

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

What Exactly Are End-Time Signs? Part I

Todd Hampson

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” — Luke 21:28

When you hear people refer to “end-time signs” they are generally talking about one of two things. First, they may be referring to specific signs we were told to look for that signal the nearness of Christ’s return. Second, they may be talking about specific world conditions forming in our day that mirror the conditions described in Bible prophecy. These conditions are logically necessary for key events to occur during the seven-year Tribulation period.

I thought it would be useful to define what a legitimate end-time sign is. I also want to show that attempting to understand our time is approved and encouraged in Scripture. We are told in 1 Chronicles 12:32 that the leaders of Issachar “understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.” The wise men from the East (Matthew 2), the godly old man Simeon (Luke 2), and the old prophetess Anna (Luke 2) all understood the timeframe of the Lord’s first arrival, and their amazing stories are recorded for us in Scripture.

We also find that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and the crowds of people for not knowing the signs of their day. To the scribes and Pharisees he said, “You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don’t know how to interpret the signs of the times!” (Matthew 16:3). To the crowds he said, “You fools! You know how to interpret the weather signs of the earth and sky, but you don’t know how to interpret the present times” (Luke 12:56).

In what is known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus responded to a question asked by his disciples. After informing them that the beautiful temple and surrounding buildings they were admiring would be completely destroyed, the disciples asked Jesus a critical three-part question.

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3)

Rather than rebuke them or downplay the question, Jesus gave them a full chapter’s worth of signs followed by another full chapter of related parables. This central teaching by Jesus regarding the end-times signs is recorded in three of the four gospels—in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13. It is the second largest recorded teaching by Jesus.

The apostle Paul, whom God used to take Christianity to the Gentiles, realized that the church age was the last “age” or era before the rapture and the terrible Tribulation period. He tells us in Romans 13:11-12—“This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here.” If this was true in Paul’s day, it’s even truer today, since almost 2000 years have passed. And based on a careful assessment of the signs and conditions of our day—we see things converging at a rate that has never been seen before.

Even the oft quoted statement that the tribulation (known as the Day of the Lord) will come unexpectedly like a thief (1 Thessalonians 5:2) is misunderstood by many to mean we can’t know the season. But just 2 verses later Paul clears this up and gives us the most compelling proof that believers will not be surprised by the Day of the Lord. In verses 4 and 5 we read these crystal clear words: “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness (emphasis mine).”

There you have it. A definitive statement that believers will not be taken by surprise by end-time events. Finally, the writer of Hebrews provides the insight that those living close to Jesus’ return will be able to recognize that they are in the season of the Lord’s return. Consider the bold statement in latter part of this verse:

Hebrews 10:25—“not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (emphasis mine).”

That “Day” is “the day of the Lord,” or what is also known as the tribulation period and arrival of God’s Kingdom. This verse plainly tells us that those who are taking notice will be able to see this time period drawing close.

Some have reservations because of the admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 that tells us “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” But, it always blows my mind that they stop reading there. Just 2 verses later we read this crystal clear proclamation that believers WILL NOT BE surprised. Read these next few verses carefully.

“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober (emphasis mine). —1 Thessalonians 5:4-6

Friends, that is as clear as it gets. We are admonished not to sleep, but to remain awake and to keep watching! Please don’t overlook the importance of these verses. We have clear marching orders to stay awake. The implication is that many will be asleep. It will be tempting to fall asleep. Perhaps even understandable (from a human perspective) to fall asleep. But we must stay awake and pay attention to the very specific signs Jesus mentioned.

It is true we can’t know the day or the hour, but from these verses above it is clear that we can know the general season when these events are nearing. Are you watching?

Hamas leader: We want to bomb Tel Aviv

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar says that "March of the Return" will continue until the return to "Palestine" is realized.

Dalit Halevi, 31/03

"Our [Palestinian] people today stuck to the basic principles, the right of return and the breaking of the siege, and they support the resistance," said Sinwar, who came to encourage those who participated in the disturbances on the occasion of Land Day.

He added, "Our [Palestinian] people say en masse that they want to live in dignity and want to live, and they say: 'O (Al-Qassam Brigades), beloved ones, bomb Tel Aviv.'"

According to Sinwar, the issue of the terrorist prisoners in Israel is at the top of the list of priorities in Hamas' talks with Egypt and Qatar, which are serving as mediators in negotiations with Israel. He stressed that the so-called "March of the Return" processions would continue until the siege is broken, the "right of return" is realized and liberation arrives.

Approximately 40,000 rioters and demonstrators gathered Saturday in several locations along the Gaza security fence, the IDF reported.

The rioters hurled rocks and set tires on fire. In addition, a number of grenades and explosive devices were hurled at the Gaza-Israel security fence in a number of different incidents.

IDF troops responded with riot dispersal means and fired in accordance with standard operating procedures.

The riots took place a day after reports emerged of an agreement between Hamas and Israel on a calm in Gaza. According to the reports, the new agreement aims to end the violent riots held each week along the Gaza-Israel border, as well as prevent rocket attacks against Israel.

