

THE
EZEKIEL
DECLARATION



Watchmen, It's Time To Speak

To the Honourable Scott Morrison,

As Christian leaders, you should be aware that in accordance with scripture we regularly pray for “and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:2).

We do write however, to you regarding a matter of significant concern. Namely, the proposed introduction of ‘vaccine passports’ into Australian society. For many Christian leaders and Christians, this is an untenable proposal that would inflict terrible consequences on our nation.

We should initially note that we are not the first generation that has been confronted with the question of ‘vaccine passports.’ Writing in 1880, aware of the challenges that a smallpox epidemic brought to society, the Christian theologian Abraham Kuyper wrote,

“Vaccination certificates will therefore have to go... The form of tyranny hidden in these vaccination certificates is just as real a threat to the nation’s spiritual resources as a smallpox epidemic itself.”

Kuyper, A. 2015. Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto. (p. 249). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

Between 1901 and 1905, Abraham Kuyper would hold the office of the prime minister of the Netherlands. He evidently understood that a ‘vaccine passport’ would represent a measure that was equal to if not worse than an epidemic itself through the oppressive control over people’s lives. As Christian ministers, we would also agree with Kuyper’s analysis on such a measure, and for several reasons.

First, the government risks creating an unethical two-tiered society. While some individuals will receive the vaccination with thanks, others may have good and informed reasons for declining. One such reason is highlighted in the statement of the health minister Greg Hunt,

“The world is engaged in the largest clinical trial, the largest global vaccination trial ever, and we will have enormous amounts of data.”

Australian Department of Health

Free citizens should have the right of consent, especially when the vaccine rollout has been labelled as a ‘clinical trial.’ Imposing a ‘vaccine passport’ when the nation is already divided on the matter risks the creation of medical apartheid. The result being that those who decline the vaccine are ostracised and alienated from aspects of public life. History has never reflected well for those who would promote segregation. As there has been no discussion that the precautionary measures will be retracted once the pandemic has concluded, there is a real concern that many of these measures will remain permanent. A ‘vaccine passport’ would therefore represent the dangerous precipice of a therapeutic totalitarianism that does not promote liberty and human flourishing, but would rather only dehumanise and control its citizens all under the cloak of personal health and safety.

Second, a good portion of the population are already burdened to the point of despair. Granted, we understand why our leaders felt compelled to lockdown in March 2020. The threat was unknown and our ability to withstand it untested. However, it is now 2021, and the adverse effects of perpetual lockdowns are now being revealed. We understand needing to respond, but we are concerned with heavy handed approaches that exceed people’s capacity to live a normal life. We are compelled to speak out on behalf of struggling people, the needy, the destitute, those being harmed by such strong measures (Proverbs 31:8-9).

The adverse effects of lockdowns are especially highlighted in the rise of people considering suicide. The ‘Journal of Psychiatric Research’ published a paper in July of 2021 based on research done on Melbourne’s extended 2020 lockdown, some of their findings are as follows,

“In September-2020, among 1157 Victorians, one-third reported anxiety or depressive disorder symptoms, one-fifth reported suicidal ideation, and one-tenth reported having seriously considered suicide in the prior 30 days. Young adults, unpaid caregivers, people with disabilities, and people with diagnosed psychiatric or sleep conditions showed increased prevalence of adverse mental health symptoms. Prevalence estimates of symptoms of burnout, anxiety, and depressive disorder were unchanged between April-2020 and September-2020. Persistently common experiences of adverse mental health symptoms despite low SARS-CoV-2 prevalence during

prolonged lockdown highlight the urgent need for mental health support services.”

Czeisler MÉ, Wiley JF, Facer-Childs ER, Robbins R, Weaver MD, Barger LK, Czeisler CA, Howard ME, Rajaratnam SMW. 2021. “Mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation during a prolonged COVID-19-related lockdown in a region with low SARS-CoV-2 prevalence.” Journal of Psychiatric Research 140 (August): 533-544.

One in ten people considering suicide is a tragedy. As these lockdowns continue, it is evident that people are getting more desperate, with many people considering suicide as their means of escape. People are inherently social creatures, meant for human interaction and contact, not long-term isolation. But these policies are causing many people to feel lonely, and increasingly isolated.

