

Newsbytes

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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

Note: What is so interesting here is that the author of the piece mentions Ezekiel 38-39, on a secular page. He doesn't quite have his eschatology right but this is surprising anyway. It's a conservative page that I have been reading for many years. MD

Why the Syria Pullout Makes Sense

America's president stands firm for America's national interest.

Tue Oct 8, 2019 Kenneth R. Timmerman Frontpagemag.com

Washington is awash with dire predictions following President Trump's "surprise" announcement late Sunday night to pull out the remaining 500 or so U.S. advisors currently in northern Syria.

But as the President tweeted on Monday morning, he was elected to end our "ridiculous endless wars," which are costing us huge amounts in blood and treasure. Continued U.S. entanglement, according to Trump, can only make Russia and China happy.

So which is it: is the President endangering the United States and our allies by pulling out of Syria? Betraying our allies, the Kurds? Or is he defending America's national interest?

I have spent a lot of time with the Kurds on the ground, especially in northern Iraq, along the Iranian border. I have also met with Kurdish peshmerga generals in Iraq, as well as the overall Iraqi commander, in charge of the fight against ISIS in Mosul.

That battle is over. And contrary to how MSNBC has been misquoting Sen. Lindsay Graham all day, the United States has indeed utterly defeated the ISIS caliphate.

Graham never said Trump lied about that; he said the administration is lying about defeating ISIS. But he's wrong. The President acknowledges that ISIS continues to have a presence in the Middle East, and they or their jihadist cousins of one flavor or another will continue to have a presence in the region and in Europe until Muslim leaders rise up and defeat political Islam once and for all.

I suspect that I will see my risen Lord in the Rapture before that happens. I'll explain why I am confident of that below.

President Trump believes that agents of the Deep State continue to prowl the basements of Washington, DC. His latest evidence of this, of course, is the so-called "whistleblowers" who reported his conversation

with Ukrainian president Zelensky.

He looks at the administration of George W. Bush and the war with Iraq, and sees the hand of deep state agents there as well. And guess what? He's right. I wrote a book about that in 2007. It's called *Shadow Warriors*, and it details how a cabal of Bush-hating, pro-Democrat State Department weenies and intelligence community weasels conspired to feed false intelligence on Iraqi WMD to the Bush White House, and then blasted Bush 43 for waging a "war for oil."

Pretty disgraceful.

The President also argues that the Middle East wars the deep state wants us to fight are primarily tribal in nature. He's right there as well, up to a point.

Turkey will continue to whack the Kurds for as long as one Kurd remains breathing who demands his freedom and ethnic identity.

The Iranians will continue to wage war against the Saudis until they have toppled the Saudi monarchy, a prospect that is becoming increasingly likely.

Are these battles involving the U.S. national interest?

Again, you can argue both sides. But sending American soldiers to defend the Saudi royal family against its own people, even if they are fully supported by Iran, is not just a losing political proposition, it would be immoral and a betrayal of American military families.

I am convinced this president is not going to do that.

The Iranians are doing their best to provoke a full-fledged war with Saudi Arabia, which they believe they can win. They see it as a repeat of the sucker-punch they delivered to Saddam Hussein in September 1980—except that unlike Saddam, who nearly toppled the Khomeinist regime when he invaded Iran, the Saudis can't win and they know it.

This explains why President Trump did not respond militarily when the Iranian Revolutionary Guards shot down a U.S. drone a few weeks ago, or launched drones and cruise missiles against the massive Saudi petroleum facility at Ab Qaiq.

These Iranian probes are a trap. My sources in Tehran tell me that the Iranians are hoping to ensnare the President in a war that will be unpopular and ultimately lead to his defeat in 2020.

They have turned to this strategy because U.S. sanctions are hurting the Iranian economy, and continue to pit the Iranian people against the regime.

But there is a big picture the president is not paying attention to, and that is the Russian-Iranian-Turkish military alliance, an alliance that Ezekiel 38-39 tells us will be turned against Israel.

Two years ago, the Iranians opened a land bridge at Abu Kamal on the Iraqi-Syrian border, and sent one of their top Iraqi terrorists with a convoy of military goods to meet up with Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon overlooking the Israeli border.

The idea was for Iran to be able to flow massive numbers of troops and military gear through Iraq into Syria and Lebanon for an eventual attack on Israel. That land bridge is now operational.

We learned just a week ago that Russia is now using the Abu Kamal border crossing to bring down fresh

troops and military gear from its Black Sea bases and the Caucasuses to the Syrian battlefield along Israel's borders.

