

# Newsbytes

The First Watch

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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## Will the Waiting Ever End?

By Jonathan Brentner

With my little transistor radio in hand, I followed every pitch. I heard the crack of the bat as Hank Aaron hit a deep fly ball. I was sure he had ended Ken Holtzman’s bid for a no-hitter; I remember the disappointment in the voice of the radio announcer as he described what he believed would be a homerun for Aaron. However, the wind was blowing in that day at Wrigley Field.

As Billy Williams, the Cubs’ outfielder, went back to the wall, he seemed to give up on the play. Then at the last second, Williams put up his glove, caught the ball, and preserved the no-hitter. (I later saw a video clip of the catch.)

I thought the Cubs were well on their way to winning the National League pennant that year. However, the New York Mets, not the Cubs, won the World Series in 1969.

Today, 108 years since they last won the World Series, the Chicago Cubs are now the reigning champs! It seems surreal to write those words. Did they really win last night?

If the Cubs had won it all last year, their fans would still be celebrating today. The storyline, however, would not be near as dramatic. Since last night, every mention of the Cubs’ victory contains a reference to the 108 years of waiting.

As believers, we yawn at the mention of waiting 108 years.

The year was approximately AD 50. That’s when Paul preached the Gospel in Thessalonica causing many of the people in that town to turn from idols to Christ and as a result, wait for Jesus’ return (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

Yes, it’s been 1,966 years since the apostle preached that message of hope to the Thessalonians and still . . . we wait. The longsuffering Cub fans have nothing on us in terms of waiting.

### Waiting for Jesus’ Appearing

Almost every epistle in the New Testament contains a reference to Jesus’ soon return for His church. As the apostles preached the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, their preaching included Jesus’ future appearing as something that could happen at any moment.

In all their preaching and writing, they assumed we would wait in great expectation of Jesus' return.

In Romans 8:23, Paul wrote that we as believers "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Then in verse 25 he added, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." Notice the emphasis on waiting "with patience" for what Jesus promised us. We believe; we hope for what we do not see; we wait.

In 1 Corinthians 1:7 Paul used the same Greek word for "wait" to describe the believers in Corinth as those eagerly awaiting Jesus' appearing.

In Philippians 3:20 Paul wrote, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus, Christ." As believers, we live in eager expectation of seeing our Lord at any moment.

Peter instructed his readers to "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). Peter's instructions echo Paul's words on waiting.

The apostle John also emphasized our hope in Jesus appearing as something that would have a purifying effect on us (1 John 3:2-3). James added these words, "The coming of the Lord is at hand . . . the Judge is standing at the door" (5:8-9).

The New Testament church waited for Jesus' appearing as something that could happen at any moment. We refer to His return as something "imminent;" it can happen at any time. That was the hope of the New Testament church and nothing has changed since that time to diminish such anticipation, unless you count the passing of a couple thousand years.

#### Waiting for Justice

Along with waiting for Jesus' return, we also wait for His justice to prevail in our world.

We frequently hear daily terror attacks somewhere in our world. We read of brutal atrocities committed against believers in places throughout the Middle East and in Nigeria. Scenes of intense suffering as a result of all this violence appear on television and Internet news sites.

The stories of Planned Parenthood profiting from abortion through the selling of body parts grieves me deeply. Does not the Lord see this? How can He let this continue? Where is He?

I'm almost embarrassed to recount the number of times I have needed to go to Psalm 37 for God's perspective on those things. I did so this morning as I felt stirred by another instance of evil prevailing.

And what do I find in Psalm 37? The Lord, through David, tells me this, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices . . . For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land" (vv. 7 and 8). I have a tendency to fret and hence the need for the Psalm.

Psalm 37 is clear on two things: First, God will surely judge wickedness. Second, we may not see it. This is because Lord patiently allows time for sinners to repent. I've benefited from this many times as He graciously gave me time to return to Him in my life as a believer.

So many times I wish the Lord would show up and punish the evil I see in the world. However, I believe that day is coming and in the meantime, I wait. We wait. Sound familiar?

