

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

I am devoting 2 successive Newzbytes (opening article) to the Bethel Church phenomenon so that you can get the big picture as to what exactly this is all about, and encourage anyone you know who may be followers of Bethel to get far away from it's influence. – MD

The Bethel Church Upgrade Unholy Signs & Cash Flows

Bethel's example of Church working with Corporate and State
herescope.blogspot.com

PART 1 (part 2 next week)

By Pastor Rod Page

“I dedicate this book to my children’s children’s children’s children. Though we will not meet until we get to heaven, I wanted you to know that I had you in mind as I wrote every word of this book, and I continue to hold you in my heart. You will become the answer to my prayers and the fulfillment of my prophecies. By the time you read this book, I will be watching you from heaven (see Hebrews 12: 1).”[1]

This quotation above is the opening dedication to Kris Vallotton's upgraded book called **Heavy Rain**. Its former title was *How Heaven Invades Earth*. At the outset it sounds like a way to soften, or even spiritualize, the more militant sounding “invade” language in his book from six years ago. I believe this change is part of a new effort to say the same thing in a more sophisticated, and yet more palatable, way in order to attract a wider audience.

In this day and age where everything is seen from a marketing standpoint, as far as publishers and agents and business in general, it is no surprise that this would happen from within the headquarters of a now worldwide movement—Bethel Church in Redding, California.

I am writing this from Redding as it is the closest city to where we live for groceries and doctors. It is also where I lived for several years. It's a pretty typical town in most aspects, with a Costco and an old converted theater downtown, and a mix of working people and retired folks looking for the sun.... It is even sunnier in Redding than Phoenix!

But Redding is actually quite special in regard to what is happening in Christendom. A phenomenon has grown up here. There is something almost “magical” about the effect that Bethel has had on this

community. The city has fallen in love with this “church”. Is this even possible in our day of hysteria over “separation of church and state”? It is not separate in Redding. Bethel bailed out the Civic Auditorium and is running it well from all indications. Bethel is also becoming a major property owner. They have bought and improved several commercial properties and hope to increase their School of Supernatural Ministry to 3000 students in the next few years. (It is currently around 1400.) They want to build a museum of revival in Americana and have spent around \$40,000 to purchase one man's memorabilia collection of articles from major “moves of God” going back into the 1950s.

Bethel is growing while the city of Redding has endured a decline in many facets. Crime is up. The housing market is flat at best. Homelessness is rampant. But Bethel is doing really well. I believe they know why. I think they have discovered a secret to moving forward at this time in their history. Before I get back to this subject let me tell you why I am writing this report.

Why I Write

Before becoming a full time pastor in 2011 I spent over 30 years being a regular Christian, with a regular secular job, raising a family with my wife of 37 years. Before we moved to Redding we attended a church for 10 years beginning in 1994 in Yuba City, California. We noticed after almost 7 years in that church that the teaching was changing. We heard things that shocked us, but because of intense loyalty to the leadership we tried to justify things we should have checked out immediately. We were told that spiritual warfare was calling out demons by name and defeating them in the atmosphere, and thus allowing our city to have a mass revival. We were told it was always God's will for us to be physically well. We were told our children were a chosen seed to bring in the great harvest of all time—that they would do miracles greater than Jesus or the Apostles. These things came in slowly, like a steady drip. We were told that Christians have demons that need to be cast out. We were to go on “prayer walks” that would run the devil out of neighborhoods and out of families as we took dominion over our city.

The problem is it didn't work, and we could not find a good Biblical reason to swallow all of this new teaching. Young people would go to the church's new “discipleship” school and come out on the other end bewildered by a lack of power, not blaming the leaders who taught them but God, who they thought did not keep up His end of the bargain. We looked at our Bibles and saw texts that were clearly meant for the next world being brought into ours, with no concept for context or proper Biblical interpretation.

It took us almost 3 years to realize we needed to get back to the Bible. Then we found the Discernment Ministries' Herescope blog (www.herescope.net). God led us to this small cadre of folks who had been writing for years about different new teachings, that were really old things wrapped up in new and upgraded lingo. As Solomon says, there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9).

Then, because of a job, and a ministry opportunity to take what we were finding about Satan's schemes and warn younger believers, we moved to Redding to start a new job and work with a couple we thought truly were wanting to warn others. Sadly, within a year we found out we were not on the same page with the very people we were supposed to serve with. Shortly after this we began to attend a church where the Bible was taught verse by verse. God put us away in His waiting room where we could get our thoughts and hearts in line with His precious Word.