In exchange, Israel will allow the Qatari funds into Gaza and ease restrictions on both Gaza's fishing area and its border crossings with Israel.

Meanwhile, Deputy Hamas leader Saleh al-Aroui stressed earlier that the agreement "is not a peace agreement" and is unconnected to diplomacy.

Israeli Politicians to EU: Shame on You for Opposing Golan Sovereignty

"The Golan heights and Jerusalem and the Land of Israel has been the home of the Jewish people thousands of years," Education Minister Naftali Bennett said.

BY TOVAH LAZAROFF MARCH 28, 2019 18:12

Israeli right-wing politicians lashed back at the European Union for its "shameful" rejection of Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights, calling its 28 nations "peace refuseniks."

"Minutes ago the EU announced that it would not recognize the Golan Heights as part of the state of Israel," New Right Party head and Education Minister Naftali Bennett said in a video message he posted on Twitter.

“We could add to that the fact that the EU does not recognize Jerusalem as our capital,” he wrote, adding “Shame on you.”

“The Golan heights and Jerusalem and the Land of Israel has been the home of the Jewish people thousands of years before France was the home of the French and the United Kingdom the home of the British,” Bennett said.

“So we will continue building our amazing country. We will continue defending the free world from radical Islam, even though you do not deserve it,” Bennett said.

Kulanu Party head and Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon said, “We will not allow those who keep the Iranian terror regime’s economy afloat to preach morality to us. Israel will not be held hostage by peace refuseniks and the policies of the Axis of Evil,” Kahlon said.

“The whole world knows that the Golan Heights is an inseparable part of the Land of Israel and the State of Israel,” Kahlon added.

No Place To Hide - Facial Recognition Technology Will End Your Privacy

prophecynewswatch.com

The Chinese police in Nanchang made news in mid April when the press reported the arrest at a concert of a man wanted for fraud. The story was significant because automatic facial recognition systems, linked through now 176 million cameras across the country (rising to 600 million by 2020), had picked the man out of a crowd of 60,000 concertgoers and allowed the police to pinpoint his location in real time.

The episode was promoted by the Chinese government as proof positive of the benefits of the Chinese surveillance state, but the notion that an authoritarian government uses automatic facial recognition to track its citizens everywhere has sent shivers down the spine of anyone concerned about privacy and who may not have full faith in the benevolence of the Chinese government.

Facial recognition holds the promise of an incredible leap forward in law enforcement but backwards in individual rights. No longer will oppressive governments need to employ human watchers to monitor video footage.

Now highly accurate computer algorithms, monitoring tens or even hundreds of millions of video feeds, match patterns of facial geometry to identify individuals, even if beards or makeup are used. A criminal suspect shows his face on a public street, at a shopping mall, in a bank or at a bus stop and an alert can immediately go out to summon police for arrest.

Tellingly, the same system can be used against terrorists, political dissidents, union leaders, human rights protestors, members of the press, the poor, or ethnic minorities. As Paul Harvey used to say, you can run, but you can't hide.

Though China has made the hardest push for ubiquitous surveillance through its vast network of cameras linked in real time to computer-based facial recognition, it is far from alone. The NYPD has been attempting to gain access to the state database of facial recognition information collected for driver's licenses.

The NYPD's Real Time Crime Center and Facial Identification Sections are not satisfied with using only

the facial scans of those it has arrested but wants to link every driving adult to its camera-equipped system, the vast majority without ever having been arrested. Thousands of cameras now installed at NYC intersections, tunnels and public buildings are feeding data into automatic facial recognition systems similar to those in Communist China.

As a precursor to real-time facial recognition powered by machine algorithms, Georgetown University's Center on Privacy and Technology revealed in 2016 that 26 states are already sharing facial recognition data collected on driver's licenses and 16 of those also share with the FBI, meaning that roughly half of the adult population can already be identified through facial recognition, though only upon arrest at this point.

Proponents of automatic recognition systems linked to pervasive surveillance point to the ability to locate missing persons, help dementia patients, identify unconscious victims and catch dangerous felons. The drawbacks are much harder to swallow, however.

Protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street, the Tea Party Movement and Black Lives Matter, were all monitored by the FBI with thousands of faces being fed into federal databases, according to recently revealed information. Those attending vigils held for victims are also common targets for facial pattern collection, representing what amounts to a chilling crackdown on free speech.

With frightening similarity to Egyptian police who manually record protest marches so they can come, often in the night, to arrest dissidents for torture in secret prisons, the creation of a government database of known protestors and blacklists of Americans is unsettling to say the least.

The latest proposal to link such automatic systems to police body cams takes the concept even further because it makes every officer a walking eye of the surveillance state.

The recent leak of data on 87 million Facebook users is another cause for concern because Facebook, as its name implies, is currently the world's largest facial portrait database and the profile photos cannot be made private, according to company policies.