### Waiting for the End of Suffering

Tonight, my wife and I are going to the visitation for a baby boy who died earlier this week of cancer at the age of seven months. We do not have to look far to see great suffering in our world. Little Lincoln endured so much pain during the three months in which cancer ravaged his tiny body.

In my favorite passage from Isaiah, the prophet tells of a great celebration and foresees a day in which the Lord “will swallow up death forever . . . and wipe away tears from all faces” (25:8). Notice the tender touch of the Savior; the text does not simply say Jesus will end our tears but will gently “wipe” them away from our faces. He is able even now to ease the grieving for little Lincoln.

I love the response recorded in Isaiah 25:9 of those enjoying the feast of this still future day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Someday we will echo those very words as we praise the Lord.

Notice that even in eternity, after all suffering and pain have ended; we will emphasize the waiting as we rejoice in our great salvation.

### The Scoffers

The apostle Peter tells us that in the last days some will give up on the waiting and mock our hope in Jesus’ return. In 2 Peter 3:3-4 he says, “Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’”

We see this all around us today. Many today mock the rapture. They cannot believe the Lord would keep us waiting almost two thousand years for His return. Surely we have misunderstood prophecy; there must be a different interpretation to the passages regarding His appearing.

“Jesus has already returned,” the scoffers tell us, “your hope is not to be found in His return.”

But is this not why Peter warned against such scoffing? The Lord knew the wait would be long and many would give up believing in His return and push aside their hope. He knew scoffers would arise and through Peter warned us about these modern day naysayers.

Today, Chicago Cub fans celebrate the end of a 108 year wait for a World Series victory. Someday, perhaps very soon, we will celebrate the end of a much longer wait, that of waiting for Jesus’ return to take us to His Father’s home (John 14:2-3).

Some old Cub fans, like me, doubted the Cubs would ever win the World Series, However, if there is one thing their victory teaches us, things we wait for can happen.

I am not making that same mistake with Jesus’ return. He is coming again, just as He promised.

When that happens, we will not complain about the wait. But like Cub fans today, we will greatly rejoice that the day has finally arrived.

Jonathan C. Brentner

# Living in a Cashless Society

abc27.com

Cash is king, right? But check your pockets. Almost half of us walk around with less than \$20. And with so many other ways to pay, including credit and debit cards, new technologies are pushing us to abandon paper money entirely. You could already be helping to make cash obsolete if you're using one of the 37-million electronic toll tags on the road.

Maybe you're using a mobile wallet like Apple Pay, Android Pay, PayPal or Samsung Pay or a person-to-person payment system via Square, Popmoney, Facebook Payments in Messenger, or Venmo to pay friends in a snap.

Branded apps from companies like Starbucks, Walmart, Uber and Dunkin' Donuts make it simple for you to pay, while building customer loyalty for the merchants. But experts at Consumer Reports say there are potential down sides. Mobile payments can generate a mountain of digital data that can tell lots about us that we may not want people to know.

And the digitalization of dollars creates an irresistible target for cybercriminals. So consider connecting any technology to a credit card rather than your bank account. You might incur some fees, but you'll get the same protections as if you used the credit card itself, which means cashless convenience may be more secure than you think. Consumer Reports has information on living a cashless life at: <http://www.consumerreports.org/personal-finance/cashing-out-new-technologies-are-making-the-convenience-of-living-cash-free-a-reality/>

In the future, you may be getting rid of more than just your wallet. One day, you may not even need your phone. New, cashless technologies on the horizon will let you make payments with just a fingerprint. And, an app is in the works that will let you scan merchandise and pay for your purchases as you walk through the store- without ever going to a cash register.

## Bulgaria warns of Russian attempts to divide Europe

By Gordon Corera

4 November 2016

The president of Bulgaria has told the BBC that Russia is trying to divide and weaken Europe. Rosen Plevneliev warned of Russian influence in his country and across the continent and said Europe needed to take a stronger line.

