

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

"Tar Is Literally Oozing Up" Through The Streets Of LA As 700 Quakes Hit Key Seismic Zone

by Michael Snyder via The Economic Collapse blog,

Scientists are quite “concerned” about the huge earthquake swarm that has been shaking southern California in recent weeks, and right at this moment bubbling tar is literally coming up through the streets in one section of Los Angeles. None of this means that a major seismic event is imminent, but it is certainly not a good sign either. We have been tracking quite a bit of unusual shaking along the Ring of Fire in recent months, and scientists assure us that it is just a matter of time before “the Big One” hits southern California. And if you follow my work on a regular basis, then you already know that I am extremely concerned about the potential for major seismic activity along the west coast. So when I came across a San Diego Union-Tribune article entitled “Southern California earthquake swarm takes an unexpected turn, and that’s reason to worry”, it definitely got my attention. According to that article, there have been “more than 700 earthquakes” in the Fontana seismic zone over the past few weeks.

There have been more than 700 earthquakes recorded in the Fontana area since May 25, ranging from magnitude 0.7 to magnitude 3.2, recorded Wednesday at 5:20 p.m., according to Caltech staff seismologist Jen Andrews.

That is certainly a lot of earthquakes, but is this sort of activity unusual?

Well, according to one scientist, this is the “most prolific swarm” to hit that area “in the past three decades”. The likelihood of a larger seismic event, given so many quakes over such an extended period, is higher than normal, the scientist said.

“People ought to be concerned,” said Hauksson. “This is probably the most prolific swarm in that area of the Fontana seismic zone that we’ve seen in the past three decades.”

Once again, I want to stress that all of this activity does not mean that a major earthquake is about to happen. But one day it is coming. In fact, scientists have told us that one day the entire San Andreas fault could “could unzip all at once”. And when that day finally arrives, there might not be any warning at all.

If you live in California, you should be prepared for earthquakes to occur at all times, and that means taking some reasonable precautions

In any home in seismically risky areas of California, experts recommend removing heavy objects around beds, strapping bookcases and dressers to walls, anchoring flat-screen televisions to walls, installing toddler safety latches on kitchen cabinets, and ensuring frames are attached to walls with quake-friendly hooks.

Hopefully there will not be a major quake any time soon, but over the past few days another ominous sign has made news.

According to one local news report, “bubbling tar” is actually coming up through the streets near the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles.

And on Saturday, more seepage. Enough to draw the interests of tourists and residents alike. CBS2’s Jake Reiner said tourists and residents alike have been coming to the area marveling at the bubbling tar.

Once again, this might be nothing.

But one local resident admitted that he had “never seen this before”, and apparently the smell of methane is very potent.

“You see a little bit of tar oozing up between the pavement,” Kogan says, “all over the neighborhood. That’s not unusual but this seems to be flow tar. I’ve never seen this before.” Not to mention the constant hissing sound coming from the ground — it’s methane.

“I can smell it. I thought a car broke its oil pan out here,” says Patrick Myer.

I don’t know about you, but if you can literally hear methane coming out of the ground and bubbling tar is starting to come up through the streets, perhaps that is a sign that it is time to consider moving somewhere else. But of course the truth is that our entire planet is becoming increasingly unstable. On Monday, a magnitude 4.0 earthquake struck near Cleveland. The following comes from CNN. A preliminary magnitude-4.0 earthquake was reported Monday about 20 miles northeast of Cleveland, in or around Lake Erie, the US Geological Survey said.

The earthquake, measuring 3.1 miles in depth, was reported just before 11 a.m. local time north-northwest of the city of Eastlake.

“Did you feel that rumble this morning Cleveland? Well if you missed it, we caught this morning’s earthquake on multiple #OHGO cameras. Check it out! #Clevelandreallyrocks,” the Ohio Department of Transportation tweeted, along with a collection of traffic videos showing the moment the quake hit.

And of course Cleveland is not very far from the New Madrid fault zone that I have been writing articles about again and again.