Facebook itself ran afoul of European privacy laws in 2012 and was forced to suspend its activities after it used facial recognition automatically to tag and link photos, a dangerous proposition for those who want to stay hidden from abusive ex-spouses.

The system showed a 97% accuracy in testing, superior at the time to even the FBI's modest 85% accuracy several years prior. Now it is reported to be ready to restart its facial recognition program for all users.

Even more worrying, there is strong evidence to indicate that private intelligence companies have already compiled this vast trove of 2.2 billion photos for facial recognition purposes, to be sold to governments and corporations alike.

Forbes magazine reported this year on a company called Terrogence, started by an ex-Mossad intelligence officer. For the last five years, Terrogence has specialized in the construction of huge face-scan databases, compiling the data from social networks, Youtube videos, Internet forums, blogs, official records, news articles and a host of other sources.

Terrogence has been selling cutting-edge intelligence technology and information to the NSA. So, what the government doesn't collect legally through driver's licenses and arrest data, it quietly purchases from private intelligence corporations.

Marketed as an effort to stop terrorism by tracking down jihadists solely by their faces, LinkedIn profiles and leaks from former employees, their involvement in politics appears to go much deeper, with one employee describing her job as "open source intelligence practices and social media engineering methods to investigate political and social groups."

The company quietly boasts of infiltrating political groups with fake online personas in an effort to gather intelligence and create dossiers on possible subversives, all for profit and free from even the loose legal tethers of the US deep state.

The American no-fly list is a famous example of a black list that, although a sensible project that started with good intentions, quickly spun out of control until it was banning toddlers with similar names. There was no way for an individual to know if they were on it, how they got there or if there was a way to get off such a black list.

The same threat to personal liberty now exists with privatized "black lists" created from these corporate databases and, in addition to being denied access to flights, the consequences could be high-risk police stops, pervasive monitoring and restrictions on normal activities, all based on automatic facial recognition.

Communist China has made no efforts to hide what will soon be a total-information surveillance state, but the United States is quietly building out the same level of control through private contractors and a patchwork connection of corporate and government data.

The reality is that all our unique facial signatures are likely already in a database, whether government or corporate, and those databases are being linked, slowly at first, to automatic facial recognition systems through cameras popping up around major cities.

There will soon be nowhere to hide. Comparisons to Orwell's 1984 have become cliché by now, but what else can really be said except that Orwell never dreamed it would go this far.

'Unplanned' makes twice the expected box office sales despite social media censorship

*'Unplanned' makes twice the expected box office sales despite social media censorship
By Michael Gryboski, Christian Post Reporter | Monday, April 01, 2019*

The pro-life movie "Unplanned" earned double the box office sales expected for its opening weekend, even while dealing with apparent censorship on social media.

Based on the life of Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic worker turned anti-abortion activist, the movie raked in approximately \$6.1 million over the weekend.

This was twice the expected ticket sales, and makes "Unplanned" the third biggest opening weekend film by Pure Flix, behind 2014's "God's Not Dead" (\$9.2 million) and 2016's "God's Not Dead 2" (\$7.6 million).

Deadline Hollywood labeled the success of the pro-life film "remarkable" since the movie was rated R and was not able to run ads on most of the major cable networks.

Pure Flix CEO Michael Scott said in a statement released Sunday that his company was "very happy for the success of this film."

“To bring the story of Abby Johnson to audiences and have them show up in such large numbers shows how the topic of abortion is so important to bring to audiences,” stated Scott, as reported by The Wrap.

“We hope that those on both sides of the debate will see 'Unplanned' and begin to have their own dialogue. This film can be that spark to bring more hearts and minds to understanding the value of life.”

The “Unplanned” film’s success also came as it dealt with issues on Twitter. The popular social media site briefly suspended the account, reportedly because of it being linked to a different account that had violated the website’s rules.

Twitter restored the film’s account soon after in response to extensive outcry from other users. Chuck Konzelman, co-director and co-writer of the movie, said that the suspension was “a sad state of affairs.”

“Whether this was an executive decision by Twitter, or a reaction by Twitter to complaints from those opposed to the pro-life viewpoint, either reason is unacceptable,” stated Konzelman, as reported by the Hollywood Reporter.

“Fortunately, the uproar in our defense was loud and fast in coming: Our account has since been reinstated. Thanks to all who have rallied to our defense.”

Further issues with Twitter continued, with the production and its allies noting a sudden unexplained decrease in the following numbers for the “Unplanned” account.

“The @UnplannedMovie account just dropped from 170k+ followers to 25.5k followers in the last hour. What is going on @jack @Twitter?” tweeted notable pro-life activist Lila Rose on Sunday evening.

This issue also appeared to be resolved by Monday morning, with the “Unplanned” account noting that their following list had shot back up again to over 200,000.

“Who else is watching Twitter like a hawk? Thanks to all of you who noticed Twitter pitching them off our follower list! It looks like we're back to normal - and up to almost 200k!” tweeted the movie's official account.