Elections to pick a new president take place in the country on Sunday, with a run-off a week later if no candidate wins an outright victory.

Mr Plevneliev, who is not standing for re-election, will step down in January. He also said his country had come under a cyber attack during a referendum and local elections last year, which he said was almost certainly linked to Russia.

'Cold Peacetime'

Europe has not returned to the Cold War, the Bulgarian president believes, but instead is involved in a new "dangerous and unpredictable" confrontation which he calls "Cold Peacetime". The threat now is less about Russian tanks invading Europe and more about Russian influence dividing the Continent, he argues.

"The game in Europe today is not to have a full-scale war and to shoot against your enemy, but the game of Mr Putin is to make other countries dependent," he said.

"What today Russia is trying to achieve is to weaken Europe, to divide Europe and to make us dependent."

The streets of Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, bear witness to the strong Russian influence in a country which was once part of the Soviet-bloc but which is now a member of both the EU and Nato. Which direction the country should face is a key issue in the election and the current president has angered some in his country with his criticism of Moscow.

Between 20% and 25% of the Bulgarian economy is linked to Russia, according to Martin Vladimirov, an analyst at the Center for the Study of Democracy in Sofia who co-authored The Kremlin's Playbook, a report on Russian influence in the region.

"Russia has been able to leverage its economic influence to capture key institutions in the country," Mr Vladimirov said, arguing that Russian money had been used to finance protests and directly affect laws as well.

#### 'Attack on democracy'

The president believes Russia's main tools across Europe include the funding of populist political parties and movements from the political extremes, extensive propaganda and also cyber attacks to destabilise opponents. Last October, Bulgaria was subject to a major cyber attack. "That was the most heaviest and intense cyber attack that has been conducted in south-east Europe," he said.

The denial of service attack - which tries to make websites inaccessible - targeted the electoral commission, presidency and other government institutions on the day of a referendum and local elections.

"I consider it an attack on the Bulgarian democracy," he told the BBC, arguing it was designed to cause confusion around results, something which some in the US fear could be possible in their elections next Tuesday also.

The assistance of Nato allies has left the Bulgarian president with little doubt as to who was responsible. "The same organisation that has attacked the Bundestag- stealing all the emails of German members of parliament - the same institution that has attacked Nato headquarters, and that is the same even that has tried to influence American elections lately and so in a very high probability you could point east from us."

#### 'Fancy Bears'

The group linked by the US administration and Western private security groups to those incidents is a group of Russian hackers known as "Fancy Bears" or APT 28, which the US administration said was likely acting with the support of senior Kremlin officials in targeting the US political system.

"I just say it is the same address, the same signature and the same approach we have seen also here in Bulgaria," Mr Plevneliev said.

"This is an attack on the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian democracy and its conducted with a high probability from Russia."

#### Putin's inner circle

Bulgaria has since drawn up a new cyber security strategy which he believes will leave it with better protection against any renewed attempts in the forthcoming vote.

Electronic voting machines are used in some areas but these are not connected to the internet, and so the main risk remains one of spreading confusion rather than altering the outcome.

Ensuring a strong consistent line from the EU on Russia was vital, Mr Plevneliev said. "Nato is strong, I also wish the European Union also could be stronger and united on the problems we have today."

Europe, he acknowledged, was facing a range of other crises with migration and refugees as among the most significant, and one which could split the EU.

Mr Plevneliev told the BBC he was "saddened and shocked" by the British vote to leave the EU. "This was a very tragic moment," he says. "Brexit is a crisis and a very serious one."

One reason for his concern is that Britain leaving the EU may make it harder to pursue a stronger line on Russia, since it has supported his more robust position on European security. Ensuring the process of separation was not painful was a priority, he added.

"If Brexit is going to be a divorce, we should stay the best possible and the closest friends."