On the other side of the world, a huge volcano in Indonesia also erupted on Monday. A huge column of ash was blasted almost five miles into the sky above the Indonesian island of Sumatra after an active volcano erupted.

Mount Sinabung blew for nine minutes on Sunday, causing panic among the island’s residents.

Indonesian officials warned that further volcanic activity was possible, although the volcano’s alert level remained unchanged.

Major seismic events are happening so frequently now that it is really hard to keep up with them all.

But it is very important not to become numb to what is happening. Something strange really is happening to our planet, and many believe that it is going to get a lot worse.

As for California, scientists keep telling us that "the Big One" is way overdue, and when it finally arrives it could be a history altering event. According to one team of scientists, an extremely large earthquake could potentially "plunge large parts of California into the sea almost instantly". Such an event would be far worse than anything that any Hollywood earthquake movie ever envisioned, and let us pray that nothing like that happens any time soon.

The Mullahs Promise "Demise of Israel" and American Civilization

by Majid Rafizadeh June 15, 2019

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/14328/iran-threats-israel-us>

The Iranian government continues to defy international standards, as it refuses to act as a rational and constructive state, even apart from its repeated malign behavior in the Gulf of Oman this week. Iran's Supreme Guide Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who enjoys the final say in all of Iran's domestic and foreign policies, recently proclaimed to the youth in Iran that they will soon witness the demise of Israel and all of American civilization. This announcement was confirmed on the Supreme Leader's official website.

Khamenei made Iran's intentions clear while meeting with students. "You young people," he declared, "should be assured that you will witness the demise of the enemies of humanity, meaning the degenerate American civilization, and the demise of Israel".

Iran also recently produced a program on its state television channel demonstrating that the government is currently practicing missile attacks, with the purpose of carrying out actual attacks on Israel. The video excerpt included in the television broadcast showed how the operations the Iranians are striving to put into action will bombard Tel Aviv. The video concludes with images of Israeli citizens covered in white sheets, indicating great tragedy for Israel, and a victory for the Islamic Republic.

The Deputy Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hossein Salami, also recently threatened on Iran's Channel 2 TV that Israel is "vulnerable and bringing itself closer to death".

Salami made the strategy of the Iranian government vehemently clear by stating, "Our strategy is to erase Israel from the global political map. And, it seems that, considering the evil that Israel is doing, it is bringing itself closer to that." In addition, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei recently posted a Twitter tirade attacking Israel. It stated that "the Zionist regime will perish in the not so far future."

Why are the Iranian leaders ratcheting up threats against Israel and the Jews at these critical times? There seem to be two major reasons.

Aside from their proclaimed hatred of the country, there is, behind these increased threats, a political motive. From the perspective of the Iranian leaders, if they continue to increase their threats against Israel, the United States will be pressured to change its strategy and lift pressure that has been placed on the clerical establishment, the IRGC, and its elite branch, the Quds Force.

Since its establishment in 1979, the modus operandi of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been to pursue aggressive violent policies instead of attempting diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East.

Since US President Donald J. Trump withdrew from the flimsy nuclear deal, the Iranian leaders have been

under significant economic pressure, and are seeking ways to escape it. Sanctions leveled against the Iranian government's military institutions -- the IRGC and its affiliates -- as well as the banking system and the oil sector, are placing financial and geopolitical pressure on the Islamic Republic. Iran's oil exports have declined by more than half, and its national currency, the rial, continues to lose value. As the squeeze continues on both political and economic dynamics within Iran, the government will grow more and more desperate.

It is not only inside the country that the Iranian leaders are feeling economic losses and pressure; Tehran's financial influence, investments and assistance to other countries, particularly Syria, are also being negatively impacted.

As the pressure continues, it is becoming extremely difficult for the Iranian authorities to continue funding, sponsoring and supporting its militias, proxies and terror groups across the Middle East.

According to the latest reports, Iran's reduced oil revenues have already caused Tehran to cut funding to its militias in Syria. As Iran's militias are not getting their salaries and benefits, their ability to continue to fight is being limited.