We began to serve the Lord in humble but useful ways. We helped clean the church each week, emptying waste cans and vacuuming the carpet. Later we taught Sunday School. We truly had many glorious times with our 4th grade class teaching through the entire Bible line upon line. Eventually I was asked to teach in place of the pastor when he was out of town. We were asked to shepherd a part of the congregation and had a “home group” of over 40 people in our home each month. What I found in those days was that God is gracious. When we seek Him and His ways for His glory, He provides all we need. His Word has the answers we need to communicate. We don't need to make up anything fancy to attract attention to it.

I had heard the Lord calling me to ministry when I was 12 years old. I had, because of fear, chosen not to follow His call for many years. Finally at 50 years of age I answered that call. I began to seek the Lord, and asked others to pray with me about going into full time work. I assumed it would be in a ministry to young people, as that was the reason I moved to Redding. I wanted to warn them of what the enemy was trying to do, both within the church and without it. After another year of waiting, just when I began to give up, an opportunity came as the Lord opened up a door for ministry. I have been serving as pastor at a small community church in Lewiston, California, ever since. I live within 35 miles of Redding in the mountains. God is gracious indeed. It is the hardest, and yet most fulfilling job, I have ever had.

But Bethel is still a thorn. I suppose it reminds me of what happened to us in Yuba City. But it is far worse. It is a leader, a worldwide and dominant leader, in a movement rife with error. This is grievous to me personally because it goes after, and actually targets, young people in a huge way. This is why I write. These young people (and old people, too) are precious to our Savior. This movement is swallowing them in ways I never could have imagined even 6 years ago when I lived within a mile of Bethel Church. This church is more sophisticated and more “excellent” in an alarming way.

The New Upgrade

A few weeks ago I listened to a message by Kris Vallotton, who is the number two leader at Bethel. Kris is known for saying things that are edgy and even shocking. What struck me about his “message” was the new angle of reasonability and normalcy that it seemed to emulate. Back when the “Toronto Blessing” was inundating congregations with outlandish barking and howling, and people falling out in gatherings, where “holy laughter” was taught as a new thing that the Spirit was doing, Bethel embraced it whole hog. (Pun intended.) At that time in early 1996 there was a mass exodus from Bethel church. They went from two services on Sundays to one. But within a couple of years they began to grow again. Like other churches they didn't divorce themselves from the teachings behind the manifestations. Instead they changed the outward appearances to be more settled, more reasonable, more attractive. (Although I would say that there still are, and always will be, outlandish worship activities that are nothing but sensual in nature and do not bring glory to God within their meetings, it is just not as “out there” as it used to be.)

This new upgrade season, that is indicated by Kris Vallotton's recent message, is just one in a series of attempts to bring legitimacy to a movement that I believe wants to be believable and acceptable, not only to their peers within the charismatic world, but even wider into the evangelical world as well. In the end, I think they want to impress the world around them. They believe they already are a “city on a hill” and that they are defeating the “religious spirit” of the old way of doing Christianity. If you would like to see the documentation and history of Bethel Church, and others they are connected to in the New Apostolic Reformation, there is much written on this movement on Herescope's website. By the way, in Kris' upgraded book titled Heavy Rain, C. Peter Wagner (New Apostolic Reformation) gives a hardy endorsement. For more information on Wagner search Herescope as well.

Let me illustrate my point with some quotes from Kris' message, “God, Government, and Prosperity.”[2]

Promoting the bringing of Heaven to Earth (Source)

On Earth Now

Upgrade #1 - Being More “Biblical”

In his opening prayer Kris says, “God make a message out of this mess.” But in mixing together “God, Government and Prosperity” he begins in Matthew 28:18 where Jesus says, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” We believe it is given to Christ alone in that passage. But Kris says, “In Heaven and on earth would have been a revelation to the Hebrews, but not just in heaven, if he had left out on earth.” What Kris is implying is that we in our day have been restored to some kind of dominion over the earth in a physical aspect. We are now Lords of the earth, and we must take control of it, as if this is why Jesus came—not to deal with sin, but to restore our rulership over this planet. The evangelical church

has always argued this is to be a reality, but only during the millennium after Jesus returns. Kris, however, is advocating for “Kingdom Now” type theology, but it seems kinder and more “reasonable.” In reality it is the same old thing.

He then says since we were made in God's image we are already “like God.” In Kris's eyes we were little gods, but through our failure in the garden, we lost our god likeness. He believes we lost our authority over the earth, so that Jesus had to go into hell sometime during the crucifixion and take back the keys of authority from the devil. Kris is saying that we have those keys, and that this somehow means we are not to make disciples of the people of the nations but we are to make disciples of “the nations” (countries). This is an astronomical jump in logic!

