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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

Why everyone is talking about free cash handouts—a primer on universal basic income
cnbc.com

The idea of free cash for all may seem too good to be true, but a growing number of high-profile people — from Democratic presidential hopeful Andrew Yang to tech billionaire Elon Musk — say universal basic income, or UBI, may become a reality.

And the rest of America is becoming more interested, too: Google searches for the term “universal basic income” have multiplied as much as 50 times between 2015 and 2019.

So what is UBI? Here’s a primer.

What is UBI?

Universal basic income refers to regular cash payments made to a given population (such as adult U.S. citizens, for example) with minimal or no requirements for receiving the money, in order to increase people’s income, according to the International Monetary Fund. Beyond that, however, there is often disagreement about what constitutes UBI.

“There is no established common understanding” of UBI, according to economists Maura Francese and Delphine Prady. And therefore, “very different income-support programs are often labeled ‘universal basic income,’ even when they have little in common or do not aim at the same goal.” However, common variances on the basic tenet include whether cash handouts replace or supplement existing social welfare programs, whether payments are distributed to a household or individual, who foots the bill and how often the payments are distributed.

Why is everybody talking about UBI now?

There are two main conditions fueling the emergence of UBI as a serious topic over the last few years. The first is fears that automation will put millions of people out of work, leaving them with little or no income. “There is a pretty good chance we end up with a universal basic income, or something like that, due to automation,” SpaceX and Tesla boss Elon Musk told CNBC in 2016. “Yeah, I am not sure what else one would do. I think that is what would happen.”

This is Andrew Yang’s thinking too. Yang, a 44-year-old entrepreneur running for the Democratic presidential nomination, has made UBI the foundation of his 2020 campaign platform. His plan, which he calls the “Freedom Dividend,” is for the federal government to give all U.S. citizens ages 18 and over \$1,000 per month.

Fellow Democratic hopeful Sen. Bernie Sanders said in 2015 he is “absolutely sympathetic to that approach,” and former Vice President Joe Biden said in 2018 he would consider a UBI as a last resort. Republicans are more likely to be against UBI.

Americans, however, are split on whether they would support universal basic income as a solution for those whose jobs are replaced by robots: 48% support and 52% do not, according to a February 2018 Gallup survey.

There is also debate as to whether robots will actually take people’s jobs: A 2017 McKinsey & Company report estimates as much as one-third of the U.S. workforce may need to learn new skills and find a new job because of automation by 2030, while a 2017 report from Gartner says artificial intelligence will create more jobs than it eliminates.

The other major situation motivating the current conversation about UBI is America’s extreme and growing wealth inequality. Some see cash payments as a way to help even the playing field.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, for one, falls into this camp.

“Every generation expands its definition of equality. Now it’s time for our generation to define a new social contract We should explore ideas like universal basic income to make sure everyone has a cushion to try new ideas,” Zuckerberg said in his 2017 Harvard commencement speech. After all, he said, it was because he had a financial safety net from his dentist father that he felt free to try something as risky as turning Facebook into a business.

The wave of interest in UBI is also inspiring a smattering of experiments and pilot studies with UBI in the U.S.

The once-bankrupt town of Stockton, California, initiated an 18-month experiment in February, distributing monthly checks for \$500 to 130 randomly selected Stockton residents to mitigate poverty and inequality. Michael Tubbs, the town’s now 28-year-old mayor, decided on the program after reading Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1967 book, “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” In the book, King writes: “... the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income.” And one of the country’s top start-up accelerators’ research arm, Y Combinator Research, has run small-scale tests in Oakland, California, to test and improve procedures ahead of a larger-scale program. In that program, 1,000 randomly selected individuals across two as-yet-undisclosed states will receive \$1,000 per month for three years to study the impact of the cash transfer.

Who pays?

That depends on who you talk to.

Hillary Clinton seriously considered running her 2016 campaign for president on a platform built with UBI. But she couldn’t figure out a reasonable way to pay for it. “Unfortunately, we couldn’t make the numbers work,” Clinton wrote in her campaign memoir, “What Happened.” “To provide a meaningful dividend each year to every citizen, you’d have to raise enormous sums of money, and that would either mean a lot of new taxes or cannibalizing other important programs. We decided it was exciting but not realistic....”

Others believe there is a solution.

Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes, a UBI supporter, says a guaranteed basic income should be paid for by the wealthiest 1% of society, according to his book, “Fair Shot: Rethinking Inequality and How We Earn.”