When these militias do not receive the required funds to operate and advance Iran's interests, some will begin to lose their power, erode, and even fall apart altogether. The Islamic Republic will likely lose the loyalty of other militias as they attempt to find new paymasters.

The second reason behind Iran's increasing threats against Israel is linked to one of the core pillars and revolutionary ideals of the Islamic Republic: destroying the Jewish state. It is also one of the religious prophecies of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and his successor, the current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, that Israel will be eventually erased from the face of the earth.

As Iran's theocratic establishment believes that the Supreme Leader is Allah's representative on earth, whatever words or desires the Supreme Leader utters are considered wishes, which must be brought to life by Allah's true believers. With this religious drive, the undercurrent of hatred toward Israel is only amplified: each attack against the country is considered a holy act.

It is an unacceptable double-standard that the United Nations and the international community have been, and continue to be, silent about Iran's threats against Israeli citizens. If the situation were reversed and if Israel threatened to annihilate Iran, the international community would be up in arms, and quick to defend Iran. Through political and economic pressure, the ruling mullahs of Iran should be held accountable by the international community for endangering global security and regional stability.

Mideast tensions rattle a key global oil route

Analysis: The alleged attack on two oil tankers near Strait of Hormuz has caused an oil price spike and increasing tensions in an already volatile situation, the impact of which could be felt around the world

Associated Press|Published: 06.13.19

Reports that two tanker ships have been attacked in the Gulf of Oman, near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, have focused new attention on the region as tensions have risen.

Here's a look at the key waterway and its importance for the global economy.

Where is the Strait of Hormuz?

The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, which at its narrowest point is just 33 kilometers (21 miles) wide. The width of the shipping lane in either direction is only 3 kilometers (2 miles). It flows into the Gulf of Oman, where ships can then travel to the rest of the world. The strait is viewed as an international transit route.

Why is it in the news?

Two oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz were reportedly attacked on Thursday. In all, 44 sailors were evacuated from the vessels and the U.S. Navy has assisted amid heightened tensions between the United States and Iran.

The incident comes after the U.S. alleged that Iran used mines to attack four oil tankers off the nearby Emirati port of Fujairah last month. Iran has denied being involved. Meanwhile, Iranian-allied rebels in Yemen have increased their missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, which has been at war in Yemen against the rebels since 2015.

Why is it important?

One third of all oil traded by sea, which amounts to 20% of oil traded worldwide, passes through the strait.

Major OPEC energy producers Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait use the strait to export oil to countries, mainly in Asia, including China, Japan, India and South Korea. The strait is also used to export gas worldwide from Qatar, the world's biggest liquefied natural gas producer.

Anything affecting the narrow passage ripples through global energy markets, raising the price of crude oil. That then trickles down to consumers through what they pay for gasoline and other oil products.

How much is the price of oil rising?

The U.S. and international benchmarks for crude oil were up over 3% on Thursday after the news of the incidents against the two crude oil tankers. That's a relatively big daily increase but it comes after a sustained drop in oil prices.

The Brent contract, for example, is at \$62.17 a barrel. That's up 3.7% on the day -- but down from over \$74 in late April. Prices have been declining on expectations that the global economy will slow, using less energy, as well as strong supplies. Analysts say that tensions in the Gulf region could push prices up again in the longer term, if they are protracted and there is a real threat to the flow of supplies.

What happens now?

How the U.S. and Iranian governments react to the event will be key. The United States has recently moved more military forces into the region, which already hosts the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet in Bahrain and the forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command at the vast Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

Iran has set a July 7 deadline for Europe to find new terms for Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers. That accord began to unravel after the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the Obama-era deal and re-imposed U.S. sanctions aimed at crippling the Iranian economy and pressuring a change in its regional policies. Iran has threatened it could resume higher levels of enrichment.

The Single Greatest Sign Of The End Times

It seems like everywhere we look today, we see violence, hatred, and debauchery of every kind. Cities track the number of murders year-to-date, and the local news reports on whether or not the latest body count is a new record. Films and television shows constantly push the envelope, portraying ever increasing

violence and sexual immorality of every kind.