There is a big difference here from the plain teaching of the New Testament. Jesus said clearly, in John 18:36, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” He said this standing in front of Pilate. If the kingdom was coming in a physical form, why didn't Jesus say, “But in a few hours I will take the elevator down to hell and steal those pesky keys from the devil and then you will see my disciples fight and win!” In fact, we are never told to fight in a fleshly or carnal way. In the Garden of Gethsemane Peter was commanded to put away his sword. Now the only weapon we have is the revealed Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit. Even with ourselves we don't sledge hammer the sin out of ourselves with whips or chains as the Romans Catholics are obliged to do. We take every thought captive with truth, making it obey Christ with the spiritual power and true authority we have, based on the Word and the faith once delivered to us, the saints. Our spiritual blessing in heaven is ours, but that leaves off many physical blessings that will be ours in the kingdom to come.

Kris loves to spin this old idea of us being little gods, and that being restored to dominion through the keys or the tabernacle of David equals us being restored to dominion in some mystical kind of way. And then, as a result of being restored, having a power ministry as we speak physical realities into existence—all the while calling this methodology “faith” and “power.” They call anyone who does not go along with it all an “another Gospel” proponent. (In fact, Bill Johnson has made the same allegation about all who don't major in miracles and so- called power evangelism.)

Kris makes an upgrade claim right away in his talk. He says that the Muslims are running five nations and Christians are taking dominion over zero nations. All of my Christian friends and colleagues deplore what ISIS is currently doing. But we look at the situation from a totally different perspective. Jesus said that the world would hate us. In fact, He says that evil men would wax worse and worse, up to the very point when He returns. Those that “disciple” nations are bound to fail. Yet Kris demands (and is not below using shame manipulation) that we capture nations and governments for God, and that if we don't we are failures and God's hands are tied.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is blasphemy! Though I fully believe in man's free will and responsibility for his actions, I believe that God, too, has a plan and is executing and using our free choices to bring out His glory-filled end to the existence of this planet and its inhabitants. We play a part, but that will never change God's ultimate plan to bring about the completion of His prophetic Word.

Bethel Church has an outward form of power. They talk about power, write about power and blog about it all day. Their meetings are “powerful” in the realm of music and lighting, drama and artistic creativity. All these things are outward forms. This is the root meaning behind the exact description of the end times apostate church movement described in 2 Timothy 3. After describing perilous times where the culture is in deep bondage to sin, and is described as lovers of themselves (Kris loves to say about his own preaching, “That is a really good word”), lovers of money (Bethel is a money machine, as are most connected ministries and churches in their sphere), boasters, proud, blasphemers, etc., the aging apostle Paul says in verse 5, “having a form of godliness, but denying its power.” True godliness has a spiritual

power that defeats sin and brings about holiness, sincerity, humility, and an ability to powerfully proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. A holy life is a powerful life, not a life that twists the promises of God meant for a future time and holds the church hostage with a carrot of constantly changing new things, paradigms, methodologies, and new signs and wonders.

Bethel is saying the same things they and others have been saying since the Latter Rain movement was hatched in 1949, which was soundly refuted by leaders of the Assemblies of God who found it to be spurious and extra-biblical in nature. No “wonder” that Bethel Church broke away from the AOG ten years ago last January. They wanted no real oversight.

Kris Vallotton is speaking the same message that other false teachers have been speaking for at least 68 years. It is nuanced now and made to sound more “biblical.” He quotes from Romans 4:17, saying, “Abraham is not the father of Israel, but the father of nations.” He says this means we are to be fathering nations—that if the church does not father, lead or commandeer (I suppose) the nations, we are not following in Father Abe's steps, as he believes the New Testament teaches. (The New Testament does not, of course, teach this.) Missing the whole point of the reality, the beauty and the majesty of the revelation in Romans about the wonder of our salvation and the righteousness imputed to us by faith, seen in its root form all the way back to Abraham—having missed all that truth for a silly and obtuse vision of a mighty Joel's army now taking dominion by “fathering” nations, Kris devolves into error. But he is attempting an “upgrade” here. He is attempting to be seen as more Biblical so he can drag unsuspecting denominations and individual churches and precious people of God, along with weak-willed, unskilled and struggling Christians into his camp of error. Using Kris' perspectives, you will never come to a knowledge of the truth because you are being tricked by a “form of godliness” that has no power. (See 2 Timothy 3:5-9)

(Part II next week....)