And Yang proposes to pay for UBI by implementing a value-added tax, or VAT, of 10% on goods and services a company produces. “Because our economy is so vast, this would generate between \$700 and \$800 billion in revenue,” he said on Reddit in 2018. Indeed, Eric Toder of the Washington, D.C.-based Tax

Policy Center told CNBC Make It in 2018 that such a VAT in the United States could raise anywhere from \$500 billion to \$1 trillion, depending on how broadly the tax is applied.

One thing is certain, however: It would cost a lot.

“A truly universal UBI would be enormously expensive,” say Hilary Hoynes and Jesse Rothstein, economics and public policy professors at the University of California at Berkeley. “The kinds of UBIs often discussed would cost nearly double current total spending on the ‘big three’ programs (Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid),” according to their working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in February. They also say these social welfare programs would still be needed even with UBI.

Will it work?

Critics say universal basic income is too expensive, that it gives people incentive to be unproductive, that it’s bad for people’s self-worth and that there are more efficient ways to spend government money to help those who can’t support themselves.

“Just giving \$1,000 to everybody in itself is not the right solution” if helping those who need it most in society is the goal, Thomas Piketty, an economist and professor at the Paris School of Economics, told CNBC Make It at Columbia University in March.

And Ian Goldin, a professor of globalization and development at the University of Oxford, argued in the Financial Times that “individuals gain not only income, but meaning, status, skills, networks and friendships through work. Delinking income and work, while rewarding people for staying at home, is what lies behind social decay.”

Nobel laureate in economics Joseph Stiglitz told CNBC in April, “I think there’s a certain dignity from work. Some of my younger students say, ‘Oh there could be a lot of dignity from meditation and from other ways of spending time.’ But I think for most people there will be a real desire to work,” Stiglitz says. As far as the data goes, it’s mixed.

Some of the news seems positive. For example, left-leaning think tank Roosevelt Institute says a \$1,000-a-month payment would actually grow the economy by \$2.5 trillion by 2025 if it was paid for by increasing the federal deficit; however, increasing taxes would have no net benefit to the economy. And some small UBI use cases seem to show that cash handouts help those who receive them in some ways — alleviating emotional stress and helping individuals pay their bills. However, it is not a silver bullet for unemployment.

Senior US team to visit Middle East for talks on Washington’s peace plan

Times of Israel

By Raphael Ahren and TOI staff July 21

Senior US officials are set to arrive in the region next week to further discuss the Trump administration’s forthcoming Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, a senior US official told The Times of Israel Sunday. The US delegation includes US President Donald Trump’s senior adviser Jared Kushner, US special peace envoy Jason Greenblatt, Kushner’s senior aid Avi Berkowitz, and Brian Hook, the administration’s point man on Iran.

They are set to travel to Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, said the senior official, who asked not to be named, as he was not authorized to speak about the visit to press.

“The purpose of the visit is to follow up on the Bahrain workshop,” the official said, referring to last month’s “Peace to Prosperity” summit in Manama, during which the administration presented the economic part of its two-pronged peace proposal.

“We would like to finalize the plan’s economic portion, including to discuss the potential placement of the investments,” the official said, referring to the \$50 billion investment packaged for the Palestinians and the wider region proposed by the plan.

The delegation’s trip is to be understood as the conclusion of the first stage of the peace plan’s unveiling, but not yet as the overture to the presentation of the political part, the official stresses.

The White House has indicated that it is waiting until after a government is formed in Israel following September 17 elections before it releases the political part of the peace plan, and has not revealed any of its details.

In late June, the White House revealed the economic part of its plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which proposes billions of dollars in investments in infrastructure projects in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and neighboring Arab countries.

Days after publicizing the economic part of the plan, the White House also co-sponsored a conference in Bahrain, which focused on it. The Palestinians fiercely opposed the workshop in the Gulf country, arguing any peace effort must address political matters before economic ones.

Greenblatt has previously stated that the publication of the political section of the plan may be postponed until around early November, when he predicted a new Israeli government would be formed. The administration said it originally planned to release the proposal over the summer, but was forced to push back those plans, after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called repeat elections in May, having failed to cobble together a coalition.

Netanyahu has said he will keep an “open mind” about the US peace proposal, while PA President Mahmoud Abbas has vowed on many occasions to reject the US plan.

Shortly after Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, in December 2017, and initiated the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, the Palestinians significantly downgraded their ties with Washington, including cutting relations with the White House.

Recent Significant Events

By Daymond Duck July 21, 2019

First, as I write this article, Hurricane Barry is bearing down on Louisiana, and I suspect that some people are wondering why is this happening?