This is what Paul said the last days will be like. He said people will love only themselves and their money. They'll be boastful, proud, scoffing, disobedient, ungrateful, unloving, and unforgiving. They'll consider nothing sacred. They'll slander others and have no self-control.

They'll be cruel and hate what is good, betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God (2 Timothy 3:2-5). This is the exact type of behavior we see today. Therefore, it's no surprise so many people think the end is near.

It turns out what many people instinctively think is actually true. The end is near. How can I be so sure? Because Jesus and the Hebrew prophets cited specific events they said will mark the end times. Today, we see those events.

The Gospel is being preached to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14)... Travel and knowledge are increasing exponentially (Daniel 12:4)... The Jewish people once again control Jerusalem (Luke 21:24)... And these are just a few of the signs. Jesus said, "When you see all these things take place, stand and look up, for your salvation draws near!" (Luke 21:28).

This means the convergence of all these signs is the #1 reason to believe His Second Coming is near.

But among all the signs, which one is the greatest? What's the most important individual sign Jesus is about to return?

The Regathering

Without a doubt, I believe the greatest sign is the regathering of the Jewish people back in the land of Israel. Not only did God promise it would happen in the last days, but the Tribulation itself cannot occur without Israel. Here are just a few end times events that require the nation of Israel:

The Antichrist's Covenant - The Tribulation begins when Israel agrees to a covenant or treaty with the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27). How could Israel agree to such a covenant if it doesn't exist?

The Purpose of the Tribulation - God's primary purpose in the Tribulation is to fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:24). Before this can happen, Israel must exist.

Jerusalem - Jesus said the Jewish people will lose control of Jerusalem, but later, they will regain control (Luke 21:24). Only then will the end times events He described take place. This means the Tribulation cannot occur unless the Jewish people control Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 38-39 - The Bible says in the last days, when God brings the Jewish people back into the land from the many lands where they've been scattered (Ezekiel 38:8), a massive coalition of armies will invade Israel. This can't happen unless Israel exists.

Israel's "Exceedingly Great" Army - Ezekiel says Israel will have an "exceedingly great army" in the last days (Ezekiel 37:10). God says Israel will be like a fire among sheaves of grain, burning up the neighboring nations (Zechariah 12:6). He says even the weakest soldier among them will be like David (Zechariah 12:8). Again, how could all this happen if Israel doesn't exist?

The Abomination of Desolation - In the middle of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will put an end to the Temple sacrifices and offerings (Daniel 9:27). Then, he will sit in the Temple and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). This is an act of desecration Jesus calls "the abomination of desolation"

(Matthew 24:15).

Before it can take place, the Jewish Temple must exist. The Roman legions destroyed it in A.D. 70. This means a new Temple must be built. And for that to happen, the Jewish people must be back in the land and in control of Jerusalem.

These are just a few of the events the Bible says will take place in the end times. How can they happen if Israel doesn't exist? They can't. They require the Jewish people back in the land of Israel. Without a doubt, Israel plays the lead role in God's end time plan. Without it, there can be no end times.

Prior to May 14, 1948, this presented a problem. Israel did not exist. In the eyes of the world, Israel was gone forever. But those who understood bible prophecy knew better. They knew God promised to bring the Jewish people back into the land. They knew the Hebrew prophets said over and over again the people of Israel will be brought back into the land in the last days. And that's exactly what happened.

God's Promise

The entire Bible (and the Old Testament in particular) contain specific and undeniable promises from God to bring His people back into the land of Israel. For example, God promised Moses and the Israelites: "Even though you are banished to the ends of the earth, the Lord your God will gather you from there and bring you back again. The Lord your God will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will possess that land again" Deuteronomy 30:4-5 (NLT).

Throughout Israel's history, one prophet after another said the same thing. Through them, God promised to bring the Jewish people back into the land despite the hardships they faced (Isaiah 43:1-13). He promised to call them from "the farthest corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12), from "among the nations" (Ezekiel 39:28), and from "north, south, east, and west" (Psalm 107:3).