If you remember your Bible prophecy, Jesus will rapture the Church just before the Battle of Armageddon begins that pits the Russia-Iran-Turkey alliance against Israel.

I don't believe the president is thinking in these terms, but rather doing what he does best: using threats and indirect pressure to weaken his adversaries before he gets them into face to face negotiations. Trump is serious when he says he wants to negotiate with Iran's leaders. That they will never sit down with Trump is another matter. But in the World According to Trump, America wins when we have a powerful military, sitting at home, rested and well-armed, ready to fight if we ever face a serious national security challenge.

Think of this: today, the U.S. Navy is defending our interests overseas with just two aircraft carrier groups: the USS Abraham Lincoln, which is prowling the seas off Oman and Iran, and the USS Ronald Reagan, patrolling the South China Sea. The five other active-duty carriers are currently sitting in their home ports so their crews can prepare for future operations. Another four are in dry dock getting refurbished, and two more are under construction.

I don't know of any other period in recent history when our military has done so much to defend our national interests with so few forces deployed around the world. And that is the world according to Trump.

Saudi visit signals Putin's growing Middle East influence

RIYADH (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin signaled Moscow's growing Middle East clout on Monday on his first visit to Saudi Arabia in over a decade, buoyed by Russian military gains in Syria, strong ties with Riyadh's regional rivals and energy cooperation.

Moscow accrued power in the Middle East in 2015 by sending troops to Syria, where it and Iran have been key backers of President Bashar al-Assad amid civil war, while the United States pulled back. Saudi Arabia sided with Syrian rebels.

On the eve of Putin's trip, U.S. troops abruptly retreated from northern Syria as Russian-backed government forces deployed deep inside Kurdish-held territory under a deal to help fend off a Turkish cross-border offensive.

Russia has also strengthened ties with both Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran, which are locked in a decades-old contest for influence that veered towards open conflict after a recent spate of attacks on oil assets in the Gulf that Riyadh and Washington blame on Tehran. Iran denies the charges.

Tensions with Iran, which is locked in several proxy wars with Saudi Arabia, have risen to new highs after Washington last year quit a 2015 international nuclear accord with Tehran and re-imposed sanctions. The Russian president met King Salman and de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, with whom Putin says he has friendly relations.

In televised remarks, Putin and the king said bilateral relations were important to regional security and stability.

After discussions that touched on joint investments as well as conflicts in Syria and Yemen, Prince Mohammed said Saudi-Russian cooperation on energy would achieve stability.

Deepening ties have seen non-OPEC Russia, once regarded as a rival in oil markets, join OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia in forming an alliance known as OPEC+ to support crude prices by restraining output. At a morning forum convening 300 Saudi and Russian CEOs, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said producers were showing high commitments to the deal, and his Russian counterpart said there were no talks underway to change it.

Ahead of the visit, Putin, who offered to provide Russian defense systems to the kingdom after Sept. 14 attacks on its oil facilities, said he could also play a positive role in easing tensions with Tehran given good ties with both sides.

Any progress on long-mulled Saudi plans to purchase the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems would cause disquiet in Washington, which is sending 3,000 troops and additional air defense systems to Saudi Arabia.

U.S. President Donald Trump has resisted pressure to sanction Riyadh over human rights abuses, including the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, calling that a “foolish” move that would only benefit competitors Russia and China.

OIL AND INVESTMENTS

Asked about concerns Riyadh was cozying up to Moscow, senior foreign ministry official Adel al-Jubeir said he saw no contradiction.

“We don’t believe that having close ties with Russia has any negative impact on our relationship with the United States,” he told reporters on Sunday. “We believe that we can have strategic and strong ties with the United States while we develop our ties with Russia.”

Russian and Saudi flags lined Riyadh streets ahead of Putin’s one-day visit, which includes an evening performance by Russia’s Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra. He travels to the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday.

The two sides signed more than a dozen memoranda of understanding during the visit including in the fields of energy, petrochemicals, transport and artificial intelligence.

Heartbreak

Jonathan Brentner October 12, 2019

My wife and I recently watched the 1939 movie Confessions of a Nazi Spy. We sat awestruck by the similarities with Germany in late 1930’s and life today in the United States. The indoctrination of children and Hitler’s use of them to promote his socialistic agenda flashed like a giant billboard before our eyes. How did Hitler get tens of thousands to go along with his wicked agenda to kill millions of Jews? He brainwashed the children and then used them to promote his brand of deadly socialism.