**Ladies...another "teacher" you need to avoid. Run! --**

Jen Hatmaker Affirms Gay Marriage – Proves She Has No Idea Who God Is  
BY JEFF MAPLES · OCTOBER 25, 2016

"You shall have no other gods before me." – Exodus 20:3

Jen Hatmaker has created a god of her own delusions. In a recent article on RNS, Hatmaker was interviewed by Jonathan Merritt and asked several questions regarding her politics and faith. It became abundantly clear that she doesn't know the God that reveals Himself through the Scriptures.

One of the questions asked of her was, "Politically-speaking, do you support gay marriage?"

Her response:

*From a civil rights and civil liberties side and from just a human being side, any two adults have the right to choose who they want to love. And they should be afforded the same legal protections as any of us. I would never wish anything less for my gay friends.*

*From a spiritual perspective, since gay marriage is legal in all 50 states, our communities have plenty of gay couples who, just like the rest of us, need marriage support and parenting help and Christian community. They are either going to find those resources in the church or they are not.*

*Not only are these our neighbors and friends, but they are brothers and sisters in Christ. They are adopted into the same family as the rest of us, and the church hasn't treated the LGBT community like family. We have to do better.*

First, Hatmaker establishes her grounds for spiritually affirming the co-habitation and faux "marriage" of sodomites by insisting that it should be legal and accepted in our society. To rephrase what she's saying here: she wants gay marriage to be accepted culturally and legally AND since it will be accepted in our society, as Christians, we must embrace it.

She then goes on to claim that these sodomites living in persistent unrepentant sin are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Of course, the true God of the Bible hates sin and teaches that those who persist in unrepentant sin will not see the kingdom of Heaven.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

This she doesn't address. In fact, when asked, "Do you think an LGBT relationship can be holy?" she replies,

*I do. And my views here are tender. This is a very nuanced conversation, and it's hard to nail down in one sitting. I've seen too much pain and rejection at the intersection of the gay community and the church. Every believer that witnesses that much overwhelming sorrow should be tender enough to do some hard work here.*

Anyone who actually knows who God is would have no trouble nailing this down in one sitting. God hates sodomy and sin, and unrepentant sinners will perish. In fact, Jesus meant this so strongly he felt the need to say it twice—back to back—in Luke 13:3-5. There is no ambiguity here. Christ died to free us from the bondage of sin, not so that we could persist in our self-idolatrous lusts. You cannot be an unrepentant sodomite and still know who God is. Nor can you rationalize sin in such a way that Hatmaker does and know who God is. Notice, Hatmaker uses no Scripture or reference to God to form her opinion. Her assumption that an LGBT relationship can be holy is purely a delusion of her wicked, unregenerate heart (Jeremiah 17:9). This is what Jen Hatmaker wants—not what God wants.

When asked if she'd attend a "wedding" of her gay friends, she goes on to say,

*I would attend that wedding with gladness, and I would drink champagne. I want the very best for my gay friends. I want love and happiness and faithfulness and commitment and community. Yes. That's an easy answer.*

She wants the best for her gay friends. Where is the concern for their soul? Where is the concern that her gay friends will spend eternity in Hell if they continue in their lifestyle and never turn to Jesus Christ for salvation? There is no concern because she knows not God. God's concern is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9)." Hatmaker's concern is temporal, wishing that her friends would live a happy and fulfilled life. And she believes this is loving? This is the vilest thing she could do to someone. There is no desire to tell her friends the truth—that truth which would set them free (John 8:32). She desires to practice a little bit of cunning, affirming those she claims she loves (though really hates), including her own children, in their sin, and sending them with a welcome basket of goodies straight to eternal damnation.

Jen Hatmaker does not know who God is, and she does not know who His Son, Jesus Christ is, who died and was buried and rose again on the third day to defeat sin and give us eternal life. The true God is a holy God. Jen Hatmaker's God is a god of compromise and affirmation of sin. The true God is a righteous God who saves and regenerates hearts, and sanctifies sinners through the work of the Spirit and conforms His elect to His Son. Jen Hatmaker's God is a god that does not require repentance or a desire to flee from or be saved from sin.

Jen Hatmaker is a false teacher. She knows a false Jesus. And she teaches a false Gospel. She is to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17).