In Japan, according to Japanese research, during their second lockdown “suicide rates increased by 49% among children and adolescents, and 37% among women.” The reason this information from Japan is relevant is because it shows that their second lockdown was far worse than their first on people’s mental health. We have been in cascading lockdowns for about 18 months now, this will be taking a toll.

This psychological effect is not theoretical. Another recent ABC news report documented the effects of lockdowns on alcohol consumption.

“1 in 5 Australians increased alcohol use during the lockdowns, “We know the statistics. We know that 93 per cent of hospital admissions at the weekend are alcohol-related. We know domestic violence is hugely related to alcohol consumption. We know it’s bad, and people are realising that.”

ABC News

By changing the goalposts from the original objective of ‘two weeks to flatten the curve’ to now requiring a proposed ‘vaccine passport’ in order to live a normal life, the government is putting immeasurable pressures on ordinary people. If the ABC is correct and 20% of Australians are drinking more during lockdowns, What will be the societal cost of adding a ‘vaccine passport’ which will potentially alienate already desperate Australians and turn them into second class citizens.

Jesus tells Christians to count the cost, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” (Luke 14:28). Jesus is here using a secular principle to make a spiritual point, and whether you are making a spiritual or secular decision you must count the cost. There are many people in our communities, not just in our churches, who are facing the costs of these policies and growing increasingly concerned about them.

Much more can be said on this point, the effects on missed cancer diagnoses and other illnesses by people staying home from the doctors, the effects on children’s missed and inconsistent education, youth graduating into a closed economy find-

ing it difficult to find work. Poverty is the leading cause of poor life outcomes, and these lockdowns are pushing people financially to the brink. The addition of a ‘vaccine passport’ into Australian society may be the nail in the coffin to many people who are already at the point of desperation.

Third, conscience should never be coerced. The conscience is one of the innermost expressions that animates an individual, and that allows them to worship God as well as obey a legitimate governing authority. The conscience is the immediate contact of God’s presence in a person’s soul, and so an individual forced to act in a way that is objectionable to their conscience will never be at peace, either before God or before the state. A government that endeavours to force or coerce an individual who is striving to honour God, will find that they only encounter resistance. Regarding the need for a free conscience, Kuyper writes,

“Conscience is therefore the shield of the human person, the root of all civil liberties, the source of a nation’s happiness.”

Kuyper, A. 2015. Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto. (p. 73). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

A government should never coerce conscience, but rather respect the important function that it carries in aiding a person to worship God freely and live obediently before the state. As we have noted, Jesus commands Christians to count the cost, and many believers do not feel that we have all the information necessary to make a decision on this vaccine at this point in time. We respect that many people have made this calculation and decided it is best for them to get the vaccine, that is their right, and we do not seek to abrogate it. But those who are not ready, or hesitant, are so for very valid reasons. Their conscience binds them to wait, and their Saviour advised them to not make decisions before they have counted the cost. This is a principle of wisdom, that everyone applies to many aspects of their lives. We would therefore ask that the Government not coerce the conscience of many Australians through the use of a ‘vaccine passport.’

Fourth, making vaccination the basis of participating in normal life would make no logical sense in terms of protecting others. A “CDC study shows 74% of people infected in Massachusetts Covid outbreak were fully vaccinated,” especially noting that four of those who were vaccinated were admitted to hospital. As we have said, we respect people’s right and choice to be vaccinated. But this type of data, published by America’s leading body of disease experts, causes people to wonder about the effectiveness of the vaccine along with concern about coercive measures by which to have it administered. As it is evident that vaccines do not prevent infection, to restrict a person’s access to society based on a medical choice is questionable.

Fifth, we as Christian leaders find it untenable that we would be expected to refuse entry into our churches to a subgroup of society based on their medical choice. Only our precious Saviour, Jesus Christ, has the authority to regulate the terms of corporate worship. These terms tell us that we are to make no distinction between those who call out in faith, neither on race or medical choice. We are also under obligation to proclaim the gospel to all men. Our strongest conviction is that this gospel message is the greatest news ever to be pronounced, and includes nothing less than God's free gift of saving grace, and the offer of eternal life to all who would respond in repentance and faith. To refuse people access to this message would betray our Saviour and everything he calls us to uphold. Any expectation to enforce a 'vaccine passport' on our churches would be met with passionate resistance.

May you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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