The climate strikes by school-age children during the past couple weeks fits perfectly with this pattern. My heart broke as I saw children as young as seven making signs that said “Let Kids Grow Up” and “We Deserve a Future” for their use in the “climate strike.” Children in the early years of grade school are far too young to form such opinions for themselves; others have brainwashed them into this foreboding culture of fear.

My heart breaks for the young children in our nation who feel the dread of believing this world will soon end unless the nations take drastic steps to prevent global warming. The most significant threat to their future,

however, comes from the radical left who use them as pawns to promote an evil agenda. Why do I make such a seemingly outrageous claim? Let me explain.

Climate Change Has Become the Pathway to the New World Order

The book of Revelation tells us that, during the tribulation, the antichrist will exert worldwide control through a totalitarian world order. What will cause the nations of the world to give up their sovereignty and rights to such a socialistic regime? I believe he will convince them that their only hope of survival is to join together against the threat of worldwide devastation via global warming.

We see this already at work. According to a September 1, 2019, Reuters report, "Pope Francis challenged governments on Sunday to take 'drastic measures' to combat global warming and reduce the use of fossil fuels, saying the world was experiencing a climate emergency." The Pope went on to say, "We have caused a climate emergency that gravely threatens nature and life itself, including our own."

On at least twelve different occasions, Pope Francis has advocated a one-world government as the solution to the dire threat of climate change. Politicians in the United States further warn that we only have thirteen years left to fix our out-of-control climate or face extinction.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms that the world must unite under one banner to avoid the impending disaster caused by climate change. The seventeen goals of this platform urge the creation of a socialistic world order for the purpose of addressing social inequity but, more importantly, the global warming emergency. Eight of the seventeen goals relate to environmental issues and combating the dire threat caused by climate change.

The Bible predicts a much different future for the planet than do those who promote fear and foreboding among our impressionable young. God's Word assures us that the earth will survive the ravages of the coming tribulation and still support life when Jesus returns at its end to set up His kingdom.

Climate Change Has Become a Religion

The most religious people I have ever met in my life are avid environmentalists.

They possess all the earmarks of passionate believers in a religion:

They worship the earth; it's the god to which they bow down and give their lives to protect.

They follow the lead of self-appointed gurus and accept their predictions of doom as gospel.

The Church of Sweden announced that climate-change alarmist Greta Thunberg, again a child, was "the successor" to Jesus Christ.

They promote their own version of a doomsday scenario with salvation consisting of saving the earth from all the evils caused by humans.

In short, they worship creation rather than the Creator just as the apostle Paul said would happen (see Romans 1:19-23). There's nothing new about the environmental religion except perhaps where it's taking the world in these last days.

It's no surprise that Pope Francis, the most prominent advocate of a world government to combat the dire emergency of global warming, also works tirelessly to form a unified worldwide religion. The two will someday become inseparable.

Of course, it is right and honorable to do all we can to protect God's creation. He gave it to us to use, not abuse. This is our Father's world, and we should do what we can to preserve it during our time here.

The Bible, however, tells us this current earth has an end date. Jesus Himself said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The words of my Lord, Genesis through the book of Revelation, are eternal; they will stand forever, but not what we see around us.

The good news is that the new earth of Revelation 21 will never “pass away.”

God promises us a new earth, one that will never come to an end or wear out (Revelation 21:1). Sadly, those who worship this planet place their ultimate hope in something that will not and cannot last. My heart also breaks for the climate activists because their religion dooms them to a judgment that is swiftly coming to the world they adore. Because they reject the Jesus of the Bible, they will miss out on what they long for the most, the time when God restores creation to its original glory and wonder. Instead, they will incur His wrath.

Those of us who know the Lord Jesus as our Savior will forever enjoy a fully restored creation. What we commonly think of as heaven, the New Jerusalem, will come down to earth during the eternal state. As followers of Jesus, we will live in the most beautiful city imaginable with unending access to the earth in all the glory God intended for it before sin entered the world.

I love the wonders of nature. I love the mountains, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the oceans, and mountain streams and lakes. And based on the promises of Scripture, I know I have just as much time ahead of me to enjoy the wonders of this earth as I did 66 years ago.

Because of Jesus, my opportunities to enjoy the wonders of God’s creation will never come to an end. Current-day fear mongers tell us we only have 13 years before disaster strikes due to global warming. They tell us a one-world order is the only answer to escape the coming doom of life on earth.

