



UNPRECEDENTED

By Graham Ashby

March 23, 2020

Over the last two weeks, so much has happened around the world and here in New Zealand. Who would have thought that an invisible viral enemy could attack every nation on earth in a matter of weeks? As every country battles the coronavirus pandemic, every day we seem to lose more of the normality we once had.

Our way of life in our work, our homes, our churches and our communities have been impacted, or are about to be, in a way that none of us has ever experienced in our lifetime. Business owners, employers and employees are nervous about job security and the entire financial world is nervously concerned about a pending global recession.

New Zealanders are racing to come home to join loved-ones. Funerals, weddings and social gatherings are all bearing the brunt of being ordered to limit attendees. Fear, anxiety, uncertainty, panic, scaremongering, greed, suspension, unemployment, lack of income and complacency are just some of the worries that many New Zealanders are contending with right now. Our mental and emotional health is being hammered on a daily basis. Distressing headlines that lasted a week are now coming almost hourly. Our brave doctors and nurses are the front line in this viral battle but admit the health sector is being stretched in so many ways.

Handshakes, hugs and hongis are banned and the over 70s are being strongly advised to stay at home. Anyone with a compromised health issue is also being firmly told to either stay at home or keep a safe distance from other people. This contagion has forced situational changes upon us and as a result, right now, new sets of words have become commonplace; COVID-19, self-isolation, community spread, social distancing, individualism, minimize face-to-face contact, to name a few.

One word, in particular, has caught my attention. It is rarely used but for over two weeks now this word has been spoken down microphones, written in newspaper articles and online feeds, and echoed around workplaces, on sports fields, in schools, on our streets, in our malls and shops and in our homes. It describes these abnormal times that we are living in. That word is – **'Unprecedented.'**

Virtually all sports have been halted overnight with everything from junior to seniors and professional games being cancelled. Unprecedented.

Air New Zealand has reduced flights across its network – cutting its long-haul flights by 85 per cent. Unprecedented.

Cruise ships have been banned from docking and coming to New Zealand. Unprecedented.

All borders into New Zealand are now closed to non-New Zealand citizens. Unprecedented.

The New Zealand Government has dramatically put in place a \$12 billion support package for the next 12 weeks. Unprecedented.

The Government is trying to create an environment of financial stability but most economists admit it is only a short-term fix. Unprecedented.

All large public gatherings over 100 are banned. Unprecedented.

Many churches have ceased Sunday services. Unprecedented.

Many Doctors and nurses are now meeting you in the carpark dressed in hazmat gear. Unprecedented.

People are fighting over toilet paper. Unprecedented.

Our mostly optimistic nation is rattled with uncertainty. No. 8 wire will not fix this! Unprecedented.

We are encouraged to have limited social contact. Unprecedented.

Today, the Government strategically moved the COVID-19 level to Level 3, announcing that in 48 hours this will shift to Level 4. This means New Zealand, apart from essential service will be in mandatory lockdown. Unprecedented!

Never since the great wars, has New Zealand experienced this state of affairs. Unprecedented.

And let's not forget the madness of our leaders in agreeing to make into law the 'right' to abort our nation's babies. Unprecedented.

It definitely appears that we are living in unprecedented times.

My dictionary states '**Unprecedented**' means '*never done or known before.*'

Certainly, my generation has never experienced such a situation like we are all living through right now.

As I read my Bible, none of this global phenomena has caught our God by surprise. He has not surrendered control of the universe and He certainly has not given up on the human race. No virus can isolate us from His love.

Although you will not find the word 'unprecedented' in the Bible, there are multiple times when it could have been used. The Bible is not short on unprecedented events:

Genesis – The entire planet is flooded because of man's sin. Unprecedented.

Exodus – A foreign slave baby named Moses grows to become a Prince of Egypt. Unprecedented.

Exodus - An entire enslaved nation of Israel is rescued from dominant Egypt. Unprecedented.

Exodus – The Red Sea parts to save God’s chosen people. Unprecedented.

Exodus – Commandments are engraved on stone by the finger of God Himself. Unprecedented.

Joshua – The earth did not rotate for an entire day as the sun stood still. Unprecedented.

Judges – One man had phenomenal strength because of his hair. Unprecedented.

1 Samuel – A shepherd boy slays a giant with one stone. Unprecedented.

1 Samuel – A Shepherd boy named David becomes the greatest King of Israel. Unprecedented.

Jonah – A reluctant prophet survives being swallowed by a large fish. Unprecedented.

Daniel – Three faithful young men emerge unscathed from a raging furnace. Unprecedented.

Daniel – Righteous, prayerful Daniel survives a night with hungry lions. Unprecedented.

Matthew – God sends His Son to be the world’s Saviour. Unprecedented.

Mark – Jesus uses five loaves and two fish to feed 5000 people. Unprecedented.

Luke – Jesus calms the storm. Unprecedented.

John – Jesus walks on water. Unprecedented.

John – Jesus Christ dies on a cross for the sins of the world. Unprecedented.

John – Jesus rises from the dead victorious over sin, death and hell. Unprecedented.

Acts – God’s Spirit comes to permanently dwell in the hearts of people who believe. Unprecedented.

You get the picture. God dwells in the realms of the unprecedented.

During these unprecedented days, we must remind ourselves that our God gives us unprecedented love, grace, mercy, hope and peace during such times as we are enduring right now. Despite the anxiety and uncertainty that many are experiencing, we are the people to bring the greatest of hope, the greatest of love and the greatest peace to our families, neighbours and communities. Our Government is saying we should be washing hands while our Bible is telling us we should be washing feet. There has never been a greater time to be servants to those we know. This crisis gives us the unprecedented opportunity to be Christ to those who surround us. Now is a marvellous time to check with neighbours in order to assist them and assure them that they need not fear isolation. We are there for them too. We are there to calm them, comfort them and to cheer them along. I repeat, this is an unprecedented opportunity for the church of God to truly be salt and light to a country that is in shock with the frightful developments around Covid-19.

One final thought, I think the word ‘Unprecedented’ will be used even more profusely when the Lord comes to take us home, an event, otherwise known as the rapture, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Imagine, in an instant, millions of believers are taken to be in the Lord’s presence. How do you describe the disappearance of millions of Christians from around the world? – Unprecedented!

In the twinkling of an eye, all Christian doctors, nurses, teachers, scientists, police, firemen, ambulance personal, plumbers, builders, electricians, labourers, pilots, drivers, athletes, artists, musicians, singers,


soldiers, ministers, pastors, preachers, aid workers, missionaries, mothers, fathers, children and the Queen, suddenly, gone! Unprecedented.

With so many being snatched into the Lord's presence, the world will be in absolute mayhem. Nothing like the rapture has ever happened before. We who believe this great day lies before us have so much to be grateful for. If our names are written in the Book of Life, we will hear the announcing trumpet and the great call home and in an instant, we will be with the Lord forever. For all of us, it will be an unprecedented event. What a glorious hope we have!. Be encouraged dear friends, one day our troubles will all be over as we dwell with the Most High God. To Him be the praise, glory and honour especially as we serve each other over these next few months.

Peace to your hearts

Blessings

Graham

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "GRAHAM". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath it.

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