly be called pro-life—nor can those who wrongly believe that the disease should “just run its course” because “only old people are dying.” (1)

Love your neighbour

One of the main arguments for persuading us, as Christians, to take the Covid-19 vaccine is because it helps to protect our communities against the spread of the disease. The argument goes that my having the vaccine means I am one of the herd of the population who are not going to pass the disease on to others. Thereby, all are benefited because I am not contributing to the spread. The outcome of this is that fewer people will die or be significantly harmed by the disease

I mentioned earlier the first and great commandment as stated by the LORD. Now let us come to the second as He stated it: **"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself."** (Matt. 22:39). Such love would drive us towards taking the vaccine.

I suggest God has given both a duty to care for ourselves and a duty to care for our neighbour.

Dr David K. Vallance says this

What are the risks of refusal? First, your personal danger of disability or death from COVID-19—contracting the real disease is far more perilous than even the most exaggerated hazards pinned to the vaccine. Further, as a potential reservoir for SARS-CoV-2, you will continue to endanger others and undermine progress toward community immunity. (1)

What About Vaccine Passports?

In writing about this matter we are in the realms of speculation. However, Jo Rhodes of Which writes that:

Cyprus has just announced it'll allow vaccinated British tourists into the country from May 1 if they can prove it (7)

The inference from such a statement is that vaccine passports, whether formal or informal, are likely to play a part in our lives in the forthcoming days. How extensive the impact of such requirements might be is very uncertain at the present time.

For some who are hesitating about taking the vaccine the requirement to have the

vaccine in order to continue in their work, for example, may well persuade them to have it. For those who are strongly persuaded against taking the vaccine then the situation is more challenging.

If you are persuaded by scripture and good reason that, before God, you should not take the vaccine then lay hold of the God you are seeking to honour in making this decision. One scripture to encourage you is **the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me for ever,' but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'** (1 Sam. 2:30b). He is faithful.

Prayer

Having reached this point I have, I feel, dealt with most of the salient issues as they bear on this matter and thereby we must draw ourselves to the point of decision. However, we must not neglect to make a very important point at this juncture. That is that whatever our decision we must commit the welfare of ourselves and our communities to the LORD in regular fervent prayer to our loving Father. As Peter exhorts us **casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.** (1 Peter 5:7) should be a functioning reality in our lives. As someone has said in a different context, but with pertinent insight:

Probably the most useful thing a midwife said to us was one who was a Christian and visited just after #### were home. We were talking about the way that he preferred to sleep on his front (ie against the 'best' advice) - she said that commending him to the Lord's safe keeping for the night was the most important thing to do and that if we believed the Lord was caring for him we could sleep at ease without worrying how he was laying!

The point of this example is that whatever procedure or approach you adopt in the caring and medical realm, the most important thing is that we commit all to the Lord.

And so whatever our conclusion on the vaccine, the most important thing is to be in prayer for ourselves and our communities. And as we do so we can know rest and ease in our souls.

Respect For one Another

One of the sad observations of the debate among Christians about taking the vaccine has been the severity with which believers have interacted with one another. Such should not be so. Surely we are very much in Romans 14 territory here and it is incumbent upon us to conduct our interactions with a good spirit and temperate speech.

In this context let us have regard to these statements from Paul:

Therefore let us not pass judgement on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. (Rom. 14:13).

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Rom. 14:19).

Christians have reached and will reach different conclusions about whether or not to

take the vaccine. We should respect each other in this. It should not be a source of division.

Our Focus

A danger remains concerning the testimony we bear in considering all these matters. Are we to be known as pro-vaxxers or anti-vaxxers or whatever other slogan might be appropriated by ourselves or thrust on us by others? I suggest we should covet none of these labels. Rather, we should remember that we should be longing to be known as Christ's ones and those who have been with Jesus (see Acts 4:13).

Let it be that our focus with Paul, is upon Christ and our future with Him and for Him. He writes as follows in Philippians 1:22-23:

If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Whilst I would not in anyway want to encourage indifference in working through the vaccination issue. It should surely be true of us, as Paul urges the Corinthians: **So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** (1 Cor. 10:31). The glory of God in all things is our goal.

Moreover, I do want to urge us towards an eternal perspective. We should not imbibe the paranoia that is abroad in our nation and communities. We should be those who are of a different spirit. We are a people who are looking with Abraham towards a heavenly country. We live here as pilgrims and strangers (see Heb. 11:8-14). Let us live honourably, but let us live sensibly.

Let us hear from Andrew King here:

The great challenge of the moment is to present Jesus to a world in panic. Leaderless, rudderless, with no belief in any truth, estranged from science, disenfranchised from politics, believing in nothing precisely because they believe in everything, and believing in everything because they believe in nothing, our generation has the most pressing need of a new centre, a new lodestar, a new calibration through the proclamation of the Christ who is truth. Science, art, music, economics and politics – all belong to Jesus. All truth is his. He rules this world with truth and grace and our task is to explore the dimensions of his grace in this life, embracing it as our only hope for the life to come. Vaccines are gifts of God through gifted people; but vaccines will not save us from a lost eternity. Only Jesus and his work can do that.

Conclusion

Altogether it is a big decision and I think we should be supportive of one another, as Christians, in seeking to work these issues through honestly before the LORD. As for myself my present intention is to book in for the vaccination.

And finally:

- Work the whole matter through: **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind** (Rom. 14:5b).
- Consult with those who have scientific and/or scriptural wisdom.
- Seek the truth and thereby avoid spurious conspiracy theories.
- And may our love for our Lord Jesus permeate everything.

Further Investigation

I suggest using the resources for initial investigation:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pS7JxOvBIQ>
- <https://heaven4sure.com/2021/01/11/im-a-christian-why-should-i-get-a-covid-19-vaccine/?fbclid=IwAR3Hq74WJ0J36Xaxm1JHj5hnOC1Vy-DgfWHaDBNxITLRTFbMIjcJU5dpfQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a65MzwhyZ3I>

Footnotes

- (1) <https://heaven4sure.com/2021/01/11/im-a-christian-why-should-i-get-a-covid-19-vaccine/?fbclid=IwAR3Hq74WJ0J36Xaxm1JHj5hnOC1Vy-DgfWHaDBNxITLRTFbMIjcJU5dpfQ> (accessed March 10th 2021)
- (2) <https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/rna-vaccines-against-covid-19-will-not-permanently-alter-your-dna/> (accessed March 10th 2021)
- (3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a65MzwhyZ3I> relevant part is at 4 min 24 sec (accessed March 9th 2021)
- (4) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a65MzwhyZ3I> relevant part is at 11 min 36 sec (accessed March 11th 2021)
- (5) <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-faqs-fetal-cells-covid-19-vaccines-treatments/> (accessed March 9th 2021)
- (6) https://johnwyatt.com/2021/01/04/article-coronavirus-vaccines-and-christian-ethics/?fbclid=IwAR2rwa1cAxbjYDAdXISZkSI7YC2_2IId-NoxC0-U-V3rLC-0MZYobYz76FA (accessed March 10th 2021)
- (7) <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2021/03/will-covid-19-vaccine-passports-kick-start-travel-again/> (accessed March 11th 2021)
- (8) <https://buildingjerusalem.blog/2020/11/16/guest-post-thanking-the-lord-for-vaccines/> (accessed March 10th 2021)

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