Among other things, I believe natural disasters are part of the curse that God placed upon the earth because of sin. There will be natural disasters until the curse is removed (Rom. 8:22).

I also believe that God sent the Ten Plagues upon Egypt to let Pharaoh know that Israel’s God is God, and there are some things that humans can’t control (Exodus 7:14-12:30).

I also believe that natural disasters come from the heart of a loving God that wants sinful people to repent of their sins and return to Him (II Chron. 12:12-14).

We live in a godless world with many Church members (Christians in name only) twisting Scripture to justify their re-definition of sin. Someone said beware of half-truths because the half you believe may be wrong. God may be telling us that repentance in the Church is badly needed.

A recent Pew Research poll found that the number of people in the U.S. that call themselves Christian was 86% in the early 90's, 78.4% in 2007 and 70.6% in 2014. God loves people, but He hates sin, and He will judge sin.

Second, true Christians are close to losing their freedom of speech and religion.

In Jan. 2019, UN Sec. General Antonio Guterres directed one of his advisors to develop a plan to combat hate speech and hate crimes.

The plan was presented to the UN in June 2019, and it wants to globally outlaw all speech, writing and behavior that is divisive or intolerant (all speech, writing and behavior that criticizes Muslims, gays, etc.).

Third, concerning Pres. Trump's Deal of the Century, his Special Envoy Jason Greenblatt said, "We are aiming for a home run."

Pres. Trump believes the peace negotiations have gone on long enough and it is time for a comprehensive, final peace treaty in the Middle East. God is the only One that knows what is going to happen, but it should be noted that the rebellious Palestinian leadership is not so rebellious after all.

Three things have spurred them to try to re-establish their relationship with Pres. Trump: 1) Pres. Trump cut off U.S. financial aid, and the PA is hurting financially; 2) The PA has decided that Pres. Trump will get re-elected, and they want to smooth things over with him; and 3) PA efforts to get all of the Arab nations to boycott Jared Kushner's Bahrain conference was ignored by some Arab leaders.

Fourth, last week, there was an article about Mark Zuckerberg's desire to create a one-world currency in early 2020.

This week, Pres. Trump and Jerome Powell, head of the Federal Reserve, chimed in on the subject. Mr. Trump tweeted, "If Facebook and other companies want to become a bank, they must seek a new Banking Charter and become subject to all Banking Regulations, just like other Banks, both National [and international]."

Mr. Powell said America's central bank has "serious concerns" about Mr. Zuckerberg's one-world currency. Notice that discussion of a one-world currency has now moved from the pages of books on Bible prophecy to tweets at the White House and Federal Reserve testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives.

Fifth, some people want to deny the existence of King David because they don't want to believe the Bible is the Word of God.

If scholars can prove that King David existed, it would make it harder to deny what the Bible says. Several years ago, archaeologists started excavating a site in Israel that appeared to be an ancient town. They have found and carbon-dated many items.

On July 8, 2010, they announced that the town they have found is the ancient town of Ziklag. According to the Bible, King David hid at Ziklag when he was fleeing from King Saul. It seems that archaeology keeps proving the Bible right, and it never proves the Bible wrong.

Prophecy Plus Ministries, Inc. Daymond & Rachel Duck

Dealing With End Times Complacency

Britt Gillette July 18, 2019 by Rapture Ready

In 1970, Hal Lindsey published *The Late Great Planet Earth*. The book sold millions of copies and introduced a generation to the miraculous fulfillment of end times bible prophecies in our day and time. Coming on the heels of World War II, the rebirth of Israel, the Six Day War, and widespread societal upheaval, many were convinced the rapture would take place before the end of the decade. But the 1970's came and went, and Jesus did not return. Then, in the 1980's and 1990's, numerous bible prophecy books with titles like "Countdown to Armageddon" and "Final Warning" sold all over the world. Again, many people were convinced Jesus would return before the end of the century. Yet Jesus didn't come. Then the world experienced Y2K, the September 11th terrorist attacks, and the phenomenal success of the *Left Behind* series. Once again, it seemed as though Jesus would return at any moment. But once again, he didn't. And then something happened. Complacency set in.

End Times Burnout

Because Jesus hadn't come, many Christians began to openly doubt whether He ever would. Why? I believe there are at least two reasons. First, we live in a culture that demands instant gratification. We don't like to wait as little as two minutes for a microwave to cook a meal it took our grandparents half a day to prepare. We're impatient, and we're used to getting what we want when we want.