The Bible, on the other hand, assures us this current earth will survive much longer than that; it will not succumb to climate change or global warming or any other catastrophe.

The Psalms tell us that, someday in the future, creation itself will rejoice at the return of its King, the Lord Jesus (Psalm 96:9-13; Psalm 98).

You see, creation knows it’s destined for a glorious makeover that begins with the Lord’s return (Romans 8:19-23). The wonders of God’s creation amaze me now. What will I see when God recreates it for the eternal state? I can only imagine the beauty and wonder of it all.

My heart breaks for children frightened by deceitful warnings of impending doom; and I pray, pray, pray they will soon realize their ultimate hope rests in their Creator. I pray they will put their trust in the One through whom all things came into existence (Colossians 1:15-17).

How do I know I can trust all of Jesus’ words found in the Bible? He rose from the dead on the third day, just as He said He would. The historical fact of the empty tomb assures me that Jesus will keep all His promises found in Scripture. He will never leave us or fail us in any way. He is coming again; He will restore creation to what it was meant to be.

Jesus said this, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” If you have not put your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, please do so today. You do not have much time to do so.

If you call out to Jesus and trust Him only for eternal life, he will hear your plea and give you eternal life. If you turn to the Savior, you will live with Him forever.

This current earth cannot do anything for you; it cannot console you in times of sorrow or encourage you when your path through life becomes treacherous. Nature cannot give you eternal life; only Jesus and Him alone can do that. Please call out to Him before it is too late.

How Retailers Are Using Biometrics to Identify Consumers and Shoplifters

Article by eMarketer Editors | Oct 3, 2019

Though most are loath to admit it, retailers already make extensive, behind-the-scenes use of biometrics to track employees, nab shoplifters and improve store security.

An October 2018 New York Magazine article titled, “Smile! The Secretive Business of Facial-Recognition Software in Retail Stores,” detailed the extent of the technology’s behind-the-scenes use at retailers, stadiums and other event venues. Peter Trepp, CEO of facial recognition software company FaceFirst, told McClatchy in May 2018 that his company can “match a face against the database of 25 million people in just under a second,” and the firm’s website counts hundreds of big-box stores, superstores, department stores, grocery stores, pharmacies and Fortune 500s among its clients.

A similar article, published by BuzzFeed News in August 2018, titled, “Thousands of Stores Will Soon Use Facial Recognition, and They Won’t Need Your Consent,” similarly revealed the technology’s pervasiveness and delved deeper into its privacy implications.

In our latest report, “Biometric Marketing 2019,” we found that despite these concerns, retailers are exploring biometric technology, including behavioral tracking and facial and voice recognition, for advertising and promotional targeting. These systems can identify and track shoppers in brick-and-mortar stores and learn their preferences, like how online retailers use cookies. The information can then be used to interact with them via their phones, in-store signage or in other ways.

For example, VentureBeat reported in September 2019 that Microsoft had launched Dynamics 365 Connected Store, a software application that enables retailers to track their customers in stores using computer vision, cameras and internet of things (IoT) sensors. The system has the capability to create personalized recommendations based on browsing and buying habits.

“Once companies are using this type of technology for crime prevention purposes, there’s no reason why they should not be using it for upselling their customers,” Arturo Falck, CEO of startup Whoo.ai, told Biometric Update in November 2018. Adrian Weidmann, a Minneapolis-based retail consultant, told New York Magazine that “most” stores, from family-owned convenience marts to big-box superstores, have already installed much of the technology to make this happen, including security cameras and cameras inside digital signs and kiosks that track attention to ads. “It’s the same camera lens,” he said. All it takes to complete the process, the article noted, would be a software upgrade.

While there’s no concrete evidence that an en-masse shift has taken place, there have been experiments. For example, Saks Fifth Avenue began using facial recognition in 2016 to both identify VIPs and apprehend shoplifters, Lowe’s admitted to using it to identify shoplifters, and Walmart has tested it in the past. Others have also explored the use of body-worn cameras and smart glasses to do the same.

Weidmann told New York Magazine that he’s already seen some companies more formally link their security and marketing operations. According to the article, he recently worked with The Home Depot to help marketing staffers use security footage to track shoppers and observe which products they browsed. Perry Kramer, senior vice president of BRP Consulting, predicted that facial recognition will more likely catch on in some segments over others, especially where people have confidence that a retailer will protect their privacy or believe that sharing their information will make their life simpler. “If you walk into an Apple store and they know who you are, it’s probably not as scary as walking into a Kohl’s store and they know who you are,” Kramer said.