He promised to bring them home and display His holiness to the nations (Ezekiel 20:41-42). He promised to welcome them home from "the lands where they were scattered" (Ezekiel 20:34). He said He would restore them to the land of Israel from distant lands (Jeremiah 30:2-10). And God promised, though scattered among the nations, His people would never forget Him, and He would bring them back into the land of Israel (Zechariah 10:9). God kept His promise. Modern day Israel is the proof.

But God promised to do more than simply restore the nation of Israel, he said how He would do it. He said Israel will be created in a single day (Isaiah 66:7-8), return as a united nation (Ezekiel 37:22), transform from a desolate wasteland to a lush garden (Ezekiel 36:34-35; Isaiah 51:3), and form "an exceedingly great army" (Ezekiel 37:10). Each and every one of these things happened.

When Will All This Happen?

But as amazing as these fulfilled prophecies are, what surprises most people is when God said they will be fulfilled. Because the Hebrew prophets directly linked the rebirth of Israel with the Second Coming of the Jesus Christ.

Through the prophet Hosea, God said the people of Israel will go a long time without a king, sacrifices, sacred pillars, or priests, then they will return to the land and seek their God and Messiah in the last days (Hosea 3:4-5).

The prophet Joel said the armies of the world will gather together for the battle of Armageddon "at the time when God restores Judah and Jerusalem," bringing His people back from among the nations where they were scattered (Joel 3:1-2). In other words, once God restores the nation of Israel, Armageddon and the

end times will soon follow.

God promised the Jewish people will return to the land and the desert will bloom (Isaiah 35:1). Then the Lord will return to destroy Israel's enemies (Isaiah 35:2-4). Through Jeremiah, God promised to gather the remnant of His flock from the nations where he had driven them and bring them back into the land (Jeremiah 23:3-4).

Then, He promised to raise up a righteous descendant of King David, a king who will rule the land with wisdom (Jeremiah 23:5-6). This is the long-awaited Messiah, and He will come to rule "when the people are back in the land" (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

Through Isaiah, God promised to restore the nation of Israel and raise its flag among the nations (Isaiah 11:12). When that happens, God says "the wolf and the lamb will lie together" and "leopards will lie down with goats." Even a baby will play with a cobra and not be bitten! (Isaiah 11:6-9). The heir to David's throne (Jesus Christ) will rule over the nations, transforming the world into a place of peace and tranquility (Isaiah 11:10).

This describes the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ. And when will His Kingdom come? After His people are re-gathered "from distant lands" and "the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 11:11-12) and after Israel is reborn as a single, unified nation (Isaiah 11:13).

As if all this weren't enough, Jesus said when the Jewish people return to the land, they'll regain control over Jerusalem. He said the Gentiles will trample Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles come to an end. When this happens, He said it's a sign of His return (Luke 21:24). In 1967, the nation of Israel took control of Jerusalem for the first time in 1,897 years. Coincidence? No. Jesus said the generation that witnesses these events will not pass away before He returns (Luke 21:32).

This year, the modern day nation of Israel celebrates 71 years since its founding. It's been 52 years since Israel retook control of Jerusalem. How many more years can go by before the generation that witnessed these events is gone? How many more years can go by before Jesus returns? It can't be many.

Why It Matters

The regathering of the Jewish people back in the land of Israel is the #1 sign of the end times. For 1,878 years, this sign didn't exist. Today, it does. Think about the miracle this represents. Throughout history, conquered people disappear. They assimilate into surrounding nations. Where are Israel's ancient neighbors?

Where are the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Deuteronomy 7:1)? They're lost to history. Yet despite almost 2,000 years without a homeland, the Jewish people continue to thrive. They still retain their unique cultural, religious, and ethnic identity.

Despite almost 2,000 years of rampant anti-Semitism, marked by the Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms, and the Nazi holocaust, the Jewish people are still around. Now, they're back in the land. This is nothing less than a modern miracle.

It's clear evidence for the whole world that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the one true God. It's also the number one reason to believe Jesus is coming soon!