The second reason is the errant predictions of date setters. False prophets such as Harold Camping and Edgar Whisenant told the world Jesus would return on specific dates – even though Jesus said "no one knows the day or hour" (Matthew 24:36). The media gives widespread attention to these predictions. When these days come and go, the false prophets are exposed. This leads to ridicule of bible prophecy, and in some cases, even Christian leaders publicly dismiss bible prophecy as a playground for crackpots and the ignorant. But these critics forget false prophets made these claims, not the Bible. The Bible's track record remains perfect. In fact, the Bible predicted this complacency long ago.

The Bible Said This Would Happen

Almost two thousand years ago, Peter issued a warning. He said in the last days people will deny the signs we see today. He said they'll mock the idea of Jesus returning. They'll make fun of those who believe in the Second Coming and say the exact things we hear today – things like, "I thought Jesus was coming back? What happened to His promise? Generation after generation has said He's coming. Yet, since the beginning of the world, everything has remained the same!" (2 Peter 3:3-4). You've probably heard variations of this complaint yourself. Maybe you've heard it in church. But is it true? No. It's not. Nothing could further from the truth.

Are Things The Same As They've Always Been?

To say the world is the same today as in years past – that we don't live in unique times – is just not true. More than any other generation, ours has reason to expect the Second Coming. Jesus and the prophets said to look for specific signs heralding the end times. For over 1,800 years, you couldn't find one of the signs they said to look for. Today, in one form or another, you can find all of them. Here are just a few examples:

The Jewish People Back in the Land – God promised to bring the Jewish people back into the land of Israel before He returned (Jeremiah 23:7-8). He said He would call them from "among the nations" (Ezekiel 39:28), from "the farthest corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12), and from "north, south, east, and west" (Psalm 107:3). He promised to welcome them home from the lands where they were scattered (Ezekiel 20:34). When they did, He promised to return and establish His everlasting kingdom (Isaiah 11:11-12). For 1,878 years (A.D. 70 to A.D. 1948), the Jewish people lived in exile. On May 14, 1948, they reestablished the nation of Israel, fulfilling God's promise to bring them back into the land.

The Jewish People Back in Jerusalem – Jesus prophesied armies would surround Jerusalem, destroy the city, and enslave its citizens. In A.D. 70, the Roman legions fulfilled this prophecy. In the days that followed, Jesus said Gentiles would control Jerusalem until “the times of the Gentiles are over.” Then, the Jewish people would once again take control of Jerusalem. When they did, Jesus promised to return (Luke 21:24-28). In June 1967, the Jewish people retook control of Jerusalem.

The Gospel Preached Throughout the World – When the disciples asked about the end of the age and the signs of His coming, Jesus told them to look for a very specific sign. He said the Gospel will be preached throughout the entire world. Every nation will hear it. Then, the end will come (Matthew 24:14). For centuries after the crucifixion, the Gospel mostly reached a small area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. But in the past two centuries, Christians carried the Gospel to every country on earth. Today, missionaries live in every nation. The Bible is translated in hundreds of languages, and the message of Jesus is sent around the world by radio, TV, satellite, and the Internet. Our generation is the first one on the verge of spreading the Gospel to every last person on earth.

Increased Travel and Knowledge – Six hundred years before Jesus, an angel gave Daniel a special message. He said “travel and knowledge” will increase in the end times (Daniel 12:4). For centuries of human history, dramatic gains in travel and knowledge did NOT take place. Yet the last two hundred years have seen explosions in the speed and frequency of travel as well as the amount and availability of knowledge. For example, up until around two hundred years ago, a man could travel no faster than a horse could carry him. Today, we can travel faster than the speed of sound. Many consider the Library of Alexandria to be the greatest collection of written knowledge in the ancient world. While we don’t know for sure how much knowledge was housed there, some estimates say it was as many 500,000 papyrus scrolls. Two thousand years ago, this was the height of human knowledge. Today, you probably have a bigger library in your pocket. Your smartphone can download almost any book that’s ever been written in a matter of seconds. Our generation is experiencing an exponential increase in travel and knowledge.