UN adopts resolution demanding Israel's withdrawal from Golan Heights

Amir Tsarfati Dec 4, 2016

The United Nations General Assembly adopted an additional resolution calling on the State of Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights. The resolution was just one of six resolutions, most concerning the Palestinians, passed against the State of Israel on Friday.

“The Syrian Golan” resolution was introduced to the General Assembly on November 30, 2016 and was passed two days later. The resolution claims that Israel has “failed to comply” with Resolution 497 which was adopted in 1981. The resolution claimed that Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights captured in Six Day War of 1967 as “null and void”.

The most recent resolution passed demanding Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights reads “the Assembly demanded that Israel withdraw from all the occupied territory to the line of 4 June 1967 and called on all parties concerned to exert the necessary efforts to ensure the resumption of the peace process.” That resolution was voted in favor by 103 with 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), and 56 abstentions.

The resolution claims that “the Assembly would declare that Israel had failed so far to comply with Security Council resolution 497. The Assembly also would declare that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and had no validity whatsoever, as confirmed in Council resolution 497. The Assembly would also reaffirm its determination that all relevant provisions of the regulations annexed to The Hague Convention, of 1907, and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949, continued to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967.”

The resolution further calls on the State of Israel to enter peace talks with Syria and Lebanon, two states that openly threaten Israel's security and call for Israel to be wiped off the map. The text reads "The Assembly would also call upon Israel to resume talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and to respect the commitments that had been reached during previous talks. The Assembly would demand once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. It would also call upon all the parties concerned to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the resumption of the peace process and its success by implementing Security Council resolutions 242 [of 1967] and 338 [of 1973]."

The resolutions come during ongoing reports that United States President Barack Obama's may turn to the United Nations for efforts to move forward with the peace process.

Jimmy Carter wants UN to impose a Palestinian state by fiat, with US recognition

NOVEMBER 30, 2016 8:27 AM BY CHRISTINE WILLIAMS

In a cynical gesture repeated each year, the UN observes the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People" on Nov. 29, turning a positive anniversary into a pretext for Israel-bashing and antisemitism.

Jimmy Carter has taken full advantage of this "cynical gesture," going so far as to call on Obama to "recognize 'Palestine' before he leaves office on Jan. 20, and to push for the admission of 'Palestine' into the United Nations as a full member."

All the while, the jihadist, racist, apartheid Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas has stated: "In a final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli – civilian or soldier – on our lands". Note Abbas' use of the word "final solution," a well-known phrase for "the Nazi plan for the extermination of the Jews."

In a piece that well describes "the moral disintegration of Jimmy Carter," Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, once targeted by the leftist media "for coming out as a Republican," stated:

Carter's pronouncements on the Middle East have become so toxic that had he not once been the American Commander-in-Chief they would be dismissed as the ravings of a man utterly out of touch with reality.

Carter has also called Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal "a strong proponent of the peace process," and refused to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last year because he called it "a waste of time." Carter has also tried to push America into recognizing Hamas, despite its murderous campaign against the Jewish state.

"Jimmy Carter: U.S. Must Recognize 'Palestine' at United Nations", by Joel B. Pollak, Breitbart, November 28, 2016:

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter has written an op-ed in the New York Times, "America Must Recognize Palestine," which is filled with outright lies and fails to condemn — or even address — Palestinian terror.....

Carter's op-ed is no exception. He calls on President Barack Obama to recognize "Palestine" before he

leaves office on Jan. 20, and to push for the admission of “Palestine” into the United Nations as a full member — despite the fact that “Palestine” has no fixed borders; is divided between the West Bank and Gaza; encourages terror against its neighbor, and has shown no interest in abiding by basic international human rights norms, even towards its own potential Muslim and Christian citizens.

The former president writes that “most” Palestinians in the “occupied territories” — it is never clear which ones he means — “live largely under Israeli military rule.” That is a blatant lie, as the roughly 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza are ruled by the Hamas terrorist organization, and nearly all of the 2.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under the direct control of the Palestinian Authority.

He also claims that “600,000 Israeli settlers in Palestine enjoy the benefits of Israeli citizenship and laws.” The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank is roughly 300,000 at most; Carter is clearly counting Jewish residents of Jerusalem as “settlers,” an absurd claim that denies Israeli sovereignty and Jewish history in the country’s capital city.

Carter wants the United Nations to impose a Palestinian state by fiat, with U.S. recognition of “Palestine” being the catalyst: “I am certain that United States recognition of a Palestinian state would make it easier for other countries that have not recognized Palestine to do so, and would clear the way for a Security Council resolution on the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” he writes.

He makes no mention of Palestinian terrorism, and ignores the future status of Jerusalem.