Israel Surrounded by Enemies – According to the Bible, enemies will surround Israel in the end times. Those enemies will say “Come, let us wipe away the nation of Israel. Let’s destroy the memory of its existence” (Psalm 83:4) and “Let us take for ourselves these pasturelands of God” (Psalm 83:12). Ezekiel said Israel’s neighbors will say “God has given their land to us” (Ezekiel 11:14-17), and “Israel and Judah are ours. We will take possession of them. What do we care if their God is there?” (Ezekiel 35:10). Ever since the rebirth of Israel in 1948, the daily headlines have included these exact sentiments. Israel’s Muslim neighbors claim the land of Israel for themselves, and they have no regard for the God of Israel. Israel’s Exceedingly Great Army – Ezekiel said, in the last days, Israel will field “an exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10). Zechariah said Israel will be like a fire among sheaves of grain, burning up the neighboring nations (Zechariah 12:6) and even the weakest Israeli soldier will be like David (Zechariah 12:8). Since 1948, Israel has fought no less than four conventional wars against its neighbors. Despite being outnumbered more than 50 to 1, Israel has achieved overwhelming victory every time.

Rise of the Gog of Magog Alliance – The Bible says a military alliance that includes Russia, Iran, Turkey, and a number of Muslim nations will attack Israel “in the latter days” (Ezekiel 38:8) when God brings His people home from among the enemy nations (Ezekiel 39:27). Today, we see those exact nations coming together. The alliance they form today is an alliance that has never existed in world history.

Rise of a United Europe – The Bible says a revived Roman Empire will come to power in the end times (Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Revelation 17). According to Daniel, it will be a ten nation alliance of weak and strong nations. Some parts will be as strong as iron, while other parts will be as weak as clay (Daniel 2:42). We see the initial stages of this alliance in the European Union – the legal and culture inheritor of the Roman Empire’s legacy. The EU today is a coalition of both weak and strong nations. A volatile alliance, it struggles to stay together.

The Rise of Global Government – The Bible says a single government will rule the world politically (Revelation 13:7), religiously (Revelation 13:8), and economically (Revelation 13:16-17) in the last days. It will rule over “all people, tribes, and languages” on the face of the earth (Revelation 13:7). Its authority will be so complete no one will be able to buy or sell anything without its permission (Revelation 13:16-17). For centuries, a true global government was impossible. Today, world leaders openly discuss it, and the technology exists to implement and rule such a government.

Alone, each of these signs indicate the end times are near. Together, they prove ours is the end times generation. Jesus Himself said to look for these signs. He said when you see them, you can know His return is near (Matthew 24:33). In fact, He said the generation that sees these signs will not pass away before He returns (Matthew 24:34). This convergence of signs is the #1 reason to believe our generation is on the verge of witnessing the Second Coming. But instead of getting excited and ramping up our efforts to spread the Gospel, the Christian church is mostly silent on the issue. A large part of the church is complacent, and the Bible warned about this as well.

It's Time to Stay Awake

The night before the crucifixion, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He went to be alone and pray. But before He did, Jesus asked the apostles to stay up and pray with Him. He warned them not to fall asleep. Nevertheless, they did. They were finally awakened when soldiers arrived to arrest Jesus. In a similar way, Jesus warned us not to be caught sleeping when He returns (Mark 13:36). To illustrate, He told a story of ten bridesmaids. Of the ten bridesmaids, five were foolish and five were wise. The five foolish bridesmaids didn't take enough oil for their lamps when they went to wait for the bridegroom. When they left to buy more oil, the bridegroom came and they missed out on the marriage feast. Jesus warned us not to be like the foolish bridesmaids. He said, “You, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return” (Matthew 25:1-13).

In another parable, Jesus once again commanded us to watch: “You, too, must keep watch! For you don't know when the master of the household will return. It could be evening, midnight, dawn, or daybreak. Don't let the master find you sleeping when he arrives without warning” (Mark 13:35-37).

Personally, I've written about the nearness of the Second Coming for over 13 years. Obviously Jesus didn't return in those 13 years, but none of the reasons to expect His return have gone away. In fact, the opposite is true. The reasons to expect Jesus to return at any moment have markedly increased. Yet to great amazement, many Christians seem more complacent and ignorant of the signs than ever. Why? I don't know. But I'll continue to sound the alarm, and you should too. The Bible says if we recognize the signs and don't tell others about them, we're no different than a watchman who sees an invading army and doesn't sound the alarm. If we fail in our role as watchmen, God says He will hold us accountable for all those who perish (Ezekiel 33:1-6).

All the signs Jesus and the prophets said to look for are present right now. For almost 2,000 years, no Christian could say that. Our generation is an eyewitness to signs previous Christians could only dream about. If the signs are telling us the Tribulation and the Second Coming are near, then it means the rapture is even closer. Don't fall asleep, and don't let anyone around you fall asleep. It's never been more important to stay awake. Jesus is coming!